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Cover picture (left): Capt Lucy Butler (RLC), Rfn Emmanuel Izonritei (Rifles) and Sgt Kristina Wright (AGC (RMP)) showcase the Army's trophy haul from a gripping month of Inter-Services sport

Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: Personnel from 4 Mechanized Brigade have had their efforts on Op Herrick 12 rewarded with an array of gallantry medals – pages 39-45





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ARMY



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"It's a new cost-cutting initiative we're testing. Saves aircraft, crews, training expenses, equipment, no more parachute pay, no dispersion... the advantages are plentiful."

● Digital descent – Pages 27-29

Welcome to the winner's circle

I HAVE something of a confession and an apology to make. There were moments this month when, feeling hard done by for being short staffed and having to pull long days in the race to meet this issue's deadline, I complained of being under pressure.

And then the citations behind the latest round of Operational Honours and Awards arrived at *Soldier* HQ. Stress is of course relative, but after a proverbial "bad day at the office" I get to go home and take it out on a bottle of Merlot – those in Afghanistan have no such luxury.

As illustrated by the tales of selflessness from the men and women who served with distinction in Helmand province during the summer of 2010 (pages 39-45), when things go wrong in theatre the stakes and consequences are incomparable, and so is the way in which Army personnel respond.

Those awarded gallantry decorations should rightly be revered, however, it is humbling to consider that they are just the headlines above countless column inches. Such acts of heroism are not exclusive feats but daily occurrences.

That an organisation which thrives on overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges on the battlefield also excels in the sporting field should come as little surprise.

Whether serving on Op Herrick or on a hockey pitch, British soldiers demonstrate an unrivalled drive to succeed, which is why the Distinguished Service Order, George Medal and Conspicuous Gallantry Cross are not the only decorations on display in this edition.

Sport is intrinsic to Forces life and – as evidenced by our cover stars, their haul of trophies and a bumper 12 pages of *SoldierSport* – those pulling on Army colours approach their respective

events with the same discipline and determination they would an operational deployment.

In the sporting arena, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force are the enemy and there is little sweeter than beating them.

Whether vying in the ring for a 28th successive Inter-Services title (pages 92-93), clinching hockey honours on goal difference (page 96) or grinding out a scoreless draw in a football fixture (page 94), gaining or preserving bragging rights over old rivals means an awful lot.

As does getting the upper hand over same-Service sparring partners after a 29-year wait for silverware (page 99) and getting the better of the elements and elite civilian racing teams during a superb sailing season aboard *British Soldier* (page 101).

But sport is about more than just one-upmanship in the military – it serves as a welcome distraction from the demands of deployments and provides troops with a second stage on which to impress and excel on.

Of course, the nature of current operations and the significant threats faced by personnel on them mean that there is increasingly an overlap between soldiering and sporting disciplines.

The injuries sustained by Cpl Terry Byrne (page 101) during a tour of Afghanistan were life-changing, but the paratrooper never once considered defeat and instead stands on the verge of representing Great Britain at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

This indomitable spirit – be it in the heat of battle or on the saddle of a racing bike – is what sets soldiers apart.

As ever, I salute you all. Sincere thanks for your monthly dose of perspective. – **Andrew Simms, Managing Editor** ■

'This indomitable spirit – be it in the heat of battle or on the saddle of a bike – is what sets soldiers apart'



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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

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Aerial assault: A Royal Air Force Tornado GR4 aircraft is readied for combat missions in Libya in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1973

Picture: SAC Lisa Conway, RAF

New theatre no threat to Helmand show

DEFENCE chiefs have insisted that British involvement with operations in Libya will have no effect on the ongoing campaign in southern Afghanistan.

Royal Air Force Tornado jets and Typhoon fighters have been involved in a series of missions to enforce a no-fly zone above the Arab state, while the Royal Navy has launched Tomahawk missiles from a Trafalgar-class submarine at specific military targets.

Despite the continuing activity in the region, Foreign Secretary William Hague has been quick to dismiss speculation surrounding possible Army involvement in Libya.

He stated: "We don't have any ground force involvement and no countries involved [in the operation] are envisaging a ground force involvement."

The MoD has also moved to reassure personnel that the UK's commitment to the mission in Helmand province will continue, regardless of the situation in North Africa.

In a briefing to Service and civilian

staff, a spokesman said: "There is currently no effect on operations in Afghanistan; we are keeping the situation under continuous review."

British Forces were authorised to launch coordinated strikes against Libyan air defence systems under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973.

The military deployment was made after the country's authorities ignored demands to stop the violence against its people, therefore breaching a self-declared ceasefire.

The international community called for leader Col Muammar Gaddafi to stop his troops from advancing on Benghazi and withdraw from other areas, while re-establishing water, electricity and gas supplies.

When intelligence reports revealed the Libyan regime had continued its offensive and moved to the outskirts of the city with little regard for the safety of the civilian population, the coalition partners were forced to act.

Speaking at the start of operations

in the country, Prime Minister David Cameron said: "We have all seen the appalling brutality that Col Gaddafi has meted out against his own people."

"And far from introducing the ceasefire he spoke about, he has actually stepped up the attacks and brutality that we can all see."

"So what we are doing is necessary, it is legal and it is right. It is necessary because, with others, we should be trying to prevent him using his military against his own people."

"It is legal because we have the backing of the United Nations Security Council and also of the Arab League and many others."

"And it is right because we believe we should not stand aside while this dictator murders his people."

As this issue went to press, UK forces had undertaken 59 aerial missions and the RAF's commander of air operations in the country, AVM Greg Bagwell, had reported that the Libyan Air Force no longer existed as a fighting unit.



IN A NUTSHELL

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) increases

What changes have already taken place?

In August 2010 some actions arising from the review were implemented. These included extending the time limits for making a claim from five to seven years for injury and from one to three years for bereavement claims; increasing the maximum bereavement grant to £25,000 and to £37,500 for Reserve personnel who are not members of a Reserve Forces' Pension Scheme. The majority of awards for hearing loss were also increased by one tariff level.

Does the scheme only compensate those whose injury, illness or death occurred while on operations?

All Regular and Reserve Service personnel are eligible to claim. An individual can claim for any injury that has been caused by service, including training and military sports injuries.

If these changes have been implemented, why will they not be operational until May?

The alterations being made are significant and time is needed to ensure IT systems, delivery processes, training and other measures are in place so claims can be dealt with in the right way and that the correct decisions are made.

What happens between now and then?

Individuals should still put in their claim and it will be looked at and, where appropriate, an award will be made under the existing scheme. When the new rules come into force, all previous awards will be uplifted.

What will happen to those who have already claimed under the scheme?

Everyone who has already received an award will benefit from these changes and receive an uplift to their original payment. Previous claimants will be automatically contacted by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency and do not need to take any action. We expect all uplifts to be paid by June 2012.

How will MoD pay for the improvements? What will be cut to pay for this?

The costs will be met from within existing provision in the Defence Budget and nothing will be cut to pay for the improvements.

Welcome news for wounded

SIGNIFICANT increases will be made to the amount of money given to injured personnel under the new terms of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

The MoD has announced an average 25 per cent rise in the awards paid to those who are wounded due to service, a figure that was recommended in a review carried out by former Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral the Lord Michael Boyce.

This will apply to all payments except the top award, which was recently doubled to £570,000.

The scheme pays a tax-free lump sum with the most seriously injured given tax-free, index-linked guaranteed income payment for life.

This is to be enhanced to better reflect the lasting impact of injuries on possible future promotions and on the ability to work up to the age of 65.

Other changes set out in the review include an increase in the maximum award for mental illness from £48,875 to £140,000 and a revised approach to the way compensation is granted for multiple injuries, so everyone receives

some money for each of their wounds.

Speaking of the changes, Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, said: "I am determined to ensure the care and support we give both our injured Service personnel and our veterans is the best possible."

"These changes show the Government's commitment to helping our wounded and will result in a significant uplift for many who have already claimed, as well as all future claimants. Crucially, nobody will lose out as a result of these changes – indeed, nearly all will get an uplift to the amount they received."

All Regular and Reserve personnel will be eligible for the scheme and individuals can claim for any injury that has been caused as a result of Service life, including those sustained during training and playing military sports.

All those who have received an award under the scheme on or after April 6, 2005 will be given an increased payment to reflect the new levels of compensation. Changes to the scheme will come into effect next month.



SECURITY EQUALS SCHOOL

■ BRITISH troops saw first-hand evidence of the positive impact they have made in the Upper Gereskh Valley during a visit to a newly-built school in the village of Rahim Kalay.

Personnel from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards have fought an aggressive assault against insurgent forces in the region, an effort that has paved the way for considerable progress at the settlement.

Joined by members of the Danish-led Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) team, the soldiers observed a class of 25 youngsters learning algebra.

Lt Jonathan Boardman said: "Over the last few months the security of the local community in Rahim Kalay has improved ten-fold."

"This climate is enabling our colleagues from the CIMIC team to make plans to further enhance the village's education programme. A larger school, which will accommodate more students, is already in the making."

"The Taliban want to oppress the people, they intimidate parents to stop them sending their children to school."

"But the efforts of the Irish Guardsmen in this area are keeping the insurgents away," he added.

“WE KNEW THERE WAS A SNIPER SHOOTING AT US AND I KNEW I NEEDED TO GET TO THE CASUALTY BECAUSE WHEN SOMEONE SHOUTS ‘MEDIC’ YOU CLICK IN AND RESPOND”
– THE RECOLLECTIONS OF MILITARY CROSS WINNER LCPL KYLIE WATSON (RAMC), PAGES 39-45



Picture: Sgt Rupert Friere, RL C

Handover signals lifting of Taliban's dark clouds

AFGHAN forces will start to take responsibility for security in the first districts and provinces of their country by this summer.

The Helmand town of Lashkar Gah has been named among the areas included in the initial stages of the handover process in a move that highlights the clear success British troops have had in developing their home-nation counterparts.

Welcoming the announcement by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Defence Minister Dr Liam Fox and Foreign Minister William Hague said it was a significant measure of the strength now enjoyed by the local military and government.

“It demonstrates that efforts to support the Afghan National Security Forces through continued training, partnering and mentoring are working,” the ministers added.

The opening stage marks the start of a gradual transition to Afghan National Army and Police control and it is hoped that British combat operations will end by 2015.

On revealing the tentative timetable, President Karzai paid tribute to the brave coalition officers and soldiers, while acknowledging that international troops would still have a role to play in his country.

He added: “I know that the

contribution will continue in different aspects other than military, by completion of the security transition, the Nato job will be to train and equip.”

Dr Fox and Mr Hague said the decision to begin the handover process was backed by an assessment of the situation on the ground.

Other areas involved in the initial phase are the provinces of Kabul (except Surbi district), Panjshir and Bamiyan, and the cities of Heart, Mazar-e Sharif and Meherlam.

The British ministers confirmed that

UK and coalition forces will remain committed to Afghanistan and will work together to ensure the country never again becomes “an operating base for international terrorism”.

“Our strategy is not just about Afghan security capability – military action must be matched by a viable Afghan state and a political process, backed by development,” they said.

“The UK remains committed to a strong, long-term partnership with Afghanistan based on diplomacy, trade and development.”

ANA FLUSH OUT INSURGENTS

■ AFGHAN forces have mounted one of their most complex missions to date by clearing insurgent fighters from two villages in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province.

Operation Omid Shash saw troops from the 3rd Brigade of the 215 Maiwand Corps command and control the assault on Malgir and Kopak, settlements that had been blighted by Taliban activity for a number of months.

With elements of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and 1st Battalion, Irish Guards in support, the home-nation soldiers coordinated reconnaissance assets, artillery, counter-IED teams, fighter aircraft and helicopters, as well as

1,000 ground personnel, 750 of which were Afghans.

By the afternoon of the second day, commanders were able to hold a shura with key village elders without any interference from insurgents.

Lt Col Chris Ghika, the commanding officer of 1 IG, said: “The operation was intended to show a presence in an area which has been untouched by the Afghan National Army (ANA) or International Security Assistance Force for a number of months.

“This action was planned and executed entirely by the ANA and concentrated on connecting local people with their leaders to prove that the insurgent has no freedom of movement in the villages to the north of Route Trident.”

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– NEW BOOK CHARTS HIGHS AND LOWS OF BEING A SERVICE WIFE, PAGES 86-87



Picture: Capt Andy Whitehead

Show of force: More than 500 Royal Irish soldiers took part in the air assault operation – codenamed Operation Tor Zhemay VI (Black Winter) – in Nad-e Ali

Irish adopt air of superiority for Taliban assault

A MASSIVE air assault by British, Afghan and US troops has destroyed one of the most dangerous insurgent strongholds in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province.

More than 500 soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment flew into Zaborabad on-board 15 helicopters – with cover from fast jets – for the dawn raid.

Supported by personnel from the Afghan National Army (ANA); 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland; the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment; and the US Marine Corps, they searched suspicious compounds uncovering 14 stashes of weapons, ammunition and bomb-making material before arresting three key insurgents.

Lt Col Colin Weir, commanding officer of 1 R Irish, revealed that many of the finds were the result of tip-offs from the local population.

“In addition to the physical impact that we have had on the enemy, the psychological effect of this air assault was remarkable,” he said.

“The insurgents were horrified but the people were delighted to see us.”

The operation – codenamed Tor Zhemay VI (Black Winter, in English) – was meticulously planned and rehearsed at a joint British and Afghan camp in Nad-e Ali district centre.

Maj James Coleby, a UK advisor to the home-nation troops involved, said the raid had been a resounding success.

“They [the ANA] have proved that

their relationship with the locals is sound and have reassured them the Afghan Government is here to protect them,” he added.

“They have worked hard without

complaint or hesitation, under extreme weather conditions, within one of the most dangerous quarters in Helmand province to achieve success in their part of the operation.”

Reduction plan gathers pace

SOLDIERS can expect to hear further details of the Army redundancy programme early this month as plans to cut numbers across all three Services continue.

The Royal Air Force has already published a comprehensive document for the opening tranche of its scheme, which outlines the branches and trades from which they are seeking to make reductions, and their military colleagues will now follow suit.

The Army will announce details for their personnel on April 4. Although the redundancy programme is compulsory, volunteers will be sought. However, it has been deemed essential that the Services are able to select non-volunteers and reject those who are not suitable to ensure they have the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right jobs.

All personnel will be informed through their chain of command if they are to be made redundant in the first tranche, which starts in September. All four tranches will be completed by March 31, 2015.

Volunteers will serve six months' notice before leaving the Armed Forces, while non-volunteers will work for 12 months. Those who are selected for redundancy will have an opportunity to apply

for a transfer into specialised areas of the Army and the other two Services.

Details of the application process and opportunities available will be published on September 1.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: “We need to restructure our forces to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to meet the demands of an uncertain future.

“The decisions we are making are not easy but they will help to defend the UK, protect our interests overseas and enable us to work effectively with allies and partners to deliver greater security and stability in the wider world.

“Our Armed Forces and their families give so much in their service to our country and we must ensure that all those who are leaving are treated with respect.”

The MoD announced in October that it would be decreasing the number of personnel across the Armed Forces by 17,000, with the Army losing 7,000 Servicemen and women. While some of the cuts will be achieved through a drop in recruiting and a policy of non-replacement, a redundancy programme is still needed.

● **Wives wary of civvy street – page 71**



“WE KNEW WE HAD TO TAKE OUR TIME, PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS AND SHOW GREAT BELIEF”
– WELSH GUARDS END 29 YEARS OF HURT, PAGE 99



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC



Picture: Steve Dock



Picture: Steve Dock

Title challenge: The ranks of craftsman, guardsman and rifleman are set to be consigned to the history books as Equality Act targets Army's designations

Gingerbread clause prompts changing of the guard

THE British Army is preparing to undertake a massive overhaul of military ranks and titles to ensure it adheres to the latest equality and diversity legislation.

The changes, required under the Equality Act 2010, will mean historical names such as guardsman and craftsman will be consigned to reference books and replaced with gender-neutral designations.

Military chiefs believe that the UK's Armed Forces should act as a “pathfinder” with regards to discrimination issues and must work to protect the human rights of its Servicemen and women.

The rank of private soldier is under the most scrutiny due to the numerous different titles which could be deemed as sexist.

Currently trooper, gunner, sapper, signaller, guardsman, fusilier, kingsman, rifleman, ranger, highlander, air trooper, craftsman and musician all apply to the junior standing and correlate to specific cap badges.

However, senior officers within each arm of the Service are preparing a number of options to prevent potential litigation cases from personnel who feel discriminated against.

Lt Col Avril Bridgeman, the officer leading the equality and diversity drive on behalf of HQ Land Forces, told *Soldier*: “We don’t want to lose sight of

what troops’ roles are so we’ve been looking at names like protector, escort or sentinel as a possible replacement for guardsman.

“For REME soldiers we think artisan, artificer or tradesperson would sit well as an alternative to craftsman.”

One solution being mooted is simply taking the “man” out of each title and inserting “person” in its place, which would comply with European Law.

Another suggestion put forward by civilian lawyers is that all regiments or corps should be forced to use the generic rank of private.

Officers will not be affected by the alterations due to the fact that they do not cross the “sexist” threshold, with titles such as captain, colonel or general being applicable to both male and female personnel.

Following the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in October 2007 there have been a number of cases of established aliases being forced to change.

For example, the Home Office now insists that inmates are referred to as Mr or Ms rather than prisoner and the terms spinster and bachelor will no longer be allowed on marriage certificates because the Registrar General says that they cannot be applied to homosexuals.

The general and specific “equality duties”, which fall under the remit of the 2010 legislation, will come into force

early this month and listed bodies will have 12 months to publish objectives.

Lt Col Bridgeman insisted that junior ranks would be consulted before any changes were implemented and that opinions were already being canvassed.

“There will obviously be traditionalists out there who will strongly object to any rebranding but so far those in favour of gender-neutral names outnumber the dissenting voices,” the female officer said.

“It is those currently in rank whose opinions count the most and one guardsman interviewed as part of our initial scoping study felt strongly about being pigeon-holed as performing a ‘man’ job. He firmly believed that as his role was not gender specific he’d prefer it to have a neutral title.”

A MoD spokesperson confirmed that further feedback from the chain of command was being sought but that rank changes would be rolled out by early 2012.

“It is important that adhering to tradition does not come at the expense of not being politically correct and causing offence,” he said.

“Many of the old rank titles are not relevant to modern society and the MoD is keen to acknowledge the increasingly important role women play within our Armed Forces.

“If it’s wrong to say gingerbread man, then it’s wrong to say craftsman.”



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Picture: AmSafe Bridport

Scientists hail super-strong string vest

HI-TECH netting capable of stopping rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) will soon be used to patch up metal bar armour on military trucks and tanks.

Tarian QuickShield is being deployed to theatre as an in-field repair kit which can be fitted quickly and without specialist tools in the event of a vehicle's protection system being damaged during a mission.

The new lightweight material consists of polyethylene fibres woven together to create a tough “string vest” that can be wrapped around platforms to defend them from one of the most widely available weapons in Helmand province.

Defence Minister Peter Luff revealed the MoD has placed a £2.6m contract with manufacturer AmSafe and that the cutting-edge piece of kit would soon be in theatre.

Stuart Bridewell, a member of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) team which tested the polymer netting's grenade-defending capabilities, told *Soldier* that 600 sets were now ready to be shipped and would be deployed “imminently”.

“When a vehicle goes out on patrol in Afghanistan it drives through

ditches and hedges and the bar armour inevitably gets trashed,” he explained.

“Soldiers can get out of the wagon and stick QuickShield on in ten minutes, attaching it with cable ties.

“Everything they need is contained in the pack.”

Maj Dick Taylor, the military officer working with DSTL to ensure the Army's requirements were met, said the technology was specifically designed to counter RPGs and had been thoroughly tested to ensure it could withstand the harsh Afghan environment.

He added: “The idea is that the troops can carry it in the back of the vehicle and replace damaged armour in the field.”

The QuickShield is made using a stronger and lighter version of the material found inside the padded armour plates which were rolled out last year.

“The main purpose of the covering was to protect the fibres from the environment,” explained Mike Taylor of AmSafe, the company which developed the unique polymer. “We have put it through a number of processes which now give it that protection and the great thing is that removing the padding has halved the weight.”

SCIENCE SPEND SAFE

DEFENCE Minister Peter Luff has praised the innovative minds behind the remarkable military kit being used in Afghanistan at an event showcasing the latest breakthroughs by MoD scientists and industry experts.

Describing the quality of issued gear currently in theatre as “first class”, he told *Soldier* it was delivering real advantages to British personnel serving on operations.

“We are doing things we already do, more effectively and more reliably,” said the Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology. “But we also have brand new things that we had never thought of, coming into defence and fundamentally changing the way we work.”

Announcing details of a £2.6 million contract for Tarian QuickShield [left], Mr Luff confirmed that the department's budget for science and technology would be protected from cuts during the current comprehensive spending review process.

“This demonstrates our commitment to helping them [industry and MoD engineers] develop innovative and cutting-edge ideas to help improve and protect the lives of the Armed Forces,” he said.

The minister added that new front-line kit was both providing troops with a battle-winning edge and helping to reduce costs.

“The new [polymer rifle] magazines are better, lighter and much more robust, and if they do break you can see it straight away,” he explained. “The soldier has a more reliable piece of kit and the taxpayer has a better deal because they are cheaper.”

Mr Luff – pictured below being shown Tarian – acknowledged that funding for emerging technologies had taken a “huge hit” in recent years but that he was addressing the issue.

“I'm conscious that the equipment we have today is based on defence science and technology of the recent past,” he concluded.

“And I'm aware of the responsibility I have for future generations.

“That's why protecting the budget has always been my bottom line.”



Picture: Steve Dock

DEPLOYING ON OP HERRICK?

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At all the main bases in Helmand, BFBS broadcasts via DTT just like Freeview in the UK. So you can watch live TV in your own bedspace on your laptop with a digital TV dongle such as the Hauppauge WinTV DVB-T stick.

You'll get 9 channels of BFBS TV on Op Herrick. As well as all your favourite programmes on BFBS1 and BFBS2, there's a movie channel, two Sky Sports channels, Sky News, and a music channel. Plus a Nepali channel for the Gurkhas.

Watch the 4-minute video at www.bfbs.com/deploying which explains everything. And for more detailed information on the kit you need visit www.bfbs.com/digitaltv. Here you can actually order and pay for equipment online and pick it up from BFBS in Bastion on arrival. BFBS Technology staff in Afghanistan have supplied hundreds of aerials, connected them to hundreds of poles, and made up miles and miles of co-ax for people! They also can supply TVs and Freeview boxes, and pretty much anything else you could need in theatre. So if you do find yourself needing additional equipment, cable, connectors or an aerial during your tour, then just get online at www.bfbs.com/digitaltv/buyonline.

TV in other locations

Outside the main bases in Helmand, at the smaller FOBs, you will get BFBS TV channels via communal satellite TV and at smaller PBs there may currently be no BFBS TV provision. But it is still worth taking your laptop because this is where BFBS Technology's latest invention comes in – BFBS iPlay...

BFBS iPlay

You can download programmes to your laptop or even your PSP and take them with you to watch when you want. You can even share with friends if you've got a memory stick. And the beauty of it is that it doesn't need an internet connection. BFBS sends around 8 new TV programmes to the iPlay system each day, along with newspapers and magazines.

At Camp Bastion you can load-up from the iPlay unit in the EFI or the BFBS Radio station, and there's also a BFBS iPlay cabin at FOB Shawqat.



AND DON'T FORGET YOUR RADIO!

You just need a normal FM radio

You have your very own BFBS Radio Station in Camp Bastion, broadcasting live and local across Afghanistan on 102.4. There's BFBS Radio 2 as well, which includes news and current affairs from BBC Radio 4 and sport from Radio Five Live. And the BFBS Gurkha service.

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- Email ops@bfbs.com
- Drop a bluey to **BFBS Radio, Bastion 2, BFP0 792**
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- Pop in to the radio station in Bastion 2



Family and friends in the UK can listen in to what you are listening to on **DAB digital radio** or via their TV on: **Freesat channel 786**, or **Sky Guide 0211**





NEWS IN BRIEF

PENSION PONDER

■ A REVIEW of public service pensions has concluded that reform and long-term changes should be made to retirement plans including the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS).

Under proposals put forward by the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission (IPSPC), the normal pension age for Armed Forces personnel would be upped from 55 to 60 and final-salary packages would be replaced with a career average earning model.

Chaired by Lord Hutton, the body looked at how the public sector entitlements could be changed to be more sustainable and affordable, while also remaining fair to both workers and British taxpayers.

The report's publication marks the start of the process to revamp the system and suggests that revised schemes could come into effect before the next general election in 2015, with members signed up to existing final-salary plans being moved to new packages.

Acknowledging that a unique approach is required for the Forces, the IPSPC recommends that the final-salary link is maintained for the past service of current members until any regulation changes take place.

It suggests that future schemes move towards a common framework and a more transparent system for personal contributions.

The IPSPC also advises giving members more choice over when they start drawing their benefits, allowing them to retire earlier or later than the normal pension age.

REDUNDANCY RECALCULATION

■ AN updated Armed Forces redundancy calculator is now available online after an error was spotted in the original version launched at the start of March.

Personnel applying under both Armed Forces Redundancy Scheme (AFRS) 2006 and AFRS 2010 could have been affected by the computer glitch, specifically those with a break in service; anyone who enlisted before the age of 18 (AFRS 10); officers enlisted before the age of 21 (AFRS 10); and rejoiners entering a period of service which is to be aggregated with their current service (AFRS 06).

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency has apologised for any inconvenience caused by the fault and is urging anyone considering redundancy to check financial forecasts made using the tool.

STRESS RELIEF

■ SERVICE personnel returning from theatre are to be given a post-operation stress management briefing as part of the ongoing support network within the Army.

The procedure will be carried out between six and 12 weeks after arriving home and will be delivered by mental health professionals or trauma risk management team leaders.

The briefings have been recently updated by the Stress Management Training Centre and will begin with immediate effect.



Cobra strike brings peace to village

A HELMAND settlement that was once considered a Taliban stronghold has been handed back to its people following the largest IED clearance by British troops in southern Afghanistan.

Char Coucha had been the scene of fierce combat between insurgent fighters and UK personnel. As the Taliban started suffering repeated losses they forced local people from their homes and littered the area with deadly bombs.

When troops from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment arrived last year they spent two months studying and analysing what was happening to the population.

This formed the backdrop for Operation Kapcha Kwandikalay – Cobra Safe Village in English – which saw the soldiers

working alongside their Afghan counterparts to clear the area of bombs and secure it until the residents were able to return to their homes.

Lt Col Andrew Harrison, commanding officer of 2 Para, said: “When we arrived here in October, Char Coucha was a deserted ghost town, choked of life by the insidious threat of these devices. Thanks to the courage of my men and the counter-IED specialists who cleared the village, children are now playing in its streets and families are returning.”

The hidden bombs had been eradicated within eight days of the operation starting and nine IEDs were diffused, nine ordnance caches removed and 75 compounds, along with miles of tracks and alleyways, searched and cleared.

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IN MEMORIAM



LCPL LIAM TASKER (26)
ROYAL ARMY VETERINARY CORPS,
1ST MILITARY WORKING DOG REGIMENT
KIA MARCH 1 – AFGHANISTAN

AN arms explosive search dog handler who epitomised the hardworking, determined and ambitious nature of British soldiers was killed in Helmand province.

LCpl Liam Tasker, of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, 1st Military Working Dog Regiment, was on patrol with his springer spaniel Theo when they were engaged by small-arms fire. The 26-year-old was fatally wounded at the scene, while Theo suffered a seizure on his return to Camp Bastion and later died.

Born in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, LCpl Tasker joined the Army in 2001 as a vehicle mechanic in the REME. However, he maintained a passion for working with animals and transferred to the RAVC in 2007, proving himself to be a rising

star within the dog-training group.

During his time in theatre he displayed search and clearance capabilities for units across Helmand province and had significant success in locating improvised explosive devices, weapons and bomb-making equipment.

Lt Col David Thorpe (Lancs), CO of the 1st Military Working Dog Regiment, said: "He wanted to ply his trade in the harshest of environments, to be outside of his comfort zone and he wanted to be successful. He was. The work he did in his five months in Afghanistan saved countless lives, of that I have no doubt."

LCpl Tasker leaves behind his mother Jane Duffy, father Ian Tasker, brother Ian, sisters Laura and Nicola, and girlfriend Leah.



LCPL STEPHEN MCKEE (27)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT
KIA MARCH 9 – AFGHANISTAN

PERSONNEL from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment are mourning the loss of an utterly reliable and fearsome warrior who lost his life in Helmand province.

LCpl Stephen McKee was killed while taking part in a cordon and search of a small village in the northern Dashte area of Nad-e Ali district.

The 27-year-old had strong family connections with the regiment as two brothers, a cousin and his father-in-law all serve in the 1st Battalion, while another brother serves in 2nd Battalion.

He joined the Army as a part-time soldier in 2003 and transferred to 1 R Irish four years later when the Home Service disbanded. LCpl McKee deployed on Op Herrick 8 in March 2008 and quickly established himself as a fine soldier who

was trustworthy and courageous.

Maj Gregory Murphy, OC of D Company, 1 R Irish, said: "He was determined to do the best he could, to stand shoulder to shoulder with his mates and to serve his country proudly. And this he did. He was a committed, brave and selfless leader that thought nought of himself and everything of those around him."

Capt Benjamin Cox, 11 Platoon commander, added: "He comes from a strong line of Royal Irish stock and it showed. He consistently exceeded what was asked of him and did so in good mirth. He was truly inspiring."

LCpl McKee leaves behind wife Carley, parents Heather and Bobby, brothers Michael, Gareth and Robert, and sisters Kelly and Rebecca.



PTE DANIEL PRIOR (27)
2ND BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
DIED MARCH 18

A BRIGHT and inspiring paratrooper died surrounded by his family in the UK after he was wounded by an improvised explosive device in Helmand province.

Pte Daniel Prior, of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, was providing fire support to his fellow patrol members in the small village of Char Coucha when he was caught in the blast. The 27-year-old received medical care in Afghanistan and at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham but passed away on March 18.

Since completing basic training in January 2008, the Colchester-based Serviceman proved himself as an exceptional soldier and had been identified among the next tranche of non-commissioned officers to be trained.

"Pte Prior was an intelligent, level-headed and mature young man who had a bright and prosperous future ahead of him," said WO1 Alan Armstrong (2 Para). "His sheer determination saw him battle for his life to the very end. He served his country with distinction and his loss will be felt by all soldiers across the battlegroup."

Maj Matt Taylor added: "As a bloke we will always remember him for his sense of humour and his consideration for those around him."

Four weeks before his death, Pte Prior had flown back to the UK to be present at the birth of his son Logan and had spent a fortnight with his wife Emily and their baby before returning to active duty. He also leaves behind his parents Ian and Gillian.

RAF Lyneham and Wootton Bassett to bow out

REPATRIATION ceremonies for those killed in overseas theatres will move to RAF Brize Norton by September 1, 2011. The decision follows the announcement that flying operations will cease at RAF Lyneham by September 30.

The change in destination for the flights will signal the end of the cortege passing through Wootton Bassett on its way to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, where post-mortem

examinations take place.

The final decision on which route the procession will take from RAF Brize Norton has yet to be decided by local authorities and Thames Valley Police.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "I would like to thank RAF Lyneham for their excellent work in supporting the important task of repatriation ceremonies. I would also like to record publicly my thanks to the people of Wootton Bassett who have chosen

to pay their respects in a unique and special way.

"It is such spontaneous public support that captures the spirit of the British people."

Prime Minister David Cameron has also announced that Wootton Bassett, in Wiltshire, will become Royal Wootton Bassett later this year.

The MoD has said there are no plans to recreate the style of procession seen in the town at another location.



“WE PERFORMED SUPERBLY AND COPED VERY WELL WITH THE PRESSURE AGAINST THE ROYAL AIR FORCE”
– ARMY HOCKEY TEAM REFLECTS ON CUP WIN, PAGES 96-97

Picture: Mike Williams



Two down, one to go: Capt Barry Stoddart is urged on by Royal Army Physical Training Corps colleagues WO2 Jimmy McCallian, left, and Sgt Simon Gowing, right, during the Fleet Half Marathon last month

Record-breaking run continues

ENDURANCE runner Capt Barry Stoddart (RAPTC) will be targeting his third world record in the space of 35 days when he takes to the start line for this month's London Marathon.

The physical training instructor will be tackling the famous 26-mile course while carrying a 20lb Bergen and hopes to shatter the fastest time for completing such a feat, which currently stands at 3hr 49min 14sec.

The officer has already set new world records at the Southbourne ten-kilometre event, where he ran with a 40lb pack on his back, and at the Fleet Half Marathon, which he finished in a time of 1hr 37min 56sec despite carrying a 20lb Bergen.

All three challenges are aimed at raising vital funds for ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the trust fund of SSgt Mickey Vaggs. The soldier, who also serves in the RAPTC, has been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. Doctors have estimated he has less than four years to live and he will leave behind two children.

Capt Stoddart is no stranger to world record attempts, having fought through the pain barrier at last year's Fleet Half

Marathon, and believes the London race will provide the ideal backdrop for a unique hat-trick.

"I don't want to tempt fate but I think I can come in at a time of around 3hr 40min," he told *Soldier*.

"I have been a lot smarter this time round. I've been taking supplements; I've been getting nutritional advice and have got on board with a strength and conditioning coach.

"Although I broke a world record last year it took a lot out of me, so I wanted to be better prepared this time.

"I thought I could do one more push to raise some money. I wanted to make a big impact so I came up with the idea of three world record attempts."

● To sponsor Capt Stoddart in his bid to collect cash for ABF The Soldiers' Charity, visit www.justgiving.com/Barry-Stoddart

Donations for the SSgt Vaggs Trust Fund should be sent via cheque to Capt Stoddart, RAPTC, Fox Lines, Aldershot GU11 2LB. All cheques should be made payable to the RAPTC Association Fund with the word Vaggs marked on the back.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FOX PRAISES DANE PACT

■ THE Danish Parliament has reaffirmed its commitment to the campaign in Afghanistan by agreeing a way forward for its troop contribution over the next two years.

Under terms set out in the Helmand Plan 2011, there will be a gradual shift from combat operations to training and developing the Afghan National Security Forces.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "The Danes have been fantastic Nato partners and an indispensable ally of the UK in theatre.

"I am delighted by the commitment to a continued Danish presence in Afghanistan, alongside the UK and other allies, until the end of 2014, and in a training role thereafter."

SPIN STARS SOUGHT

■ AN appeal has been made for Service DJs to take to the turntables to support the ongoing work of Help for Heroes.

Cpl Scott Clark (16 Regt RA) is hoping to organise a series of club nights to help raise money for the military charity and is looking for interested parties to send him a sample of their work to try to secure a place on the line-up.

The music policy for the nights will be house, electro and dubstep and personnel interested in taking part should send a demo CD and a brief CV of their DJ experience to Cpl Clark, 16 Regt RA, St George's Barracks, North Luffenham, Rutland LE15 8RL.

BLUEFORCES BACK UP

■ SERVICE personnel have been offered financial advice following the collapse of property company Blueforces.

The firm had specialised in buying, selling, managing and renting property on behalf of Servicemen and women but ceased trading earlier this year. Anyone who purchased accommodation through Blueforces should consider taking control of rent collection, while those who own houses should get in touch with their mortgage provider to clarify the position.

The chain of command will be able to assist anyone having problems and personnel deployed on operations can request a welfare phone card in an attempt to resolve any issues.

For more information contact Maj Ainsworth on 01264 385415.

■ FOR a second successive month, the editorial team's endeavours to trump *Soldier* readers with a movie-related spine line competition failed miserably.

Having already demonstrated an encyclopedic knowledge of all things Disney, hundreds of you guessed the connection between the names printed on the side of March's cover. A salute to our countdown of history's greatest "warrior women", Moore, Hawn, Kellerman and Ryan are all actors who have portrayed female Servicewomen on the silver screen. For those of you still scratching your heads, Demi Moore assumed the role of Lt Cdr Joanne Galloway in *A Few Good Men*; Goldie Hawn starred as the eponymous Private Benjamin; Sally Kellerman was the talent behind Maj Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan in *MASH*; and Meg Ryan donned a uniform as Capt Karen Walden in *Courage Under Fire*.

This month we have teamed up with online fine food emporium Delimann.co.uk to offer one lucky winner an authentic Devonshire cream tea hamper containing two impressively large scones (baked on day of despatch), Langage Farm clotted cream; extra-fruity strawberry jam, tea and an all-butter fruit cake.

To enter, tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 29. Prize can only be sent to a UK mainland address.



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Picture: Mike Weston

Crooner's charity pub crawl collects high notes

FOR touring pop stars, life on the road is often characterised by executive travel in luxurious buses that offer a home away from home.

But for singer Ian Campbell there have been no such comforts on his latest musical adventure.

The 50-year-old has been sleeping in the back of a Ford Transit van during his Great British Pub Tour, a quest that will see him perform 366 shows in 366 towns in 366 days.

His efforts have already raised more than £120,000 for military charity Help for Heroes and with 19 dates left on his gig list this figure is expected to swell even further.

"I'm from a big Services family, my father was in the Royal Air Force for 22 years, and I was brought up all over the world," Campbell told *Soldier* during a welcome break in his hectic schedule.

"I had an accident when we were living in Monchengladbach and was left deaf in one ear. I spent a lot of time in Forces hospitals and as a very small child I saw what happens to people when they are injured.

"I thought Service personnel deserve the best treatment and that has stuck with me all my life."

The start of the musical marathon coincided with Campbell's 50th birthday and the Lincolnshire native was keen to celebrate the landmark in style.

"I woke up one morning and thought that [the tour] is what I will do when I reach 50," he explained.

"I started when I was 50 and it will carry on until I am 51.

"We are now up to £120,000 and that has just blown me away. I was hoping to make £50 a day, which would

take me to £18,500 over the year.

"But the Great British drinkers have been absolutely phenomenal.

"The vast majority of people in this country are incredibly proud of our Service personnel.

"I have not heard a bad word about Help for Heroes or the Armed Forces and this has rekindled my faith in human nature."

Campbell performs under the stage name of Frankie Martin, singing cover songs by acclaimed artists such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Nat King Cole.

The tour has taken him across the country, with each town showing countless acts of generosity.

In Hastings one pub-goer gave a personal donation of £1,000 to help break the £100,000 barrier and The

Sparrowhawk, near Burnley, raised more than £1,500 in a night, with staff offering their tips to the cause.

With the end now in sight, Campbell has been able to reflect on a trip that has seen him sleep in temperatures of -14 degrees and endure an early morning alarm call from a Scotsman offering a pint of bitter.

"I'm desperately missing my family and girlfriend but it will soon be over," he said.

"I managed to get back at Christmas every night after the gigs and by January 2 it was hard to get going again. But I am more than happy to be on the road doing this."

● **To find out where you can catch Campbell in action or to sponsor his tour, visit www.bndmusic.co.uk**

● **BRITISH troops have launched a new scheme to help farmers in Helmand province look after their animals.**

Personnel from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland organised the veterinary teaching initiative at the headquarters of the Afghan National Police's (ANP) 2nd Kandak near Lashkar Gah.

Capt Joanna Lowe (RAVC) spent time educating participants on better ways of carrying out animal husbandry and more than 160 people attended the sessions over two days.

The officer, along with ANP commander Col Abdul Sattar Noorzai, also spoke on Radio Nahr-e Saraj on both evenings of the project, answering veterinary questions from farmers calling the station.

Capt Lowe said: "The aim of these two days was to educate the local people on modern methods of animal husbandry and medical care. This knowledge will help them to become more self reliant and will also improve their livelihoods."

Right, Kid's play: Lt Ed Challis gets to grips with farming



Picture: Capt Niall Archibald, 5 Scots

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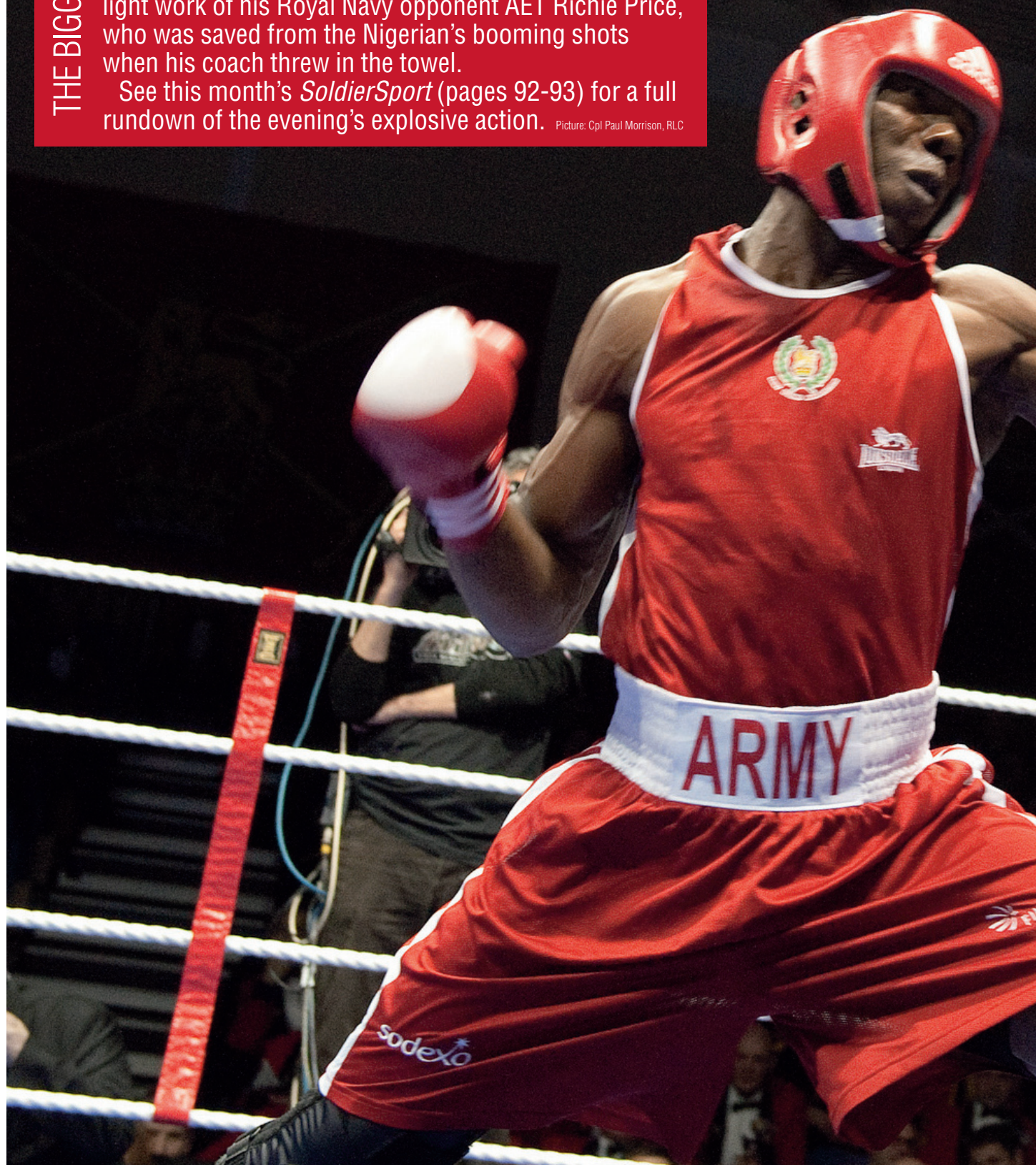
WELCOME TO THE INSTANT-ON MILITARY.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

A FIRST-round victory for heavyweight hero and *Soldier* cover star Rfn Emmanuel Izonritei (4 Rifles) helped land the Army boxing team their 28th successive Inter-Services championship at Aldershot's Combat Sports Centre. Taking to the ring in front of special guests James DeGale and Ricky Hatton, the big hitter made light work of his Royal Navy opponent AET Richie Price, who was saved from the Nigerian's booming shots when his coach threw in the towel.

See this month's *SoldierSport* (pages 92-93) for a full rundown of the evening's explosive action. Picture: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC







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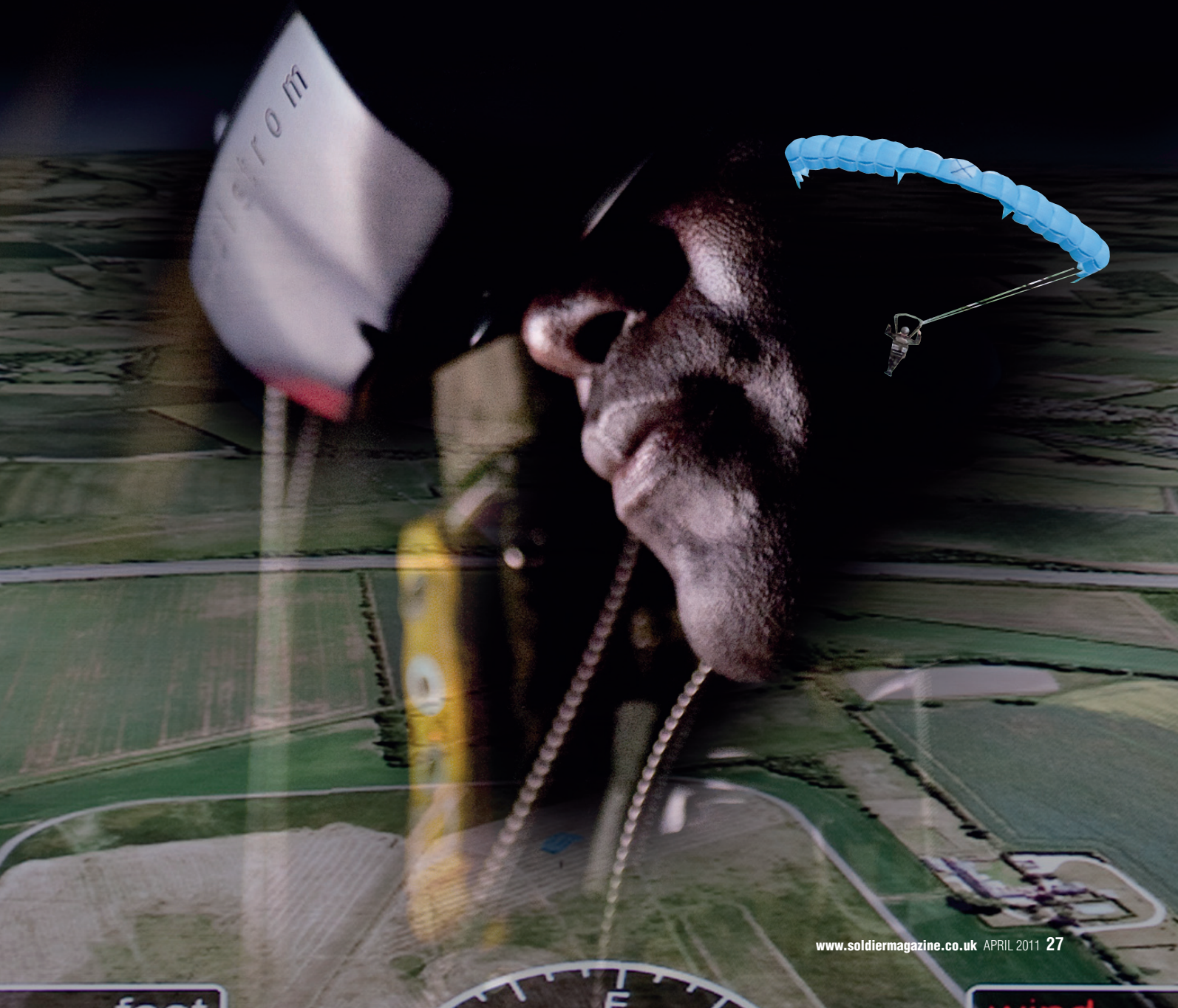
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DIGITAL DESCENT

**VIRTUAL REALITY PARACHUTE JUMPS
PREPARE SOLDIERS FOR THE HIGH LIFE**



Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Andrew Linnett

ARMY parachute practise is getting a modern makeover thanks to cutting-edge digital technology that allows soldiers to experience exiting an aircraft and hitting a drop zone without having to leave the ground.

A new £500,000 virtual reality room at RAF Brize Norton's training school will let pupils perfect their jump skills in a range of authentic on-screen environments and emergency situations.

"It can replicate flight patterns and any malfunction, and although it doesn't replace live descents, it will make sure students are better prepared for them," explained Sqn Ldr Jez Whitten-Brown, the officer responsible for developing the airborne forces asset.

He added: "It's a bridge between dry synthetic training in a hangar and a live jump.

"The simulator brings the flight swings, ramps, maps and mocked-up C130 aircraft into the virtual world."

Trainees using the system are strapped into harnesses, suspended in a darkened room and equipped with hi-tech goggles through which they view a computer-generated version of reality.

Their RAF tutors control weather conditions such as rain, fog and snow, and can tweak the wind speed and direction to make descents more difficult.

Instructor Sgt Andy Gillet (RAF) said that students could expect to see the drop zone in full detail, including any nearby buildings, wooded areas and water, as well as "an exact replica" of the parachute's canopy above them.

"When they're looking up to check, they can actually see if there are holes, rips or tears," he explained.

"There are also different sounds attached to different types of malfunctions or even to a good canopy.

"It gives them the full environmental experience."

Students' hands and the parachute handles are hooked up to sensors, allowing tutors to monitor and record every move they make, from steering to responding to specific emergency situations.

Sgt Graeme Rose (RAF) explained that footage of the simulated jumps could be replayed as part of the feedback process during lessons.

"We can watch the video and say 'this is what was wrong' or 'well done, you reacted to the scenario and did your drills correctly'," he said.

Groups of trainees waiting their turn to use the equipment can also see their classmates in action on a set of 42-inch screens in an adjacent viewing gallery, taking either a pupil's or teacher's perspective.

"The beauty is that we can repeat and repeat until the drills are ingrained," Sqn Ldr Whitten-Brown told *Soldier*.

"We've been using virtual reality trainers for around 15 years but until now have been restricted by the technology and the numbers available."

He added: "The latest generation is a far more enhanced training aid.

"More students can use it and the graphics are from exit to landing on the ground, and we can factor in numerous common malfunctions."

Around 20 RAF instructors from the tri-Service parachute training school have been drilled in how to use the system and the first group of students to benefit from the facility are expected in May.

"The idea is that anyone with the need to jump will use the virtual reality trainer," said Sqn Ldr Whitten-Brown.

"So it depends what the Army decide to push our way, but initially those with the requirement for square parachute training will come here."

Regardless of who they are, the new kit will ensure the next crop of airborne Army personnel get the most up-to-date and realistic training available, preparing them to a level previously only achievable by actually jumping out of a high-altitude aircraft. ■



Picture: Ben Birchall/PA Wire

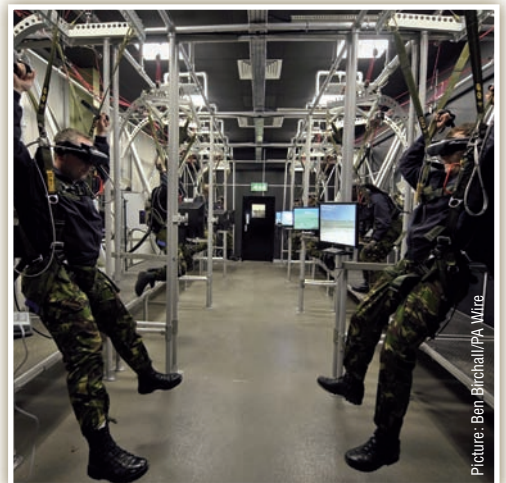


Potential parachutists are strapped in for a virtual reality ride, eliminating any jumps into the unknown





Sky bashing: Sgt Andy Gillett (RAF), an instructor at the Parachute Training School, RAF Brize Norton, operates the new virtual reality parachute system



Picture: Ben Birchall/PA Wire



WIDENING

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH Facebook and smartphone users increasingly common in the ranks of the British Army, the tools of the military trade are being updated to ensure soldiers have access to the latest digital channels.

An online asset already offered to troops is the ArmyNet website – a password-protected information portal, mailbox and text-messaging service available to personnel and their families, wherever they are posted.

The small team of experts behind the site have been busy bringing it up to speed, revamping the way it looks and developing some flashy new features to make it fit for the needs of today's IT-savvy soldiers.

Maj Mark Beaman (Rifles), the officer responsible for the web-based communication hub, told *Soldier* that from this month visitors to the homepage can expect to see some significant changes.

"ArmyNet will have a refreshed look and feel that will make it easier to use," he explained.

"We are also rolling out a new email solution that will look a lot more like Microsoft Office, with improved calendar and contact functions."

With one eye firmly on the future, plans are under way for smartphone users to be able to access ArmyNet from the palms of their hands.

"We want to create our own version of the iTunes app store, with packages sponsored by the Army," Maj Beaman added, revealing that an online British military fitness tool was already in production.

"It's in response to a commonly asked question on the Army's Facebook page from people who are thinking of joining – they want to know whether they are fit enough."

The software will provide on-screen demonstrations of how to do a press-up, timers to tell users whether they are running fast enough and will let them know if they are on target to pass the test.

"The plan is to sell it through iTunes but if you are serving you will be able to download it for free," the officer explained.

"We're developing it for Android and Apple iPhones and there's talk of a Blackberry version."

Other innovative ideas include palm-held programmes to help soldiers locate UK military bases, find out about Army discounts and even app versions of trade books, designed to guide troops as they progress through the ranks of their chosen career path.

The Service's commitment to cutting-edge digital developments is supported at the highest level with many senior officers owning smartphones and recognising the importance of the technology.

"They have seen what the US Army is doing – the Americans have hundreds of people developing this sort of stuff and there is talk of every soldier being issued an iPhone," Maj Beaman said.

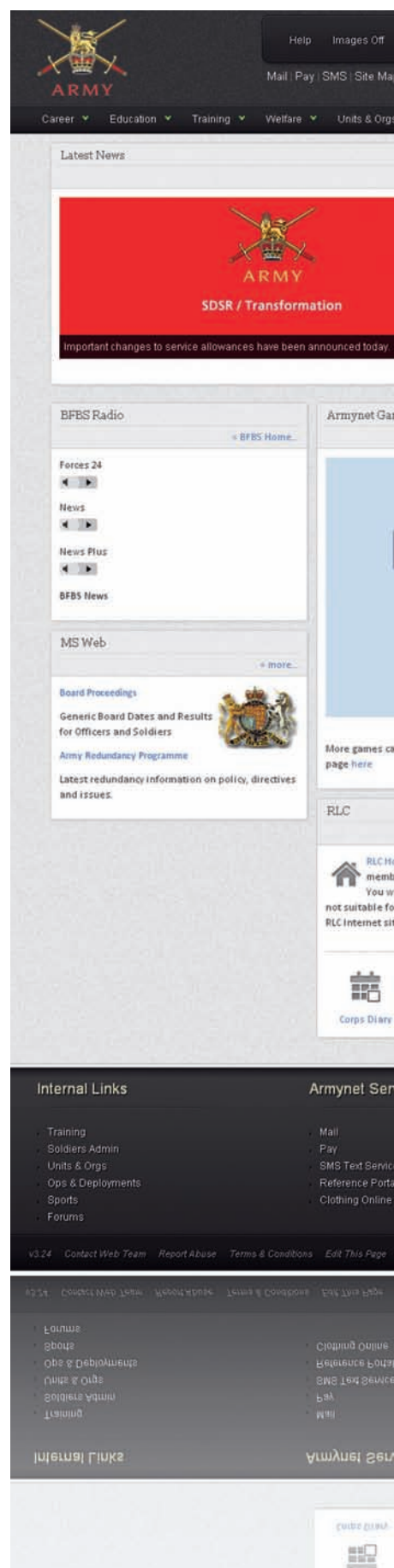
"The app store initiative has buy-in from the top of the Army because it is a great means of delivering information – it's there in your pocket and it's a natural progression because it's what people are using."

And it's not just iPhones that the military is targeting. A group of British soldiers was recently issued with iPads after a shortfall in pre-deployment cultural awareness training was identified.

"A built-in education package was delivered to troops bound for Afghanistan, showing them what to say and the correct gestures to use," explained Maj Beaman.

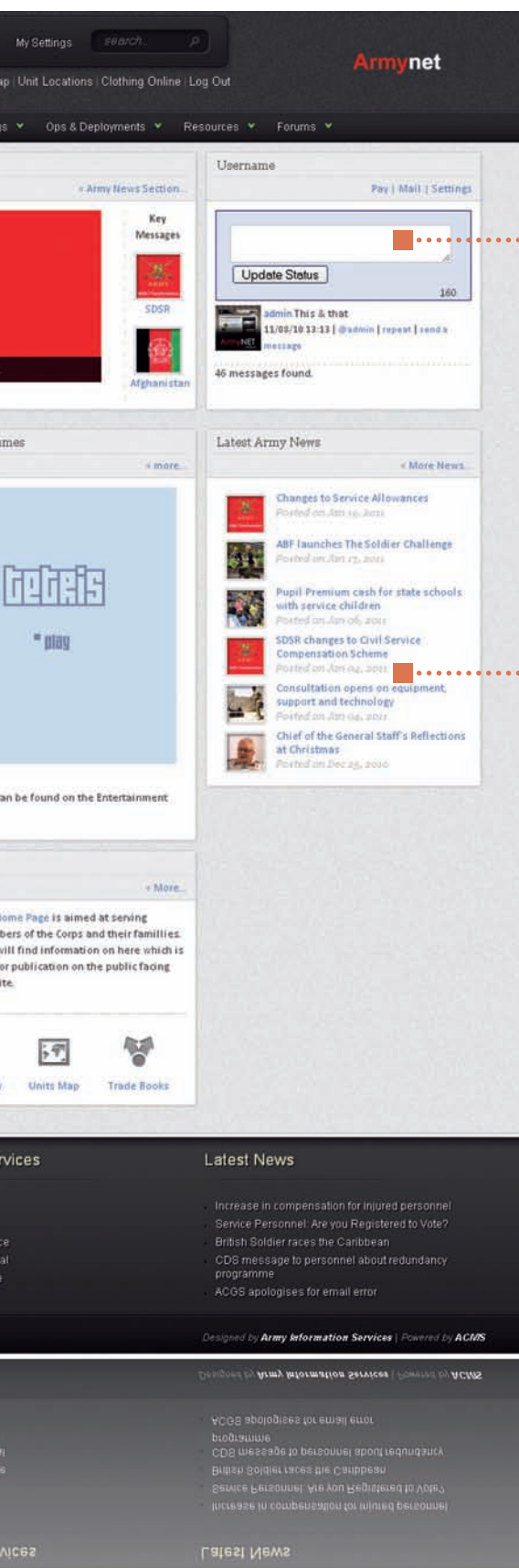
"We're not just messing around, doing cool stuff with cool kit – there is a serious business case underpinning it."

With a dedicated team keeping on top of evolving online wizardry and gadgets, the Army is preparing and equipping its personnel for the digital world of tomorrow. ■



THE NET

ARMY'S WEB EXPERTS KEEP FINGERS ON THE PULSE TO PROVIDE TOP TECHNOLOGY FOR TROOPS



Interactive: The email system offers functionality that will greatly improve usability and increase personal and business capabilities. Armynet's version of Twitter, Contact, allows users to post short updates which appear on their friends' and families' homepages

Refreshed: Armynet's new look brings the site bang up-to-date both visually and behind the scenes. The layout can be customised by the user selecting and arranging the homepage's widgets. A rolling feed of news items from the Army and MoD websites also features

DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

● Armynet.mod.uk was set up in 2003 with the aim of keeping troops and their families connected – formally and informally – regardless of where they are in the world.

Any serving soldier, Regular or Reserve, has access to an account, which can be kept even after leaving the Service. The site has more than 204,000 registered users and around 30,000 of those log in frequently.

"Soldiers can access online pay slips, career information, promotion lists and even games," explained Maj Beaman.

"The vast majority of personnel don't have access to DII [Defence Information Infrastructure], so another benefit is that it offers them a secure email."

Troops can also create guest accounts so their partners can, for example, view pay statements when they are away on exercise or operations.

The officer added: "Another advantage of this feature is that emails never leave the Armynet server, so they can't be intercepted or tinkered with."

The latest updates to the site mean users can now choose their own log-in and password details and the revamped design highlights the homepage widgets – on-screen menu bars like those on the BBC website – that can be moved to customise the surfer's view.

Troops can also access news items and regimental and sports club pages, allowing communities to keep in touch and up-to-date with what's going on. A feature particularly useful for those on operations.

"Since 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment left for Afghanistan, the unit's homepage has had around 3,000 visitors each month, as soldiers and their families have logged on," said Maj Beaman.

Another asset – equally popular with deployed welfare officers and sport's captains – is Armytext, a free messaging service that allows groups to update their members with important information about homecoming parades or forthcoming fixtures.

There is also an extensive reference portal containing all unclassified Defence Instruction Notices, Defence Internal Briefs and Army Briefing Notes.

Maj Beaman added: "An online library provides Armynet users with access to thousands of journals such as *Jane's Defence* – a valuable tool for anyone writing a military essay – and numerous training courses have material and learning tools on the site."

With an estimated 70 per cent of Armed Forces personnel now owning a smartphone, the officer is hoping that the user-friendly updates to the site will encourage more troops to log on and find out what is available.



Right, Screen test: Maj Mark Beaman (Rifles, left) and SSgt Andy Paddock (RLC) make adjustments to the revamped Armynet pages and are developing the ability to access the information from a range of devices



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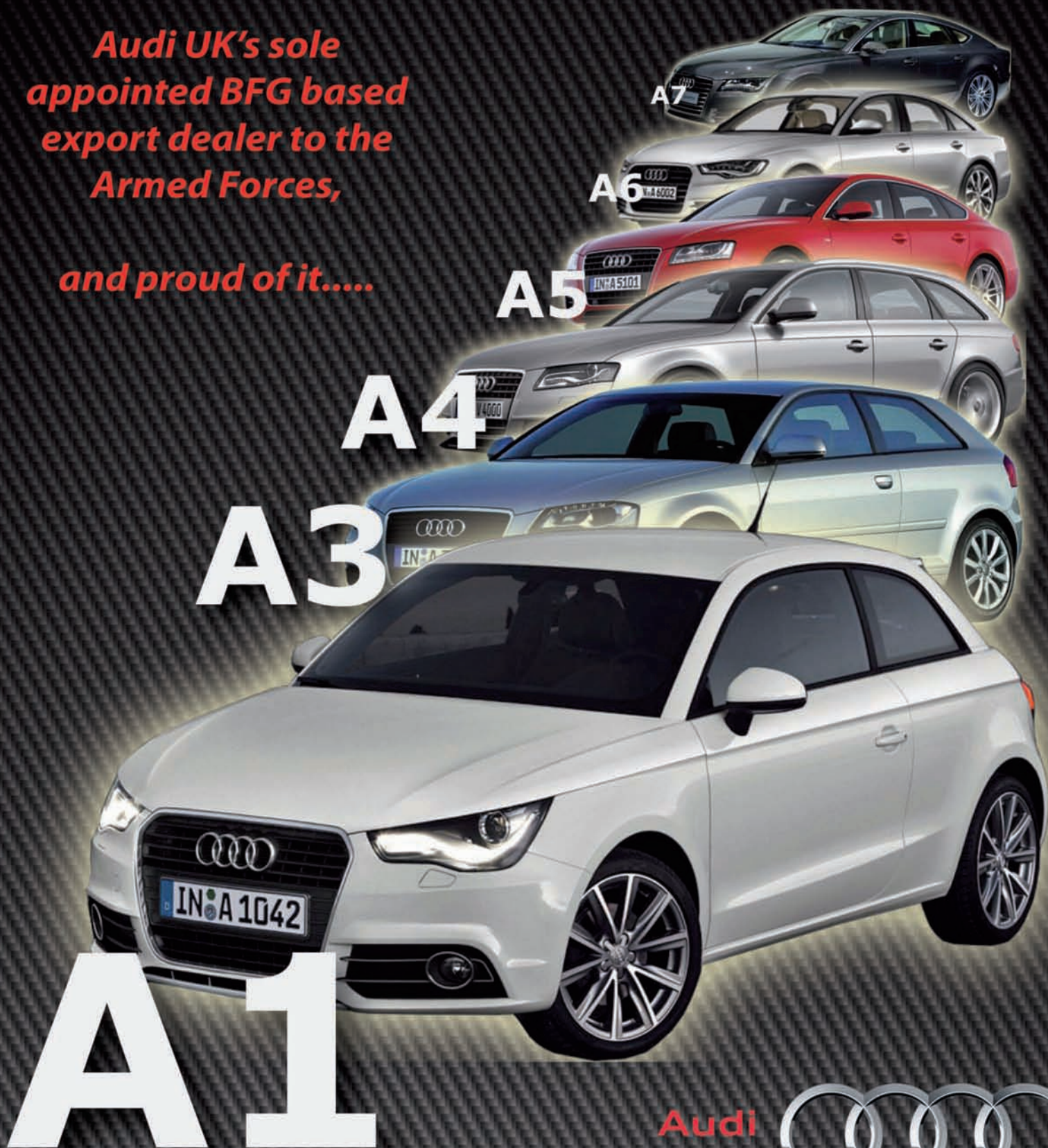
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RAY GUN REALITY

LASER TECHNOLOGY WARMING UP FOR BATTLEFIELD OPERATIONS

Report: Joe Clapson

EVER since 1898, when a "heat ray" was described in HG Wells' *War of The Worlds*, people have been fascinated by the seemingly far-fetched notion that a beam of energy could be used as a weapon.

But such fantasies are now very much a reality and the laser-based technology could find itself on the operational battlefield – or closer to home – in the near future.

Soldier caught up with Mike Booen, vice president of directed energy at transatlantic defence contractor Raytheon, to hear what hi-tech assets are currently available.

Highlighting that ray guns are no longer the sole preserve of science fiction, the laser guru explained that the company's Phalanx close-in weapon system is already in use on every US Navy ship.

"It's a rapid-fire, computer-controlled, radar-guided gun platform," he said.

"It's designed to defeat anti-ship missiles and other close-in air and surface threats."

Excited by the potential advantages of embracing laser technology instead of orthodox weaponry, Mr Booen added that Raytheon had a number of next-generation devices in the advanced stages of development.

One such project is Silent Guardian, a protection suite which is being pitched to armies and police forces across the world as a less-than-lethal directed-energy application that will repel individuals

or crowds without causing injury.

"It operates at a radio frequency of 95Ghz and will penetrate one-64th of an inch into your skin, which is at the same depth as your pain receptacle," said the defence specialist.

"It does not matter if you are the toughest, most battle-hardened soldier, it will make you stop what you are doing and turn in your tracks.

"It's like opening the door to a blast furnace."

From as far away as 200 metres, Silent Guardian can shoot out a four-foot by four-foot (1.2 metre square) beam to momentarily disable an individual, allowing time for the organisation firing it to take action.

Booen was quick to quash any suggestion that the rays could be harmful by explaining that the technology had been subjected to a decade of tests conducted on more than 10,000 people.

"The medical establishment has said it does not cause cancer, infertility, premature baldness or anything else," he said.

"The European Convention has said it's safe and the US military has bought several systems."

Put into the context of the current conflict in Afghanistan and the global threat of terrorism, Booen was adamant the highly-accurate equipment could be of vital use.

"With current weapons, if you're in a crowded marketplace and see a potential terrorist you might be reluctant to shoot," he said.

"But with Silent Guardian there's no collateral damage, we can fire and if it hits an innocent person there is no injury and consequently no friendly-fire deaths.

"It will make the person drop their weapon and then you can move in on them.

"If someone wanted this in Afghanistan it could be there within less than a year – the technology

exists already, we'd just need to build it."

The forward-thinking American moved on to another of his pet projects, Vigilant Eagle, a protection suite that uses microwave technology to defend aircraft from ground-to-air-missiles.

The system, which has been tested successfully, creates a dome around an airport or base and is able to identify and track a warhead before disrupting and diverting it away from its target.

"This is a way to defeat shoulder-fired missiles using high-powered microwaves which can travel at the speed of light," said Booen.

"It is steered electronically and will put a beam of energy around the projectile and defeat its ability to explode."

Explaining the potential uses of Vigilant Eagle, Booen said: "If a terrorist went to Heathrow and shot a missile at an aircraft there is simply no time to act – you

have to take advantage of the speed of light to defeat it and we've tested this capability and it really works."

He added: "Nato seem quite interested in this system because helicopters are being shot at and Vigilant Eagle could be put at a forward operating base to place a protective dome around it.

"Once a munition is launched, the system detects it and tracks it down and it happens very quickly – at Mach one million."

Before the First World War, the idea that horse-mounted soldiers would one day drive armoured tanks was repelled as nonsensical.

Advocates of directed energy believe they are now facing a similar challenge.

"Phalanx, Silent Guardian and Vigilant Eagle are not science-fiction ideas," concluded Booen.

"It [laser technology] used to be fantasy but we are bringing the future to the now." ■

**WE CAN FIRE
AND IF IT HITS
AN INNOCENT
PERSON THERE
IS NO INJURY!**





SERVICEMEN and women earning £21,000 or less are to receive a £250 increase in their salary as part of terms set out in the latest pay award.

The move will see around 22,500 of the Army's lowest earners benefiting from the initiative after the Government accepted the recommendations of the independent Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB).

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox revealed an additional £24 million is to be spent on Service wages and believes the extra money is a welcome reward for the challenging work personnel undertake.

As a result, a private soldier deploying on their first operational tour will now receive basic pay of between £17,265 and £26,405, as well as the £5,281 tax-free Operational Allowance which was doubled by the Government on May 6 last year.

They will also be entitled to a minimum of £1,218 in Longer Separation Allowance over the course of a six-month deployment.

Commenting on the increases, Dr Fox said: "Our Armed Forces make great sacrifices for this country and nobody deserves a pay award more.

"Despite inheriting a tough financial situation I'm glad that we are still able to award this increase to the lowest-paid Servicemen and women."

The AFPRB proposals will be implemented in full from April 1 and will include new targeted measures to retain personnel essential to current operations, such as specialist pay for explosive ordnance operators.

There will also be an increase in the Northern Ireland Residents' Supplement, which will rise from £6.41 to £7.29 per day, while eligibility will be extended to locally recruited full-time Regular Service and Northern Ireland Reserve Forces personnel.

However, as part of the changes there will be increases to charges for military homes and food.

Service Families Accommodation will rise by up to 34 pence per day and Single Living Accommodation by a maximum of nine pence per day. The Daily Food Charge will go up to £4.25 – an increase of 12 pence – and the Entitled Casual Meal Charge and Pay As You Dine core-meal fee will increase to £4.34.

The Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, said the Government's programme to reduce the national deficit has inevitably placed considerable constraints on public sector expenditure.

He added: "The Armed Forces are playing their part and the 2011 pay award should be seen in this context.

"The pay award reflects the Government's public sector pay-freeze, but it does provide a £250 increase for all personnel who earn under £21,000. It also delivers additional support to some of those who shoulder the heaviest operational burden, including

Walking tall: The Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, believes the Armed Forces have to play their part in reducing national debt but is pleased to see low earners and specialist roles rewarded in the pay award

Picture: MOD Copyright 2011

some improvements to certain forms of specialist pay.

"Additionally, it recognises the restrictions placed upon the lifestyles of those personnel assigned to Northern Ireland by increasing Northern Ireland Residents' Supplement.

"However, the AFPRB has recommended increases in food and accommodation charges in line with the costs faced by the wider public sector.

"In retaining pay increments we have ensured that over 80 per cent of the British Army will receive an increase in basic pay this year.

"We will continue to monitor pay and allowances closely to ensure that as far as possible they keep pace with your unique and outstanding commitment to the country and defence." ■

Financial Retention Incentives (FRIs)

- The introduction of a FRI of £18,760 for SF Communicators 'Officers commissioned from the ranks' for a two-and-a-half-year return of service

- The introduction of a FRI of £20,000 with a three-year return of service for Human Intelligence Advanced Handlers returning for a second tour

Pay increases for personnel earning £21,00, inclusive of X-factor, or less

Other Ranks

		Higher band		Lower band	
		Annual Rate 2010	Annual Rate 2011	Annual Rate 2010	Annual Rate 2011
LCpl/ Pte	Level 5	—	—	£20,582	£20,832
	Level 4	—	—	£19,529	£19,779
	Level 3	£20,250	£20,500	£17,957	£18,207
	Level 2	£18,342	£18,592	£17,486	£17,736
	Level 1	£17,015	£17,265	£17,015	£17,265

New entrants

£13,645	£13,895	£13,645	£13,895
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Commissioned officers

		Annual Rate 10	Annual Rate 11
SSLC	Level 3	£18,571	£18,821
	Level 2	£17,019	£17,269
OCdt	Level 1	£15,573	£15,823
UCdt	Level 4	£17,899	£18,149
	Level 3	£16,397	£16,646
	Level 2	£14,603	£14,852
	Level 1	£12,719	£12,969

Restructured Specialist Pay and Compensatory Allowances – page 36

Golden Hellos

- £14,000 for direct entry pharmacists for a three-year return of service

- An enhanced "golden hello" of £4,500 on completion of a UKSF Communicators Course

- £2,500 on qualification as a Special Communication Operator

Fiscal fairness

Army's lowest earners set to benefit from Armed Forces' Pay Review
Body recommendations



Specialist Pay

Daily rate 75% 50% 25%

Special Reconnaissance

Officers

Level 1 on badging	37.58	28.19	18.79	28.19
Level 2 after 3 years	44.24	33.18	22.12	11.06
Level 3 after 6 years	47.88	35.91	23.94	11.97

Other ranks

Level 1 on badging	18.43	13.82	9.22	4.61
Level 2 after 2 years	26.05	19.54	13.03	6.51
Level 3 after 6 years	29.70	22.28	14.85	7.43
Level 4 after 9 years	36.36	27.27	18.18	9.09
Level 5 after 12 years	39.38	29.54	19.69	9.85
Level 6 after 15 years	44.24	33.18	22.12	11.06
Level 7 after 18 years	47.88	35.91	23.94	11.97

Special Forces Communications

Level 1	17.57	13.18	8.79	4.39
Level 2	20.60	15.45	10.30	5.15

Special Communications

11.52 5.76

Special Intelligence

HUMINT Op 2 - Level 0	12.12	6.06
HUMINT Op 1 - Level 1	20.60	10.30
HUMINT Op 1 more than 3 yrs Class 1 exp - Level 2	30.92	15.46

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Operators

Def EOD Op	16.38	8.19
Adv EOD Op	21.82	10.91
Adv Man EOD Op	27.87	13.94

Compensatory Allowances

Daily Rate

Northern Ireland Residents' Supplement	7.29
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Further details can be found in the following documents on ArmyNet:

- DIB 22/11, including annexes showing the revised rates of pay for personnel earning £21,000 or less and examples of the effect of the 2011 AFPRB recommendations for those based in the UK and those on deployed operations.
- Full details of the 2011 Pay Award can be found in 2011 PAY AWARD ABN 19/11
- Full details of Specialist Pay and financial incentives for 2011 can be found in ABN 20/11

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Picture: Cpl Gary Kendall, RLC

THE remarkable bravery of scores of soldiers who served on Op Herrick 12 has been rewarded in the latest round of Operational Honours.

The deployment of 4 Mechanized Brigade saw the task force consolidate its position in Helmand province, as well as expanding local governance and boosting Afghan-led security.

The mission, which lasted from April to October 2010, saw British troops partnered at all levels and conducting many joint operations with home-nation soldiers.

It came at a significant cost – 62 Servicemen lost their lives and many more suffered life-changing injuries.

But their sacrifices allowed the International Security Assistance Force to take significant steps forward, including Operation Tor Shezada which cleared Taliban insurgents from the stronghold of Sayedebad, handed over control of Sangin to US marines and paved the way for Afghans to plan and execute fair, free and legitimate elections.

Here we feature the incredible tales of courage that have earned some of the brigade's troops additions to their military medal haul.

● **THE commander of Task Force Helmand during Op Herrick 12 has been awarded a CBE for his leadership throughout an "unrelenting" tour in southern Afghanistan.**

Under the watch of Brig Richard Felton, 4 Mechanized Brigade resisted attempts by the Taliban to regain the initiative and cemented relationships with key Afghan and coalition partners.

Describing his time at the helm of deployed British Forces as "the most challenging and rewarding" experience of his career, the senior officer said it had been a "hard summer, with dark and difficult times".

His approach of encouraging Afghan partners to take the lead on operations showed "great patience and persistence" and was ultimately successful in tackling "unprecedented levels of insurgency".

His citation reads: "His confidence and sense of certainty has been a great source of strength to his subordinates."



● Brig Richard Felton

● **A SENIOR officer's "exceptional" contribution to International Security Assistance Force operations in Afghanistan has been rewarded with a CBE.**

Col Gerhard Wheeler worked "tirelessly" during an intense ten-month deployment tackling the dual roles of Task Force Helmand's Deputy Commander and Deputy Head of the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Forging critical relationships with Afghan governors and coalition military and civilian staff, he "provided the energy" underpinning successful reintegration strategies across the province.

Drawing on his experience and extensive understanding of the challenges of operating in southern Afghanistan, Col Wheeler oversaw numerous key initiatives which proved crucial to the campaign's continued advancement.

Despite the exhausting pace, his consistent contribution and "personal energy, dedication and brilliance" proved to be a driving force for accelerated progress.

His CBE citation reads: "Col Wheeler's work in cajoling, negotiating and persuading the Afghan and coalition civilian staffs to work to a single aim and purpose ensured its success."

● **THE "outstanding audacity and utter selflessness" of an officer who demonstrably saved lives by improving the way equipment is deployed to the front line has been rewarded with an OBE.**

Lt Col John Matthews (RRF) acted "well beyond his rank" to champion direct purchasing of key operational kit through the internet, as well as totally revamping the way new assets are procured, to the "complete advantage" of soldiers on the ground.

Under his watch, mission-critical radio scanners were delivered to Afghanistan within weeks and, in response to the insurgency's growing use of snipers, the officer pioneered a plan to use ballistic glass recovered from damaged vehicles as protective screens in sangar positions.

Using his "ingenuity and alertness" he saved lives that would otherwise have been threatened.

Selflessly extending his tour to nine months, Lt Col Matthews produced a plan justifying the decision to triple the number of staff in the Capability Branch, extending the rules "beyond imagination" to ensure posts were quickly filled by the Army Manning Centre.

The officer's citation reads: "Lt Col Matthews has delivered a breathtaking inspirational performance of far-reaching effect and has been the embodiment of operational support."

● **THE commanding officer of the support team behind the operational command centre in Kabul has been awarded an OBE for leading his unit with "courage and distinction".**

Lt Col Andrew Moss (RLC) was tasked with setting up and running a bespoke multinational coordination point capable of supporting the 900-strong headquarters

responsible for overseeing military operations against the Taliban.

Forming the unit in just three months, he ensured that the HQ was able to communicate with a range of task forces and headquarters spread across a large area, using different national communication systems.

Working under considerable international scrutiny, the officer also managed several presidential visits and numerous Afghan-led conferences.

During an extremely tough year, the officer's ability to command the early stages of operations in and around Helmand and Kandahar was "of critical importance". His citation reads:

"Lt Col Moss has led his team with energy and determination, tireless in his efforts to deliver a whole range of complex systems."

● **THE "inspirational" leadership of a Royal Engineers officer has led to "dramatic reductions" in the number of soldiers killed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Helmand province.**

During Lt Col David Southall's time as commander of the Counter-IED Task Force the frequency of incidents involving homemade bombs decreased as a result of new initiatives introduced under his watch.

Analysing every blast and piece of intelligence, the officer ensured that lessons were learned as quickly as possible, undoubtedly saving many lives.

His "encyclopedic knowledge" of his field of expertise led to him developing and deploying small expert counter-IED tiger teams.

Lt Col Southall was also responsible for training and deploying the first Afghan National Army and Police bomb disposal and search teams in Helmand.

He motivated and encouraged those under his command, leading by example in his pursuit of excellence throughout his operational tour.

Despite a large increase in the use of hard-to-detect low metal content devices, his citation states that he "presided over a major decline in IED events and an impressive reduction in deaths".

Lt Col Southall has been awarded an OBE for his actions.

'He motivated and encouraged those under his command, leading by example in his pursuit of excellence throughout his tour'

● **TASK Force Helmand's Chief of Staff during Herrick 12 has been awarded an MBE for the "considerable skill and pin-sharp judgement" he exercised during a particularly difficult period in Afghanistan.**



● Maj Thomas Bewick

Maj Thomas Bewick (Rifles) faced a daunting series of challenges with "rock-solid" confidence, leading his staff through significant structural changes in a time of intense insurgent activity.

His all-consuming dedication to his work ensured that despite switching to a new regional command within weeks of arriving in theatre, all Task Force functions continued to operate effectively.

Maj Bewick's citation described the officer as an "inspiration to the whole headquarters" and said "he was at his very best when in control of major incidents".

● A COMBAT medic stationed in an isolated Helmand checkpoint has been awarded a MBE after dealing with an unprecedented number and variety of casualties during her six-month tour.



● LCpl Isobel Henderson

The base LCpl Isobel Henderson (RAMC) was sharing with 20 Scots Guardsmen and 15 Afghan police officers came under attack more than 60 times and the threat outside the gates was equally extreme.

In one incident, a mistimed attack by insurgents led to a bomb exploding under a taxi packed with up to 15 women and children. After arriving at the site, the 24-year-old medic calmly assessed the wreckage and treated the casualties.

"I looked out [at the scene], took a deep breath and got on with it," said LCpl Henderson, who also treated an injured soldier under fire, saved the life of a pregnant woman with abdominal wounds and earned a reputation for excellence for her efficiency, persistence and compassion.

The NCO said: "The whole time out there you're scared because every step could be your last, but I learned so much putting my skills to the test and I was impressed with myself and how I reacted.

"This proved that you learn so much when you prepare."

Helmand heroics: Among the latest personnel to receive operational honours and awards are (from left to right) Brig Richard Felton, Rfn Maniraj Gurung (RGR), LCpl Kylie Watson (RAMC), Kgn Scott Glendinning (Lancs) and LCpl Isobel Henderson (RAMC)

Picture: Mike Weston

● AN OFFICER deployed as an artillery battery commander has been awarded an MBE for his success at "personally leading the development" of the local police in the Helmand city of Gereshk.

Maj Paul Dupuy (RA) was posted at short notice to the area and tasked with improving the relationship of the Afghan National Police (ANP) with the district governor and local population.

Taking charge of a small training team of just 20 men, he embarked on a mission to mentor a 240-strong police force with responsibility for a city of 80,000.

Where others had failed, he successfully brokered a security plan for Gereshk, which included coordinating the ANP contribution to an operation to clear IEDs and secure the eastern flank of the city to provide protection for a critical hydroelectric power station.

By effectively supporting Afghan governance in the area, his efforts as a senior police mentor "made a significant operational impact" on the wider military campaign in Helmand province.

● A COMPANY sergeant major who repeatedly risked his life on the battlefield, "always looking after his soldiers before considering himself", has been awarded a MBE.

WO2 Anthony Higginbottom (Mercian) was rewarded for his "strength, courage and leadership" when fighting with his men in battle and consoling them in grief.

He is credited with holding his company together and supporting his commander with "total commitment through dark days".

When an IED detonated just metres away from the sergeant major, despite fragmentation wounds to his face, he took control, ensuring soldiers were safe and coordinated medical treatment. Just two days later when a nearby patrol came under fire and a soldier was shot twice in the chest, WO2 Higginbottom led a small team including a medic across ten metres of open ground to the casualty.

As the battle raged around them,

● A RIFLE company commander who personally led his men through operations in an unexpectedly tough area of Helmand province, has been awarded an MBE.

Taking command just before deploying to Afghanistan, Maj Richard Grover (Mercian) had little time in which to ready his troops for the challenges that lay ahead and was consequently deployed to an area believed to have the least insurgent activity.

The assessment proved wrong and his company found themselves under regular attack from the Taliban within days of arriving in theatre.

Maj Grover proceeded to take the fight to the enemy, fronting the more difficult patrols into new areas and regularly coming under fire himself.

Determined to counter the insurgency by winning over the local people, the officer pushed the local army and police to work better as well as rallying his soldiers "through gruelling times". Maj Grover's citation reads: "His company's results speak volumes for his commitment."

WO2 Higginbottom stemmed the soldier's bleeding before carrying him to safety.

He then returned to the scene to retrieve sensitive electronic equipment.

On hearing of his award, WO2 Higginbottom played down his heroic acts. He said: "Every time you take soldiers out onto the ground you want to bring them back in off the ground.

"Any other sergeant major in the same position would have done exactly the same thing I did."

His citation reads: "WO2 Higginbottom has consistently been a tower of strength, giving his company the confidence they need to step out of the gate, in the knowledge of what awaits them."



● WO2 Anthony Higginbottom



● **A SENIOR** British officer has been awarded a Distinguished Service Order for the operational success he achieved during a remarkable tour commanding coalition troops on the front line in Afghanistan.



● Maj Gen Nick Carter

During his 12-month tenure, Maj Gen Nick Carter planned and conducted the largest multinational air operation in recent years, directly strengthening the hold on central Helmand and reversing the insurgency.

He also oversaw changes to the structure of international forces that involved transitioning command for more than half of his area to US forces and refocusing his attention on building security in the key city of Kandahar.

Initially assuming responsibility for more than 55,000 personnel, including many Americans, the regional commander reported firstly to Gen Stanley McChrystal, then Gen David Petraeus.

His citation read: "The extraordinary levels of trust placed on him by our allies is indicative of the high regard in which he is held and the manner in which he has led his diverse command."

His contribution to the Army, as well as wider allies and the Afghan people, was described as "exceptional".

● **THE officer** responsible for the "training, selection and superb operational performance" of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) during the summer tour of 2010 has been rewarded with a Distinguished Service Order.



● Maj Marcus Mudd

Displaying outstanding and inspirational leadership, Maj Marcus Mudd (QRL) commanded the specialist sub-unit with "calm courage, unwavering judgement and exceptional tactical acumen".

Consistently placing himself at the fore of operations with his soldiers, in the most dangerous areas, he was often consciously exposed to enemy fire.

He said: "I believed I had to be where my soldiers were and that put us all in some fairly interesting places."

"In the roles we were doing deep inside the insurgents' safe haven, every man stood and fought. Our mentality within the BRF was every man was a bayonet."

His citation reads: "Maj Mudd has consistently displayed leadership of the highest calibre under highly-demanding operational circumstances. He has formed, trained and led an elite force that, time and time again, has accomplished complex, arduous and dangerous missions."

● **THE** commanding officer of a battlegroup based in one of the most challenging parts of Helmand province has been awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his "remarkable success" in tipping the balance against the enemy.

Lt Col Gerald Strickland (RGR) was rewarded for fighting an "unrelenting battle" to stabilise a key rural district, despite taking significant casualties.

In an area comprising scattered settlements and few roads, with little police influence and no government control, local people were easy targets for insurgent intimidation.

Lt Col Strickland quickly identified the key villages and fought an aggressive campaign to seize control of them, while building and securing roads and checkpoints to give the population freedom of movement.

The officer – who motivated his men with a "steely sense of purpose" – slowly won the support of the community, allowing government control to take hold in the area and turning the tide so that it was the insurgents who began to feel intimidated.



● **A BRAVE** and courageous soldier who single-handedly fought off an enemy attack to save the lives of three comrades has been awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.



● A/Sgt Dipprasad Pun

A/Sgt Dipprasad Pun (RGR) was manning a rooftop sangar in a remote village when he heard a clinking noise coming from the south of his checkpoint.

Realising he was about to be attacked, he quickly informed his commander via radio before firing a weapon-launched grenade at the approaching enemy.

He continued to fight off the insurgents, who got as close as 20m, using grenades and at one point hurling a heavy machine gun tripod at an assailant who tried to climb onto his rooftop.

"At that time I didn't worry about anything, I was just fighting," he said.

"I didn't get a chance to think. All I knew was the Taliban were going to overrun our checkpoint, so acted to save my own life and also my friends."

His citation reads: "In the dark he took the enemy head on."

"In doing so he saved the lives of his three comrades and prevented the position from being overrun."

● **THE** commander of a counter-improvised explosive device search team showed complete disregard for his own safety to administer life-saving first aid to two colleagues who had been seriously injured by enemy fire.

LCpl James Bedford (RE) was leading his men on a mission to secure a key bridge and clear a treeline and ditch when they were engaged by highly-accurate small-arms fire.

When two of his team were wounded, the junior NCO immediately ran forward in full view of the enemy and with no covering fire. He deliberately placed his body between the casualties and the incoming rounds before treating one of the stricken soldiers.

LCpl Bedford directed further assistance to the second victim and as he did so a shot struck the equipment on his back, narrowly missing his head.

The selfless soldier then led the evacuation to the helicopter landing site before returning over open ground to recover the specialist electronic-counter measures and search equipment.

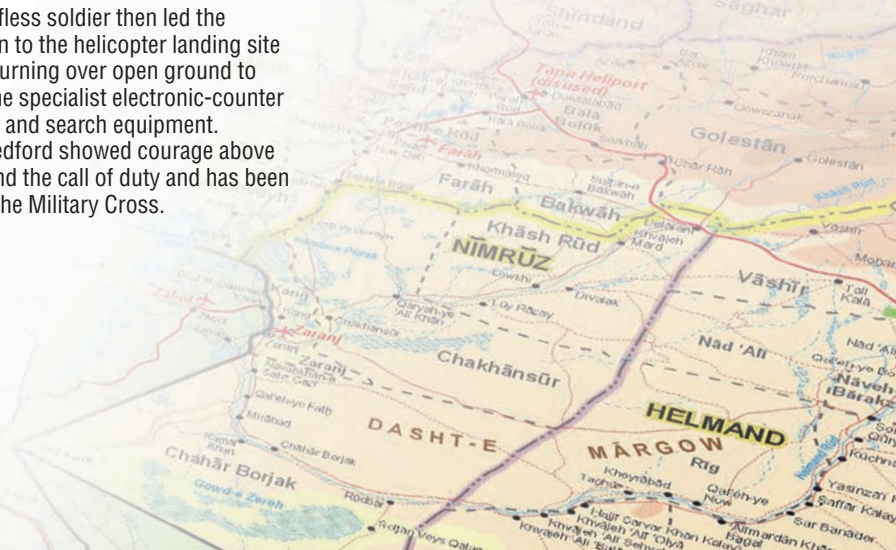
LCpl Bedford showed courage above and beyond the call of duty and has been awarded the Military Cross.

● **A JUNIOR** rifleman fought through the pain of severe injuries to his legs and hands to drag his platoon commander and an Afghan interpreter to safety during a fierce firefight.

Rfn Sunil Limbu (RGR) exposed himself to continuing weapon-launched grenade fire to ensure his wounded colleagues were able to seek refuge in a nearby compound.

It was only when he was satisfied that the other casualties were completely safe that he succumbed to his own injuries, which by this time were so serious he could not stand.

The citation for the young soldier's Military Cross reads: "Rfn Limbu acted with extreme courage in the face of a critically-dangerous situation at great risk to himself, and despite suffering painful and serious wounds."



● **A GALLANT soldier who faced heavy and accurate enemy fire to support a medical evacuation has been posthumously decorated with the Military Cross.**

LCpl Stephen Monkhouse (SG) was part of a mission to change the personnel in an ongoing cordon operation when insurgents, who targeted the Servicemen from multiple locations, shot a guardsman.

His colleagues immediately returned fire and gave first aid but were pinned down by the enemy.

LCpl Monkhouse's vehicle was manoeuvred into a position where it could help the evacuation and the heavy machine gunner resolutely manned his weapon in the face of increasingly-accurate rounds.

His efforts bought precious minutes in the quest to extract the casualty but just as the mission was complete, he was shot and mortally wounded.

His citation reads: "The evacuation continued and the guardsman's life was saved. By giving covering fire, LCpl Monkhouse saved his comrade's life with his own, displaying actions of the highest level of gallantry."

● **INCREDIBLE acts of bravery in the face of a determined enemy have earned a junior NCO the Military Cross.**

LCpl Alan Redford (Mercian) took the fight directly to insurgent forces on at least two occasions during his operational tour, when his unflinching courage undoubtedly saved the lives of his colleagues.

At the beginning of May his platoon was patrolling through a maze of mud-built compounds when they were suddenly attacked by small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

Realising the enemy had the upper hand, LCpl Redford charged forward and forced them to withdraw.

A month later his section was targeted by small-arms fire when one of his men was killed in an IED blast. The courageous soldier leapt to his feet and swiftly moved towards the insurgents, firing as he went.

After clearing an enemy compound he helped establish a defensive position and led his men through a further day of contacts without suffering any casualties.



● LCpl Alan Redford

● **CRAWLING forward through extremely accurate enemy fire to deliver life-saving first aid to an injured Afghan comrade has earned Capt Sean Scott (RLC) the Military Cross.**

Working as an advisor to the Afghan National Army, the officer was on a partnered patrol when his group came under attack in a "devastatingly effective ambush".

Two soldiers were seriously injured, one of whom was shot through the thigh and was unable to move. With accurate fire still targeting them, Capt Scott led the safe evacuation of the wounded men, displaying leadership and courage "of the most extraordinary kind".

"Leaving him there was never an option," explained the officer.

"You don't worry about yourself, you worry about what you can do for the people out there who are injured."



● Capt Sean Scott

● **A VIKING section commander who was killed as he went to the aid of a wounded guardsman has had his extraordinary bravery acknowledged with the award of the Military Cross.**

A/Cpl Matthew Stenton (RDG) was called into action when his colleague was injured in a cordon and search operation.

Realising the soldier needed an immediate evacuation, the committed soldier expertly manoeuvred his vehicle 150 metres towards the insurgents, firing his machine gun as he went and buying precious seconds to aid the extraction.

The casualty was moved into the back of the Viking but as he continued to provide cover A/Cpl Stenton was fatally shot.

His citation reads: "A/Cpl Stenton's gallantry was of the very highest order and he made the supreme act of self-sacrifice to save a comrade's life."

● **A SOLDIER has received high praise for consistent acts of selfless bravery and after showing inspirational leadership during three hard-fought contacts.**

Cpl Mark Ward (Mercian) was on an operation to clear IEDs when a device detonated, fatally injuring a soldier. In the ensuing firefight, despite being only metres from the bomb blast himself, the NCO took control and led his men in a counter attack lasting more than 24 hours.

"We were running out of water and ammunition, and at the same time grenades were being thrown over walls at us," explained the NCO.

"It was a difficult situation and a testing time and we were massively outnumbered but adrenalin keeps you going."

Cpl Ward's actions have been honoured with the Military Cross.



● Cpl Mark Ward

● **ACTS of immense courage and bravery in the face of heavy insurgent fire have seen LCpl Kylie Watson (RAMC) presented with the Military Cross.**

The junior NCO put her own life in mortal danger to help an Afghan National Army soldier who had been shot in the chest while on patrol. Exposed on open ground, the medic treated the casualty for 20 minutes before assisting with his extraction to safety.

On a second occasion, she made a 100-metre dash through a waist-high ditch in full view of the enemy to deliver life-saving first aid to an Afghan colleague who had been shot twice in the pelvis.

Describing the first incident, the 23-year-old said: "It was one of those days when you've got everyone screaming around you and rounds going off everywhere."

"We knew there was a sniper shooting at us and I knew I needed to get to the casualty because when someone shouts 'medic' you click in and respond."



● LCpl Kylie Watson



● THE senior Army nurse who took charge of the operating theatres at Camp Bastion's hospital last summer has been made an Associate of The Royal Red Cross.

Maj Ruth Truscott (QARANC) dealt with "unprecedented surgical demand and changing patterns of wounding" during a hectic six-month tour at the Services' trauma centre.

With surgical lists often topping 18 hours a day, her department carried out more than 1,000 procedures on soldiers wounded in battle. Her personal contribution to the unit's survival rate of 98 per cent was described as highly significant.

Commanding an international and multi-disciplinary team, Maj Truscott led from the front with "judicious application of natural authority".

When an unexpected equipment failure meant 50 per cent of the ward's sterilising capability was lost, her "immense technical ability" ensured that a continual theatre service was maintained.

Her citation said: "Her initiative, energy and compassion in the face of human suffering epitomise the finest traditions of the military nursing service and have been an inspiration to us all."

● A HIGH-THREAT bomb disposal expert who sacrificed his life attempting to disarm his fifth IED of the day has been posthumously decorated with a George Medal.



● SSgt Brett Linley

SSgt Brett Linley (RLC) worked as an improvised explosive device disposal operator in Afghanistan in the summer of 2010 and used his specialist skills to neutralise hidden booby traps while preserving forensic information.

In his first three months serving with the Counter-IED Task Force he dealt with 51 potentially-lethal tasks, saving hundreds of lives and placing himself in grave personal danger.

The fearless 29-year-old was selected as the soldier to discover the secret behind a new threat that had halted progress on the construction of a vital road between the Provincial capital of Lashkar Gah and the city of Gereshk.

SSgt Linley was killed in a blast on July 16, having already disarmed four roadside bombs to make safe an area for his colleagues and Afghan civilians.

The citation for the NCO's award reads: "SSgt Linley called on manual techniques reserved for the most extreme of circumstances, involving disarming and recovering the IEDs with delicate fingertip drills in order to preserve the evidence in pristine condition.

"His conscious, considered actions showed courageousness and valour of the highest quality."

● AN IED disposal operator approached a 500lb bomb on foot while under enemy fire, knowing that the device's detonation mechanism had been activated and could explode at any time.

Conscious of the potential risk to Service and civilian life and with his robotic equipment damaged, SSgt William McFarland (RLC) put concerns for his own safety aside and chose to painstakingly check for secondary devices by hand.

Such was the bomb's instability that the NCO's trowel melted on contact with its casing. With the scale of the threat identified, Sgt McFarland levered the device by hand and used a six-foot picket to attach a steel wire recovery line to an armoured vehicle, before dragging the half-ton device clear.

SSgt McFarland then man-handled the deadly explosive onto a trailer with assistance from his team and drove it to a safe area 1,000 metres away, where it could be rendered harmless without further risk to human life.

In recognition of the soldier's heroic actions in May of last year he has been awarded a Queen's Gallantry Medal.

His citation states: "SSgt McFarland's conduct displayed true gallantry, outstanding leadership and professionalism. He was pivotal in the successful recovery of a device that, had it exploded, would have caused significant loss of life."

On the ground: Troops from The Royal Dragoon Guards on patrol near Nad-e Ali during Op Herrick 12

Picture: Cpl Gary Kendall, RLC



● A YOUNG soldier who hand-cleared a path riddled with IEDs to rescue three wounded Afghan National Army (ANA) colleagues has been honoured for his courageous act.



● Pte Daniel Hellings

Pte Daniel Hellings

(Mercian) was working as a vallon operator when a 15-man ANA patrol struck a bomb in a three-metre wide alleyway.

The device blinded one soldier and left others in need of urgent medical attention.

"To be perfectly honest I thought I was going to die," said the 19-year-old soldier, who was ordered to withdraw from the dangerous location by his commander.

"There was no other choice for me but to go and help those men as I would expect them to do the same for me."

Knowing his metal detector wouldn't work among the metal debris, the infantryman inched forward, checking everything by hand.

During his hour-long fingertip search he came across another four deadly devices, before reaching the three soldiers and helping to administer life-saving first aid.

The soldier's actions have been rewarded with a Queen's Gallantry Medal.

His citation reads: "Pte Hellings demonstrated a level of courage and ability far beyond that which could be expected of his age, rank and experience, and in the most extreme of circumstances".

OPERATIONAL HONOURS AND AWARDS

AFGHANISTAN

Commander of the Order of the British Empire

Brig Richard Friedrich Patrick FELTON, late AAC; Col Gerhard Horst WHEELER, late R Welsh.

Officer of the Order of the British Empire

Lt Col John Andrew MATTHEWS, RRF; Lt Col Andrew Paul MOSS, RLC; Lt Col David William SOUTHALL, RE.

Member of the Order of the British Empire

Maj Thomas Howard BEWICK, Rifles; WO2 Martin James COX, Para; Maj Paul Mark DUPUY, RA; Maj Richard Charles Owen GROVER, Mercian; Cpl Isobel Ann HENDERSON, RAMC; WO2 Anthony Edward HIGGINBOTTOM, Mercian.

Distinguished Service Order

Maj Gen Nicholas Patrick CARTER, late RGJ; Lt Col Charles Seymour COLLINS, Rifles; Maj Marcus James MUDD, QRL; Lt Col Gerald Mark STRICKLAND, RGR.

Conspicuous Gallantry Cross

Cpl Dipprasad PUN, RGR.

Military Cross

Cpl James Andrew BEDFORD, RE; Rfn Sunil LIMBU, RGR; A/Lt Col James Rowland MARTIN, PWRR; LCpl Stephen Daniel MONKHOUSE, SG (killed in action); LCpl Alan REDFORD, Mercian; Capt Sean Alan SCOTT, RLC; A/Cpl Matthew James STENTON, RDG (killed in action); Cpl Mark WARD, Mercian; A/LCpl Kylie Elizabeth WATSON, RAMC; LCpl James Gerard WHITE, Para.

Associate of the Royal Red Cross

Maj Ruth TRUSCOTT, QARANC.

George Medal

SSgt Brett George LINLEY, RLC (killed in action).

Queen's Gallantry Medal

Pte Daniel James HELLINGS, Mercian; SSgt William Ernest MCFARLAND, RLC; Capt Benedict Lincoln STEPHENS, Mercian.

Mentioned in Dispatches

LCpl Andrew Christopher ATHERTON, SG; Sgt Sven BAKER, Lancs; LCpl Christopher Stephen BOON, Mercian; Pte Stephen Edward BROWN, Para; LCpl Christopher Elliot BURNS, Scots; Maj Shaun William Mark CHANDLER, RGR; Cpl Raymond Dino DALLAT, Para; Cpl John Lee DARE, Mercian; Sgt Anthony Carl GIBSON, SG; Rfn Maniraj GURUNG, RGR; LCpl Scott Henry HENDERSON, Scots (TA); Capt Peter Alexander HOULTON-HART, RGR; Kgn Callum Michael John HOWIE, Lancs; Pte Robert Oliver JACK, Mercian; Cpl Dean JONES, Para; SSgt Kevin KEENAN, Para;

Capt Michael John KERRIGAN, Para; LCpl Paul Anthony LANGTON, Mercian; LSgt Christopher LEYDEN, SG; WO2 Stephen Thomas MCDERMOTT, Lancs; Sgt Dean Wayne MCHUGH, Lancs; Gdsm Glen MCNALLY, Coldm Gds; A/Sgt George William MOITT, Mercian; Sgt Rory Patrick George O'CONNOR, Para; LCpl Anthony Joseph OWEN, Para; Fus Jason PALMER, R Welsh (TA); LCpl Joeli RADUVA, Scots; LCpl Nabin RAI, RGR; Cpl Craig Colin SAXTON, RDG; Capt Shureshkumar THAPA, RGR; Lt William John Lewis TULLOCH, SG; Pte Mitchell Scott TYLER, Mercian; WO2 Stephen Paul WATTS, Rifles; Capt Malcolm James WHEELER, Mercian.

Queen's Commendation for Bravery

LCpl Michael Charles BRACEGIRDLE, RAMC; Cpl Bryan GILSTON, Lancs; Kgn Scott David GLENDINNING, Lancs; LCpl Andrew James HAAG, Mercian; LCpl Greg HIND, RE; SSgt Ian Barry JOHNSTON, RLC; Spr Matthew John MORRIS, RE; Sgt David Anthony QUINN, Lancs; LCpl Dennis Robert SKINNER, Scots; Spr Roy WATSON, RE.

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service

Capt Alasdair James AKERMAN, Scots; Capt Thomas Simon BODKIN, Para; Capt Matthew Anthony COX, AGC (RMP); Maj Gen Richard Roderick DAVIS, late RE; Cpl Simon Lauchlan DONE, Mercian; Cpl James Christopher GREEN, R Signals; Cpl Manoj GURUNG, RGR; Lt Col Andrew Nicholas HADFIELD, Mercian; Lt Col Charles Leonard Gordon HERBERT, Scots; SSgt Andrew Derek JOHNSON,

RE; Lt Col Lincoln Peter Munro JOPP, SG; Maj Rupert Edward Charles KITCHING, SG; Lt Col Frazer Michael LAWRENCE, Lancs; Sgt Cameron MACDOUGALL, SG; Lt Col Michael Stewart MCGINTY, AAC; LCpl Paul Edward RAMSAY, SG; Pte Kyle SALISBURY, Para; Sgt Duncan STEVENSON, Para; A/Capt Michael George Bovill WHITEHEAD, RY (TA).

REST OF THE WORLD

Officer of the Order of the British Empire

Col Guy Hugh John DEACON, late 1 QDG.

Queen's Commendation for Bravery

Cfn Roy Thomas BOWDEN, REME; WO1 Nicholas Francis HANDY, RLC; Sgt Lewis Donald HORSBURGH, Para.

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service

Sgt Rudy MCCLENAGHAN, REME



Hot work: Kgn Luke Moyes (Lancs) takes part in a live-firing compound clearance training exercise at Camp Bastion in Helmand province during Herrick 12

Picture: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC



MiTo 1.4 16v Sprint

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Equipped with:

16" Alloy wheels, Climate control,
Front fogs, Bluetooth, Cruise control,
Rear Spoiler, MP3 CD Player



Finance Example

- £9,995 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £9,495 - Term 60 Months
- **Payment £209** - Interest £2,803
- Total payable £13,053

12.2%
APR
Typical



Punto Evo 1.4 GP 3dr

£8,495 Tax Free

£10,295 Tax Paid

Equipped with:

16" Alloy wheels, Air-Conditioning, Front fogs
Bluetooth & USB, M/F Steering wheel
ABS with EBD, MP3 CD Player



Finance Example

- £8,495 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £7,995 - Term 60 Months
- **Payment £177** - Interest £2,371
- Total payable £11,121

12.2%
APR
Typical



DS3 VTi 120 White

£10,995 Tax Free

£13,495 Tax Paid

Equipped with:

17" Black Alloys, Air-Conditioning
Privacy glass, Sports suspension
Cruise control, Aluminium pedals



Finance Example

- £10,995 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £10,495 - Term 60 Months
- **Payment £230** - Interest £3,090
- Total payable £14,340

12.2%
APR
Typical



Fabia 1.2TSi Monte Carlo

£9,495 Tax Free

£11,395 Tax Paid

Equipped with:

17" Black Alloys, Air-Conditioning, Privacy,
Front fogs, Black roof & spoiler
Sports suspension, Rear diffuser



Finance Example

- £9,495 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £8,995 - Term 60 Months
- **Payment £198** - Interest £2,659
- Total payable £12,409

12.3%
APR
Typical



Clio 1.2 GT-Line Tom Tom

£9,495 Tax Free

£11,995 Tax Paid

Equipped with:

16" Alloy wheels, Air-Conditioning, Privacy,
GT Rear spoiler, Rear parking sensors
Tom Tom UK Sat-Nav, Bluetooth



Finance Example

- £9,495 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £8,995 - Term 60 Months
- **Payment £198** - Interest £2,659
- Total payable £12,409

12.3%
APR
Typical



New Focus 1.6 Zetec 5dr

£12,595 Tax Free

£14,995 Tax Paid



Equipped with:
Alloy wheels, Air conditioning, front fogs
Bluetooth with USB, Cruise control,
MP3 CD Player & M/F steering wheel

Finance Example

- £12,595 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £12,095 – Term 60 Months
- **Payment £265** – Interest £3,805
- Total payable £16,400

11.9%
APR
Typical



Mazda2 1.5 Sport 3dr

£9,695 Tax Free

£11,745 Tax Paid



Equipped with:
16" Alloy wheels, Climate control,
Front fogs, Bluetooth, Cruise control,
Rear Spoiler, MP3 CD Player

Finance Example

- £9,695 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £9,195 – Term 60 Months
- **Payment £202** – Interest £2,971
- Total payable £12,667

12.3%
APR
Typical



Clio RS200 Cup 200bhp

£11,795 Tax Free

£15,295 Tax Paid



Equipped with:
17" Alloy wheels, Red brake callipers,
RS Cup chassis, trip computer, CAT 1 Alarm
Rear Spoiler, & RenaultSport body kit

Finance Example

- £11,795 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £11,295 – Term 60 Months
- **Payment £247** – Interest £3,575
- Total payable £15,370

11.9%
APR
Typical



S-Max 2.0TDCi Titanium

£15,995 Tax Free

£18,995 Tax Paid



Equipped with:
17" Alloy wheels, Climate control,
Privacy glass, Bluetooth, Cruise control,
Parking sensors, LED Running lights

Finance Example

- £15,995 tax free - Deposit £500
- Loan £15,495 – Term 60 Months
- **Payment £337** – Interest £4,783
- Total payable £20,778

11.7%
APR
Typical

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ADVICE TO AFRICA

British troops provide supporting shoulder
to safeguard future of Sierra Leone



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

DESPITE the impoverished conditions and visible scars of an 11-year civil war, Sierra Leone is hopeful of a secure and prosperous future.

A United Nations mission led by British troops brought an end to the vicious conflict in 2002 and since then the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) has worked tirelessly to rebuild key elements of the West African country.

Soldier travelled to the nation's bustling capital, Freetown, to witness the progress made by the multinational group over the past decade.

Col Jamie Martin, commander of IMATT, explained that his staff's mission is wide-reaching and includes advising the Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces (RSLAF) to ensure stability is brought to the coastal state.

"We firmly believe a secure Sierra Leone will have a stabilising effect on the whole of West Africa," he asserted. >>

"The third set of democratic elections since the civil war are expected to take place in 2012 and everyone is confident the process will be peaceful, fair and open."

In the early days of IMATT there were more than 115 personnel overseeing RSLAF training but now only 45 staff – drawn from Britain, Canada, the USA, Ghana, Jamaica and Nigeria – remain.

Explaining the changing nature of his organisation's approach, Col Martin added: "When the team was first set up we really had to do everything for the Sierra Leonean forces."

"But over the past two to three years we have looked to hand over the training to them, with our personnel stepping back into more advisory roles – otherwise they will never stand on their own feet."

A major success for the international partnership was achieving its target of reducing the African force from an inefficient, poorly-skilled group of 17,500 to a professional, apolitical body of 8,500 soldiers.

Sierra Leone's Chief of the Defence Staff, Maj Gen Robert Yira Koroma (pictured right), explained that the military education provided by IMATT is reaping tangible rewards.

"Training is an area where it has succeeded the most – from when they arrived in 2002 up to now it has been very worthwhile," he said.

"We have been able to build the Armed Forces Training Centre to take 100 to 200 people, which is very beautiful."

"Also the Horton Academy – where we are taking students from places like Ghana, Liberia and Senegal – has been created."

"The training is strengthening our Army a lot and changing the outlook."

The senior military officer went on to highlight how far his country has come since 2002, when it was moments away from becoming a lawless failed state.

"For a post-conflict city like Freetown we thought that armed robbery and crime would be high, but it isn't and that's because of IMATT's involvement," he said.

"When people were discharged from the Army they had been trained and went into trades rather than turn to crime."

The restructuring of the RSLAF has led to its international acceptance as a well-organised force and it is currently providing military aid in Darfur.

"It's amazing that we have gone from soldiers being called rebels to sending troops on a UN mission," said Maj Gen Koroma.

"It is something to be proud of in the RSLAF and it's following because of the British help."

On April 27 the West

African nation will mark the 50th anniversary of independence after 150 years of British colonial rule, but the celebrations will not bear any grudges towards the UK.

Brig Gen Mohamed Ali Cesay, Sierra Leone's Commander Joint Forces, spoke on behalf of his countrymen and nation.

"We are celebrating 50 years of independence but we are pleased to copy the British model."

"A lot of things have transpired between Britain and Sierra Leone but they came to our assistance when we needed it most."

"The UK is top of the scale when it comes to providing assistance."

With a beaming smile, the charismatic officer added: "It's been a pleasure to have them here after the wonderful operation they undertook with the West Side Boys. When we had no-one else to rely on, IMATT came to the rescue."

Although the list of the team's positive effects is long, there is no attitude of complacency as Sierra Leone is listed as one

of the poorest countries in the world and has an average life expectancy of 42, compared to 79 in the UK.

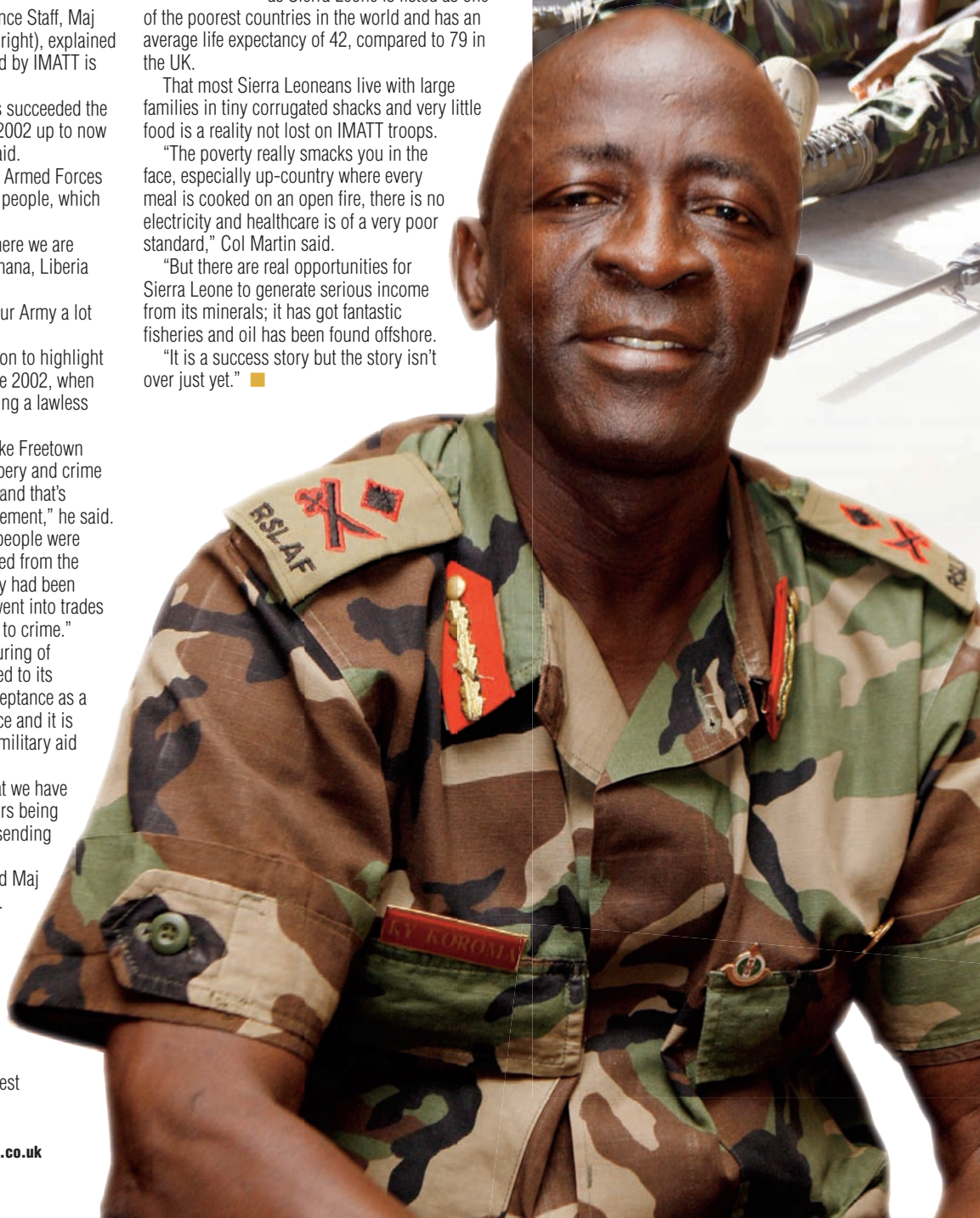
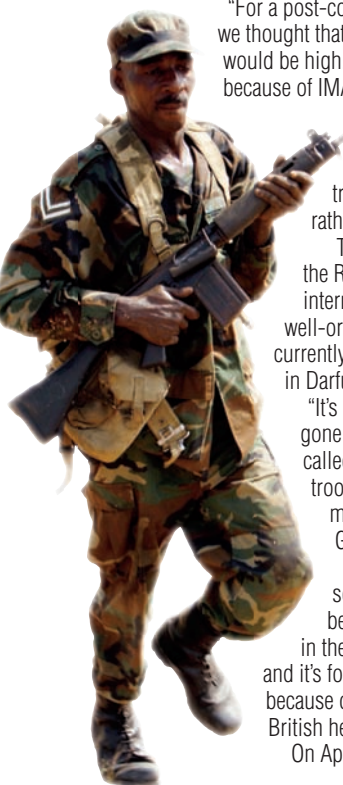
That most Sierra Leoneans live with large families in tiny corrugated shacks and very little food is a reality not lost on IMATT troops.

"The poverty really smacks you in the face, especially up-country where every meal is cooked on an open fire, there is no electricity and healthcare is of a very poor standard," Col Martin said.

"But there are real opportunities for Sierra Leone to generate serious income from its minerals; it has got fantastic fisheries and oil has been found offshore."

"It is a success story but the story isn't over just yet." ■

**Britain came
to our assistance
when we needed
it the most**





Left and above, Top class: Recruits receive training based on a blueprint from Sandhurst and Pirbright



Above, Early learning: The Horton Academy has been created as a centre of excellence for military training in Sierra Leone and enrolls students from across Africa, including near neighbours Ghana, Liberia and Senegal

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RAPID REVOLUTION



From rebels to proficient peacekeepers – a salute to Sierra Leone's soldiers

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

JUST one minute watching the professional instructions of a Sierra Leonean soldier teaching a fresh batch of recruits spoke volumes about the progress of a nation.

In 2000 the West African state was close to being overthrown by the Revolutionary United Front and its Army was considered to be a rabble of unorganised rebels.

But now, after nearly ten years of mentoring by the International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT), the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) is a respected organisation attracting global attention.

"Sir, yes sir," came the synchronised response from the next generation of African peacekeepers to their instructor prior to a demonstration platoon attack.

Dressed in British camouflage and speaking English, the future soldiers at Benguema's Armed Forces Training Centre (AFTC) would not have looked out of place on a UK exercise ground.

Taking shelter from the sweltering heat, CSgt Mark Beaton (R Welsh), an IMATT advisor at the facility, explained how his job no longer requires hands-on teaching.

"We let Sierra Leonean instructors run things on their own and we speak to them at the end of the lesson to advise and mentor," said the British senior NCO.

"For example, rather than simply take over or tell a RSLAF instructor what to do, I might suggest that he projects his voice to the whole group and makes sure he wears his headdress, uniform and webbing correctly while teaching." >>



‘ We let Sierra Leonean instructors run things on their own and we speak to them at the end of the lesson to advise and mentor ’

“Eventually these guys will take on the whole military role.”

Under the stewardship of its UK leaders, IMATT has modelled the AFTC on Catterick’s Infantry Training Centre and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Graduating personnel either move on to the platoon commander’s course or to Phase Two training to learn a trade, before

eventually joining their full-time units.

The long-term plan, which is already bringing success, is to build a skilled RSLAF capable of carrying out its country’s defence missions and contributing to internal and regional stability.

Speaking about the relationship between IMATT advisors and their Sierra Leonean colleagues, Cpl Festus Tiafoy – an RSLAF

instructor at Benguema – said: “If we are unsure of something we go to the British soldiers and they advise us. They are experienced and very helpful. I will ask a question and use the answer next time. I never make the same mistake twice.”

When IMATT was established in 2002, its Servicemen and women were tasked with turning armed civilians with tribal instincts into professional, apolitical troops.

“Sierra Leonean soldiers used to wear mirrors because they believed they would deflect bullets – the man with the biggest mirror was the RPG deflector,” said one officer. “When men were killed, their colleagues believed it was because ‘the enemy’s magic was much better’.”

Today, the troops train and operate in the same manner as their British tutors.

RSLAF personnel have also been given General Purpose Machine Guns and self-loading rifles, as used by UK forces prior to the introduction of the SA80.



Sharp eye: CSgt Mark Beaton (R Welsh) oversees instruction on a General Purpose Machine Gun



Observer: CSgt Paul Baines (Coldm Gds) looks on as CQMS Dominic Kamara procures supplies



Learning curve: Aspiring military leaders make use of the facilities at RSLAF's Horton Academy

Maj Andy McIntyre (Mercian), OC Infantry training and advisory team, added: "You would've laughed six years ago if we said a place receiving assistance from 10,000 United Nations troops would be helping in Sudan by 2011 but that's what's happened."

The success story continues with Horton Academy – commonly called "the jewel in RSLAF's crown" and based at IMATT HQ – where talented officers can study to advance their military careers.

The educational centre is Sierra Leone's equivalent to the UK's Shrivenham and is now firmly on the international radar due to its growing reputation.

Capt Patrick Woods, a Canadian instructor at the academy, said: "The 18-week junior staff course can cater for up to 54 students who have usually served for seven to ten years.

"It's well-equipped with laptops and purpose-built classrooms and it's on a par with anything in the UK or Canada."

British personnel working with IMATT have built a solid foundation for the RSLAF to improve upon.

And Sierra Leonean soldiers seem determined to put their education to good use, both on home soil and in support of their African neighbours. ■

Sierra Leone's Defence Minister Alfred Palo Conteh pointed to the RSLAF's United Nations mission in Darfur as evidence of the organisation's swift progression.

"Just ten years back we were an almost failed state and now we are stable enough to help others – that is a real achievement," said the British-trained barrister.

"I have just got back from Darfur and things are going really well. Once we get our feet under the table there we would like to send a full battalion."





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TOP-CLASS ACTS TAKE CENTRE STAGE IN BID TO
RAISE THE ROOF FOR MILITARY CHARITY



Pete Cain, Comedian

WITH an alternative strain of humour, Pete Cain operates at the sharp end of comedy and, giving a flavour of what he has lined up, told *Soldier*: "My act is usually quite dark and some people get angry over buzz words like 'disabled' or 'Muslim' without listening to the context, but I'm sure soldiers use humour to get through difficult times and hopefully we'll get on well."

"I always say, whatever injuries you get, you can't amputate someone's personality. The military is all about banter, just like anywhere else you stick a load of blokes together."

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

A PLETHORA of sought-after talent is set to take London's Comedy Store by storm in a bid to put the Help for Heroes cause up in lights.

With a mixture of military skills and smooth talking, WO2 Seb Miles, who served on the kinetic battlefield of Op Herrick 11 with the Grenadier Guards, has organised a top-class evening of entertainment to sign off his Army career with a bang.

Inspired by a Combined Services Entertainment (CSE) visit to Forward Operating Base Shawqat, the senior NCO decided to stage a morale-boosting Stand Up For Heroes show on home soil.

"I've been coming to The Comedy Store for a long time and I'm in the final year of my Army career, so thought organising an event here would be a very fitting way to give something back," said the business-minded soldier.

"We had a tough tour in Afghanistan last year and sustained five tragic losses in the week before two comedians came to visit us with the CSE.

"But when Andy Askins and John Fothergill put on their live show it gave us a real boost and soldiers were smiling again.

"I spoke to the acts in Helmand and we decided we should put on a similar night in the UK."

Through that chance meeting on operations, big names on the entertainment circuit began talking and the Stand Up For Heroes idea became a reality.

Headline acts on April 11 will include comedians Jeff Leach, Pete Cain, Stewart Francis, Charlie Baker, Askins and a few household names whose identities are being kept secret.

Providing top-drawer music for the evening will be the coveted Billy Franks and his five-piece band as well as upcoming songstress Catherine Taylor-Dawson.

Collecting money in the wings will be the mesmerising feather-clad dancers from Bang Bangs Burlesque.

Explaining the purpose of the glamorous cabaret showpiece, WO2 Miles said: "Obviously the event will raise some money for charity, which is great, but we want people to take notice of the Help for Heroes cause.

"This is not designed to put wounded soldiers on show, it is to raise awareness of the organisation and for those coming back from Afghanistan injured."

With experience of booking mess events throughout his 22-year career, the senior non-commissioned officer spoke to the Get Comedy agency, which pulled strings and twisted arms to book a money-can't-buy list of performers.

In the audience, attending soldiers will be rubbing shoulders with celebrities from the film and music industry who have snapped up tickets to see the show.

"Some massive names have played at this venue over the years and it's going to be completely packed out on the night – which is entirely fitting of our cause," said the Grenadier Guard.

"As well as the class acts on stage we've got some massive names who've asked to be in the audience. This is one event not to be missed." ■

● For more information and to book tickets (£20), visit www.thecomedystore.co.uk



Jeff Leach, Comedian

DESCRIBING himself as a pacifist, self-effacing storyteller Jeff Leach said he hoped to put on a good show to thank Britain's Armed Forces for protecting his freedom to be a professional funnyman.

"I'm not a massive fan of conflict – I'm a lover not a fighter – but there are people putting their lives on the line to ensure that myself and other comedians can get up and ponce around on stage, so this is me saying thanks," he explained.

"Laughter is a way to get people through adverse conditions and soldiers seem to be able to keep smiling even when under extreme pressure, which is amazing. Hopefully my jokes will go down well.

"It's a lot better to be doing something like this than to be sitting at home."

Billy Franks, Singer

FORMERLY of the Faith Brothers, the man who has toured with U2 and REM and drawn praise from Oasis is anticipating a night to remember on behalf of Help for Heroes.

"I'm really looking forward to the event, especially as I've never played this venue before," said the experienced singer-songwriter.

"When I was a kid I saw a short film about wounded soldiers from the Second World War. I was only seven but still wondered why we needed to have a whip round when we'd asked them to serve on our behalf. It also made me seething to see how injured troops were treated when they returned from the Falklands – that's why I'm getting involved with this.

"The Armed Forces are doing a great job so we should support them."

Catherine Taylor-Dawson, Singer



A STUNNING singer/guitarist who draws inspiration from the likes of Stevie Nicks and Janice Joplin is planning big things for 2011 and hopes the audience enjoy her work.

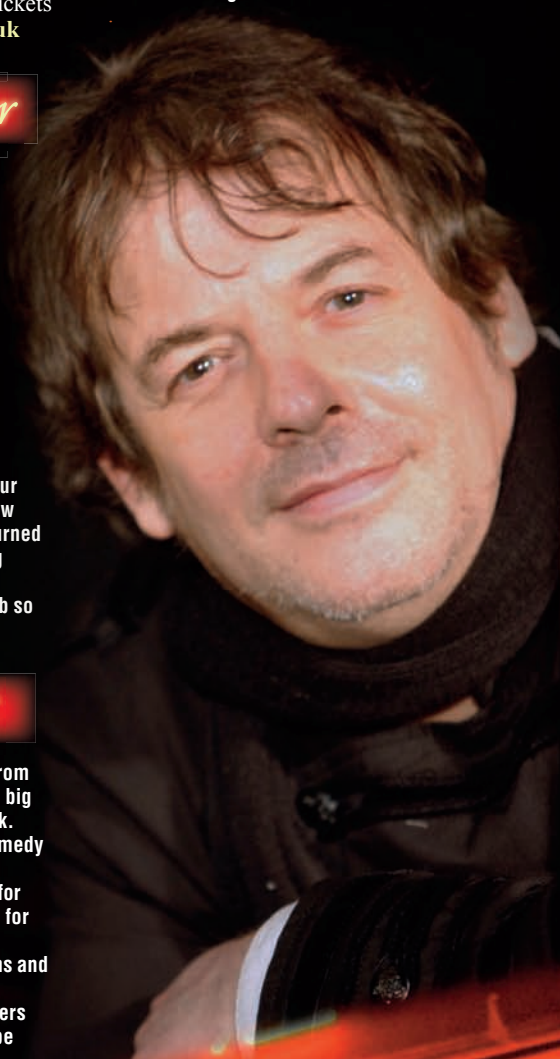
"I'm delighted to be supporting the night at The Comedy Store," Catherine Taylor-Dawson said.

"I'm very much about sending a positive message for the troops who are serving all over the world and also for the younger generation in general.

"Music and comedy are two of my greatest passions and they can help promote a positive mental state."

Taylor-Dawson will stick to traditional guitar numbers on the night but this summer she will be touring Europe with her dance album.

"The record is different to the stuff that I've done before but I'm passionate about all music, so I'm really enjoying it and looking forward to taking it to the clubs."



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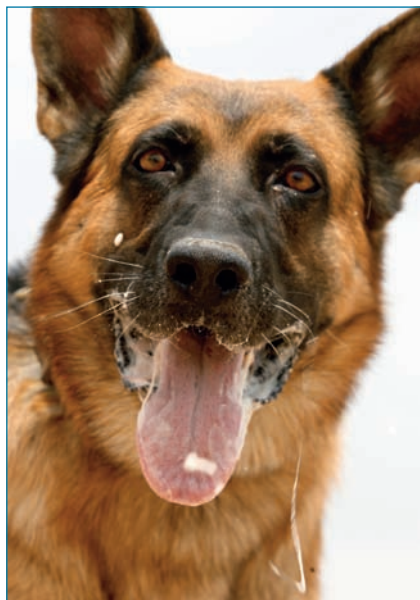
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HOUND 'EM OUT

AM I the only non-dog lover serving in the Army? Why is it that some people – mostly, but not exclusively, officers – have the urge to bring their pets to work?

I recently attended a meeting in which it was pointed out that those wishing to be accompanied by their pooches have to first fill in the necessary forms. It was also stressed that owners had to ensure that nobody in their workplace had any objection to having a canine colleague.

All of this information was delivered by a quartermaster with a dog at his side.

I would imagine that in the event of being asked their opinions on this issue by an officer, most junior soldiers would not have the confidence to object.

Personally, I have a massive problem with dogs sniffing me and slobbering over my hands and uniform.

I also believe that it is irresponsible and dangerous when people take their pets on squaddied runs and I heard recently of a runaway coming close to temporary closure because some madman let his canine escape and bound around.

How has it become tradition to bring an animal to work and have them star in regimental photographs?

Perhaps I should take a Shetland pony into the office from time to time and let that trot up and down the corridors.

Single parents don't bring their children to work, they have to find childcare. The same should apply to dogs.

And has anyone considered how Muslim soldiers feel about the presence of pooches? I would guess that they would have even stronger views than I do about this.

It's time for dog owners in the British Army to arrive in the 21st century and leave their pets at home. – Name and address supplied.

'Yet another price hike? It's time to send Pax packing'

WHAT is the justification for the latest round of price increases from PAX? It seems like every time I open an issue of *Soldier* I read about another hike in costs.

Notwithstanding the moral dubiousness of troops injured in the line of duty having to rely on charity and their own insurance; I do not expect to have to stump up more and more each year for an insurance premium against which I have not claimed. In many other cases, the price of a policy would be discounted as a "no-claims bonus".

Why does the British Army not challenge this profiteering and stop the monopoly PAX has through the pay system?

With an undue salary freeze and ill-thought out cuts to basic allowances, many soldiers will be feeling the pinch.

It is time the Army stood up for its soldiers and got them a better deal. Perhaps there is a need to "go compare". –

Capt J Morris, 203 Field Hosp.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I am not an apologist for PAX but I feel it is important to state some facts.

It was the MoD that approached the insurance market to find a readily-available, appropriate and reliable personal product for our people – PAX was the result.

It is "available" in the sense that it is enabled through the use of unit human resources staff and very simple procedures that result in premiums being collected through JPA [Joint Personnel Administration], and payments can be initiated, cancelled, increased or decreased easily.

"Appropriate" in that in its simplest forms it covers you on and off duty and wherever you are serving – there are no operational clauses.

"Reliable" in that it pays out when the evidence of injury and death in service is properly presented to the insurers, as is the case for all insurance policies.

Tragically, because of the continuing high level of claims over recent years, the value of PAX payments has exceeded the premiums received.

That said, personal accident insurance is a matter for individuals who should seek the protection that best suits their particular requirements.

Soldiers injured in the line of duty do not have to rely on charity and such policies; the MoD provides cover through



the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the Armed Forces Pension Schemes.

Commanders and human resources staff need to understand these packages to inform themselves and those they advise of exactly what they provide.

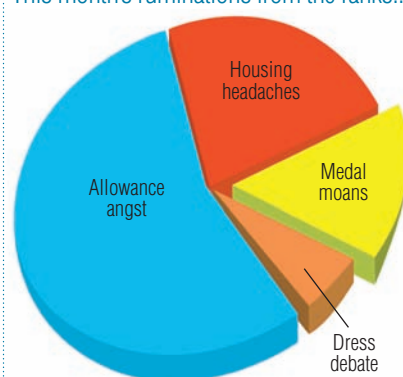
It is up to individuals to decide whether they wish to increase the benefits available to them by joining PAX or any other insurance programme. PAX does not have the monopoly and personnel are free to take their custom elsewhere.

Finally, the latest increase in price was due to the one per cent rise in Insurance Premium Tax (IPT), announced by the Chancellor in the budget and effective from January 4, 2011.

The rate applies to any product that attracts IPT and there is little that PAX – or any other provider – can do other than pass this on to their customers.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



Move 'home' would help restore marital bliss



I WRITE with regards to the outdated and ridiculous criteria adopted when it comes to housing allocations.

In 2009 I was forced into attending an annual staff cadre, which meant I would be posted approximately 60 miles from my parent unit in Tidworth for a period of two years and a change of Service Families Accommodation (SFA).

My wife, who has her own career, consequently faced an 120-mile round trip to work. After a year of making do it was clear that the rising fuel costs associated with the commute were becoming a burden.

Our marriage also began to suffer as the travelling time, expense and distance from friends and family meant my wife often found it easier to live out of a suitcase.

As a result, I requested a move back to Tidworth on compassionate grounds only to be turned down and met with statements such as "it's her choice".

After a further six months of pushing on, I'm now at the point where something has to give.

If my wife had a career in the military then we would be quartered in Tidworth. It's disgusting that in today's society the Army

and Defence Estates (DE) have such an archaic stance on this subject.

I now have to use a number of different welfare avenues to try and resolve my situation with no guarantee of the outcome, during which time my marriage and relationship with the British Army are rapidly deteriorating.

Wives don't marry the military any more and those in similar situations to my own should be catered for accordingly. – Name and address supplied.

Defence Estates Operations Housing, RAF Brampton, responds: DE always adopt a sympathetic approach to the needs of Service personnel and their families.

If an appropriate surplus SFA property had been vacant at Tidworth at the time of the request, DE would have been happy to offer it to the soldier concerned.

Unfortunately, due to the high level of demand for Service houses and the lack of availability of properties, we were unable to do so.

There continues to be a shortage of appropriate SFA and any surplus requests are being declined.

Cap in hand over money for missing miles

I AM writing with regards to the distances you are eligible to claim for under the Home To Duty Travel (HDT) allowance.

At present my daily commute to my place of work is around 65 miles, but the rules state I can only be recompensed for 50 of those.

As I choose to live in my own property, I am also expected to pay for the first nine miles of this journey.

Why is the allowance capped? If the distance I travel to work is acceptable to my chain of command and doesn't affect my ability to do my job, then why can't I

claim for the entire journey?

I'm not asking for a rise in the rate of HDT and understand that the payment exists to assist in meeting fuel costs, but would like the cap to be removed. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:

As you point out, the maximum distance that an individual can claim is capped at 50 miles. This was included on affordability grounds when the regulations were introduced.

I regret to say that, in the current

financial climate, there is no prospect of having the limit increased.

However, the rules do allow for the Service Personnel and Veteran's Agency's pay and allowances casework and complaints cell to grant exceptional authority to claim up to 70 miles when there are valid medical or welfare reasons for travelling such distances on a daily basis.

If your personal circumstances meet these criteria, your unit human resources staff will be able to submit a case on your behalf.

Why won't Army help get me home to see kids?

HAVING recently started divorce proceedings, I have found that my monthly costs have rocketed.

At least twice a month I travel to see my children in Wales and then take them to stay with my family – a total distance of 222 miles according to Google Earth.

As I do not own a property, or rather cannot provide a Council Tax statement and two household utility bills, I have been told that I am unable to claim any form of Get You Home (Travel) [GYH(T)] allowance.

This strikes me as odd when it is perfectly okay for individuals with properties, who may or may not go home at weekends, to claim an extra £200 per month.

There are enough strains placed on relationships by Army life without denying parents separated from their children the assistance given to Servicemen and women solely on the grounds that they own a house. – LCpl W Evans, 62 Wks Gp, RE.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes:

You raise concerns over the lack of entitlement in the current GYH(T) regulations for Service personnel wishing to travel to see children from a former relationship.

Let me emphasise that this allowance is designed to reduce the impact of separation from the Service person's

home; it does not directly contribute toward the costs of maintaining contact with family members.

To qualify for GYH(T) – which is automatically paid out at daily rates – the address to which the individual is travelling must be the main residence where they would live, but for the exigencies of the Service, and meet the directed criteria laid out for a privately-maintained property.

The hard fact is that there is no entitlement to any allowance which covers the personal circumstances you describe. The current regulations are contained in Joint Service Publication 752, chapter 5.



Royal ripple: *The King's Speech*, starring Oscar-winning Colin Firth as George VI, has brought British history into the consciousness of young cinema-goers

Cameron should compound Colin's success

DEAR Prime Minister, I have a suggestion which I hope you will take most seriously.

In a few years time the Second World War generation, which gave us such remarkable service, remained resolute even on the darkest of days and selflessly sacrificed so much, will be gone.

We will no longer have the opportunity to hear first-hand their tales of derring-do, to honour them and show how grateful we are for their bravery and personal sacrifice.

Mr Cameron, it is our duty, no less, to ensure that our children – and their children – understand the extreme privation and

indomitability required of this generation which, with inspired leadership and against such odds, secured the freedom of future Britons. We must remember them.

Quite apart from the fact that time is running out, this would be an apposite moment to bring the superlative endeavours of these men and women into sharp focus.

Millions of young people have seen *The King's Speech* [pictured above] and are now aware, to an extent, of the grave nature of what was about to consume our small island for the next six years.

Mr Cameron, in order to compound

this effect, please seriously consider striking a special medal or announcing an event or public holiday – or all three – to commemorate and honour surviving veterans of the Second World War.

This course of action, in addition to the admirable work done by other organisations, will complement Armistice Day, which of course remembers members of the Armed Forces who died during and since both world wars.

Your government has a reputation for radical thinking. Here, sir, is another opportunity. We must remember them. – Neil Cappendale, Shoreham-by-Sea.

FALLEN HERO

In *Soldier's* salute to those who fell during the Gulf War, "Bigger picture" (March), we omitted the surname of a Royal Military Policeman. Apologies to all those who knew and served alongside SSgt David Clifford Tite (158 Pro Coy, RMP). – The editor.

COST-CUTTING CARDS

AS the managing director of the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), I welcome feedback from those who have used our resettlement services and would like to provide some information in response to the view given by a former soldier in January's *Talkback*.

The website criticised, RightJob, is a free tool

for both Service leavers seeking employment and those who use it to post job vacancies.

I can assure *Soldier* readers that CTP works with employers from a wide range of industry sectors in order to source suitable opportunities for personnel leaving the military.

In addition to these organisations, we do permit recruiters to register and they are vetted and monitored to ensure the jobs they offer meet the needs of those leaving the Forces.

All services provided are at no cost, with no revenue generated from any agency, employer or individual through advertising or placement.

CTP staff continue to raise awareness of the talent pool leaving the military and to demonstrate the value that their knowledge, attitude and experience bring to potential employers. – David Duffy, managing director, Career Transition Partnership.

TALKBACK TITTLE TATTLE

THANK you beret-less Military Support Function civil servant, "Knickers on flagpoles and horses in the mess..." (*Talkback*, March), for taking the time to read and comment on the letter I had published in January's issue.

However, if you're going to make remarks in response to correspondence in *Soldier*, can I ask that you ensure you actually reflect what has been written.

Anyway, what is a civil servant doing looking at the magazine of the British Army? Shouldn't you be reading *Paperclips* [now *Defence People*] instead? – SSgt K Barnett, RTMC.



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Are my lottery playing days numbered?

As a serving soldier who has been based in Germany since 1998, I have a question about the rules surrounding the UK National Lottery.

I have been buying tickets for as long as I can remember and only recently learned that, if my numbers come up, I may not receive the prize money due to a change in gambling laws.

Is it true that Camelot, who seem happy to take my cash, may not pay out if I was fortunate enough to win a big amount?

Am I wasting my money or is there a way of still playing when serving overseas? – Sgt J Sanders, 3 RHA, BFPO 30.

British Forces Germany responds:

Residents will be aware that unless they can prove they have a UK address, they cannot play the UK National Lottery while serving overseas.

In addition, they are advised that any ticket purchased online while in Germany may be deemed invalid due to German gambling laws and may result in the non-payment of winnings.

The Glücksspielstaatsvertrag [gambling treaty] has prohibited online gambling in Lower Saxony in North Rhine Westphalia since the end of 2007.

This means that the authorities could legitimately stop the payment of

winnings. The regulations apply to all serving personnel, their dependants and crown servants and their dependants while they are stationed in Germany.

Anyone buying lottery tickets should check the terms and conditions regarding residency and payment of winnings very carefully to avoid any disappointment.

National Lottery Commission replies:

If you play online or in person while stationed overseas be aware you may not be fulfilling all of the National Lottery Commission conditions, which are: you must be over 16 years of age; have a UK bank account; be resident in the UK or the Isle of Man.

If you do not meet all of the stipulations laid down by the National Lottery rules you may be in for a disappointment if your lucky numbers come up.



The main proviso is that of residency which you will be required to prove should you win. Your overseas BFPO address

does not meet these conditions and your claim will not be valid.

Online registrations set up before leaving the UK, to a UK email account, are not valid once you leave for a BFPO address.

The MoD is currently tackling this issue; however, until this is resolved make sure you can demonstrate residency in the UK or Isle of Man if you do intend to play.

Camelot writes:

Armed Forces personnel serving abroad can still play the National Lottery with friends and colleagues by forming a syndicate with a syndicate manager who is based in the UK.

Camelot provides a tool for anyone wishing to set up a syndicate, which can be found at <http://www.national-lottery.co.uk/player/p/help/syndicates.ftl>

PLACES OF HONOUR

IT was uplifting to see Dagenham commemorating Pte Tony Rawson (1 R Anglian) by naming a street in his honour, "Sign of respect" (*Informer*, March).

There were once many historic examples of this previously well-established custom, most commonly in remembrance of local men who fell during the two world wars.

Unfortunately, their numbers have been reduced by old streets being demolished or by newly-elected councils substituting the names for those of individuals more favoured in modern popular politics.

With the centenary of the Great War and the 75th anniversary of the Second World War both falling in 2014, it would be pleasing if it proved possible to restore some of these addresses.

Equally, it would be encouraging if a wider initiative was adopted that saw new streets named in commemoration of local regiments – Regular and Territorial – and the contributions made by Commonwealth and colonial troops recognised.

Having endured so many disbandments



and amalgamations, which can sometimes create an impression that the "old" regiments simply never existed, it would serve as a permanent reminder to the people of Great Britain of the military's enormous and impressive heritage. – Name and address supplied.

COST-CUTTING CARDS

ALL military personnel and units are facing cutbacks and money-saving measures, but the MoD are still wasting much-needed cash on the simplest of things.

For example, why do we have rank printed on identification cards? I imagine there are at least 100 Servicemen and women a month having to get new versions produced as a result of being promoted.

When you consider the cost involved, such as material and man-hours, it really does verge on the ridiculous. Why can't we do away with this detail on the card? Our ranks are visible on our uniform.

Computers were introduced into the Armed Forces to alleviate paperwork,

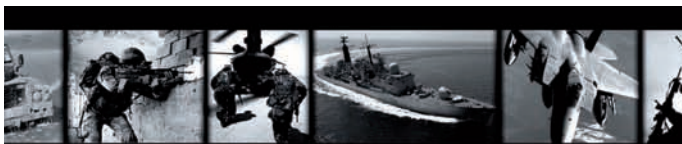


"New cost-cutting initiative I'm afraid, Harry... automatic fire is forbidden on even dates."

however, they have become a good excuse for creating forms. I now fill out more paperwork than I ever did back in the 1980s, so in addition to the expense of paper we now have extra expenditure on electricity.

Another example is the use of civilian contractors to repair and modify Service vehicles. Our own specialists in the REME must be hugely frustrated and, when it comes to pay, I think I know which would be the cheaper option.

If the Army needs to save money it should be looking at the smaller things that take place on a daily basis. – Name and address supplied.



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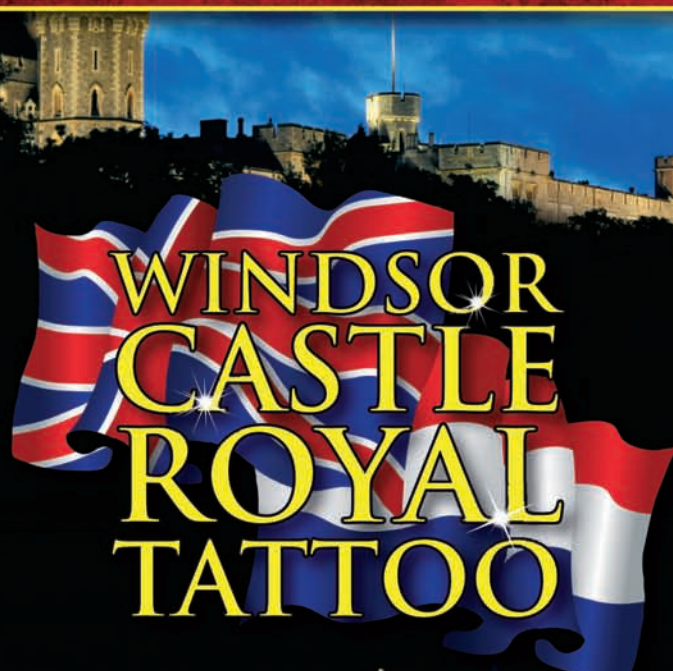


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"That's it... one of us has to go."

■ I AM writing this letter in disgust having just watched an interview with a soldier getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan on the BBC news.

The Serviceman in question had a large tattoo on his neck which was very clearly above the collar line. This is something that I am seeing more and more often although, luckily for the individuals concerned, not in my chain of command.

Why are these soldiers getting away with this clear breach of the Queen's Regulations? I remember visiting an Armed Forces Careers Office as a recruiter a few years ago and seeing a job seeker being turned away because he had tattooed hands and neck.

Why the change in policy? – Name and address supplied.

Steaming over ironing on ops

I AM just about to return to Afghanistan and was horrified to hear that the ironing of uniforms has become policy for British troops in Camp Bastion.

This rule has clearly been thought up by somebody sat bored behind a desk.

While I'm sure the decision will please those who stand around looking to pick people up on the standard of their dress, it comes at a financial cost.

Based on an approximate figure of 6,000 UK Service personnel at Bastion and taking into account usage of irons, the price of non-duty diesel and generator efficiency, the annual expenditure equates to a minimum of £37,000.

This sum does not include the expense of supplying irons to theatre, the logistical costs of providing the extra diesel or generator maintenance bills.

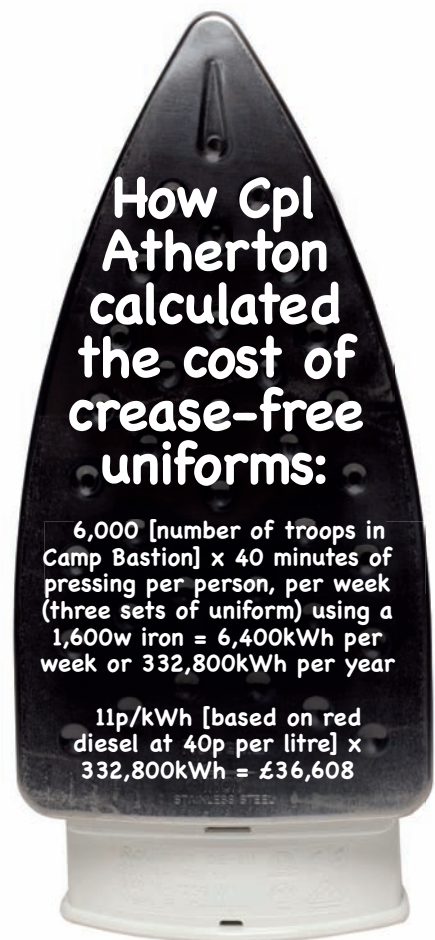
I'm sure this money could be far better spent, especially in this financial climate, and preferably on something more worthwhile which adds to morale rather than depletes it.

We are at war after all and should be focusing on our jobs, not unnecessary policies. – Cpl Atherton.

How Cpl Atherton calculated the cost of crease-free uniforms:

6,000 [number of troops in Camp Bastion] x 40 minutes of pressing per person, per week (three sets of uniform) using a 1,600w iron = 6,400kWh per week or 332,800kWh per year

11p/kWh [based on red diesel at 40p per litre] x 332,800kWh = £36,608



Cheaper travel costs for soldiers? Hogg off!

WHY is it that I was able to source a return train ticket to London for £38 online but the fare eventually paid by my unit travel cell was £46?

Equally, why did the same system book accommodation for equipment trials in America at \$105 per room, per night when a civilian colleague – who was able to talk to the hotel directly – managed to negotiate a \$30 daily discount and upgrades for his entire party?

And why was a Service friend in Germany denied a return flight and booked onto a train journey that was more than twice the cost of the quickest and most convenient route?

I have asked those in my unit the previous questions and the only answer I seem to get is "because we have to use the Hogg Robinson Group".

Why do we, as an organisation, insist on using external agencies?

We presumably pay for this service, yet I see little evidence that they provide us with the most cost-effective option. – W02 J Seaton, Joint EOD & Search.

Sqn Ldr Daniela Nowalski, Jt Sp Chain, responds: The use of a management company, in this instance the Hogg Robinson Group, allows the MoD to maximise its corporate leverage in the market and has allowed Defence Travel

(DT) to negotiate significant savings.

For example, through the air programme, travellers can take advantage of 200 reduced-rate routes, with an average 35 per cent discount on long-haul economy-class travel.

The British Airways element of this initiative has realised savings of £4 million since its launch.

In addition, favourable hotel rates and guaranteed room availability are in place, as well as soft benefits including increased baggage allowances and flexible booking terms and conditions that greatly enhance the service provided to MoD personnel.

Utilisation of a central booking arrangement through a travel management company ensures that passengers' personal details are properly protected, preventing the information being shared with less-reputable third parties.

We also know where any MoD traveller is in the world at any time should the worst happen.

Channelling all our travel expenditure through a single organisation allows us to keep track of how much we are spending and to drive passenger behaviour in a sustainable direction.

The withdrawal of rail warrants and use of restricted train tickets has saved

the MoD £2.4 million in the last year and mandatory DT has saved the department nearly £100 million since its inception in December 2007.

It is very difficult to comment on W02 Seaton's specific examples without knowing more detail.

However, DT does not formally encompass European rail and travel cells are free to book as they see fit but should always bear in mind Deutsche Bahn offers a MoD discount.

For all other travel modes (UK rail, worldwide flights, car hire and hotel accommodation), there is a clear and robust exemption process that affords bookers the opportunity to challenge DT and allows them to "shop" outside when a cheaper fare exists.

We will not force a department to pay more if they can prove that a less expensive option is available (although be sure you are comparing like-for-like products and always check the terms and conditions of the booking).

The DT pages of the Defence Intranet contain all the information W02 Seaton would require to contact the team and we would be happy to investigate further the discrepancies he highlights.

DT staff welcome any feedback and are constantly looking at ways to improve the service provided.



DIRECTORY

Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01264 382324; [www.mil943912324.com](http://mil943912324.com)

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstons.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)



DIARY

April 15: **ABF, The Soldiers' Charity** are holding a counter-IED talk at ATFC Winchester's chapel. 1800 for 1845 start with drinks and canapes. Tickets £15 each – send a cheque payable to ABF to Maj M Webster, Coopers Farm, Hartley Wespall, Hook RG27 0BQ.

April 22-29: **Gooseberries and Gas Masks at the Ready.** Exhibition of Britain at war at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambridge CB22 4QR. Visit www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

April 23: A **St George's Day** charity event is being held at Banbury Labour Club to raise funds for SSAFA Forces Help. Live bands and motown, soul, reggae and British beat music from 2000 to 0100. £5 donation on door. Email fisherend@aol.com for details.

April 24-25: **Medway Festival of Steam and Transport** at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent. Visit www.thedockyard.co.uk/steamandtransport

April 26: **Concert at The Guards Chapel**, Birdcage Walk, London SW1E 6HQ. 1310. Free admission. Call 0207 414 3299.

May 1 onwards: **Exhibition of War Correspondents – Reporting under fire since 1914.** Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line of operations to us at



home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

May 1 onwards: **Classic War Stories for Children.** *Once upon a wartime* delves into the pages of well-loved books, bringing five stories of war dramatically to life. Adults and children can wander through life-size sets, peer into intricate scale models and explore the tales' themes of loyalty, separation, excitement, survival and identity. Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk

May 12-15: **Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo.** Held in the grounds of Windsor Castle during the evening. The Royal Windsor Horse Show takes place at the same venue during the day. Tickets available from the box office on 0871 230 5570 or booked online at www.windsortattoo.com

May 25-29: **Forces March 2011.** One of the UK's top challenge events. Participants attempt to complete five marathons in five days. Entries from military personnel, ex-Forces and emergency services welcome. Minimum of four people in each team. Visit www.forcesmarch.org.uk for further information and an application form.

May 28: **Blues Brothers Tribute Band.** In aid of Help for Heroes. Performing live at Hatherley Manor Hotel, Gloucester GL2 9AQ. Tickets cost £30, include a three-course meal and are available online at www.peruforh4h.co.uk or by phoning 01452 260063.

June 8: **War Widows' Association, Service of Commemoration** at the Guards Chapel, London at 1130 followed by a reception at the Central Methodist Hall, Westminster. Contact Mrs R Campbell, 7 Pentreath Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7TA or call 01483 852056.



SEARCHLINE

Where are you **chef John Clark (aka Clarky)?** Last known whereabouts was 16 Regiment, Woolwich in 1999/2000. Wendy Hennell is trying to find you. Email wendy.hennell@hotmail.co.uk

Leonie Hawking from Australia is trying to locate a lost pen friend, **Hilary Pickering, wife of military policeman Elwyn Pickering.** The family was stationed in Germany in 1992/1993. Leonie visited the Pickerings in the south of England in 2002. Email leoniehawking@hotmail.com

Ex-Rhodesian Army engineer (Patrick McCosh) is trying to find former colleague **Michael Peters** who joined the British Army in 1980 when he left Zimbabwe. Michael was a sergeant in 1993. His parents were Ron and Margaret Peters. Contact Patrick by email at patrick@west.co.zw

Ryan Gearing is producing an anthology of poetry – *Enduring Freedom* – written by men and women of all three Services, and of verses that have inspired them as they carry out their dangerous duties. For each copy sold a donation will go to the charity Combat Stress. Poems should be sent to



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner (Flaps, Buzzie, Dizzy and Ziggy are the vultures from Disney's The Jungle Book): Pte D Condliffe, Chicksands.

Cyrus winners: M Bellringer, Abingdon; Sgt K Chapman, GSUOTC, Glasgow; Angela Neilson, 145 (S) Bde; Michelle Dryden, G4 Food Svcs

& DAS Budman, BFPO 140; WO2 A Samuel, AFCEO Cardiff.

I'm Still Here winners: Cpl A Duncan, 2 LSR, BFPO 47; Maggie Humble, QM's, 2 RRF, BFPO 23; Janet Taylor, Waterbeach; Tracey Gellatly, Blairgowrie; SSgt G Cron, ATDU, Bovington.

The Complete Encyclopedia of Formula One winners: Liz Pullman, Fulwood, Preston; Sgt E Davies, FAACO, Creddin Hill; G Westlake, Media & Comms BFG, BFPO 140.

Ryan Gearing, Tommies Guides, Menin House, 13 Hunloke Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 8UL or to sales@tommiesguides.co.uk

104 FS Battalion REME requires Territorial Army volunteers for Op Herrick 16. The deployment will cover a 12-month mobilisation period with tour dates between April and October 2012. Anyone interested should contact the ROSO, 104 FS Bn REME via their company PSAO. The selection weekends will take place on **May 20-22, July 1-3 and September 9-11, 2011.**

Rhoda Kirkpatrick is seeking information about her cousin, **23917491 LBdr David Edward Tilbury**, who was killed in action on October 27, 1971 in a bomb attack on an Army observation post at Rosemount RUC in Northern Ireland. If you have any information, contact Mrs Kirkpatrick by email at kirkysgirl@yahoo.com

Simon Thomas has recovered a Territorial Army efficiency medal while metal detecting. The decoration was awarded to **622413 Sjt M James RHA** and was found in Bridgend, Wales. The soldier is believed to have lived in the Neath area. Owner or family of Sjt James should email thomas.s31@sky.com

David Stewart is trying to trace fellow comrades of his late father, **22722258 Cpl Robert Muirhead Wilson (RAOC)**, from his National Service days. Cpl Muirhead served from October 2, 1952 until October 24, 1954. He served in Tripoli from January 1953 to September 1954. Contact David at 9/12 Smithfield Street, Edinburgh EH11 2PG or phone 0131 477 6387.

Former MoD civilian Udham Dillon is trying to locate **Lt Col A Pratt (RA)** who was serving in Hong Kong in 1982/83 as Chief G4 Qtg. Udham was an executive officer and retired in July 1983 and emigrated to Canada. Contact him by email at jeobala@rogers.com or write to 311 Dixon Road, Apt 809, Etobicoke, Toronto M9R 1S3, Ontario, Canada.



REUNIONS

77th Artillery Clerks: Reunion and dinner at Larkhill, Salisbury on May 6-8. Details from reunion secretary Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regt RA, Bhurtpore Barracks, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7AS or by phone 01980 656550 or email ian.constantine758@mod.uk

Combined Cavalry Old Comrades: All serving and retired members of the Cavalry and Yeomanry are invited to attend the annual parade and service in Hyde Park on May 8. Those attending are asked to form up with their regiments on The Broadwalk by 1045. A limited number of wheelchairs are available. Contact Maj Stretton on 01753 755132.

Trucial Oman Scouts Association: 60th anniversary of the formation of the force. Reunion in the India and Pakistan Hall, Royal Overseas League on May 14. Veterans of all ranks are welcome. Further details from Terry Ward by email at tjward@jackanapes.co.uk

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Association: Annual reunion will be held at Worcester Rugby Club on June 4 from 1200-1800. Past and present members of the regiment and their families are welcome. Contact Maj (Retd) M Green, RHQ Mercian (Nottingham Outstation), Foresters House, Chetwynd Barracks, Chilwell, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 5HA or call 0115 9465415.

Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth & Camerons): 50th anniversary gathering, Inverness on June 11-12. Visit www.cabarfeidh.com or call 01463 732343.

Gordon Highlanders: Waterloo lunch at the London Scottish Headquarters, London SW1 on June 18. Ladies welcome. Further details from Bob Harman on 0208 642 7192 or honorary secretary John Spooore on 01634 231070 or

email jspooorewigmores@tinyonline.co.uk

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters: Pre-Crith supper will take place at Foresters House, Chilwell on July 2. Admission by ticket only, priced £12.50. Contact 0115 9465415.

The Mercian Regiment: Annual pilgrimage to the Regimental War Memorial at Crich on July 3. Service starts at 1500. All those wishing to attend should be at the Memorial Grounds no later than 1400. Information from Maj (Retd) M Green, RHQ Mercian (Nottingham Outstation), Foresters House, Chetwynd Barracks, Chilwell, Nottingham NG9 5HA.

Operation Lecturer-Cambodia: Reunion at RM Barracks, Stone House, Plymouth on July 22. Any personnel who served in Cambodia 1991/1992 as part of the UNAMIC/UNTAC mission and are interested in meeting, email Tony Jacka at anthony.jacka219@mod.uk

Calday Grange CCF: 60th anniversary on October 1, with a parade and black-tie dinner. Information from Maj Adcock at ccf@calday.wirral.sch.uk



ROADSHOWS

The Army Presentation 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 drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

May: 17, Harrow; 18, Hounslow.

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JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of Gen Sir Peter Wall, the Chief of the General Staff, during a parade at Horse Guards, London. Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 833, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot,

Hampshire GU11 2DU by April 29.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be

announced in the June issue.

February competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Spr Inglis**, 61 Fld Sqn, 33 EOD. Runners-up **Tpr Griffith**, D Sqn, HCR and **Cpl B Powell**, RAF Odiham, each win a £25 gift voucher.



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www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the British Army.

www.facebook.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Facebook fan page.

www.twitter.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Twitter channel for the distribution of news and information.

www.youtube.com/britisharmy

The Army's official video channel with lots of clips ranging from training to equipment.

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Picture: Steve Dock

Role reversal?: Redundancy may result in a return to work for those Army partners who have found it difficult to hold down a full-time job and follow the flag

Wives also wary of move to civvy street

DESPITE still having troops in Afghanistan and serious unrest across the Middle East, April is set to see further details of the first phase of Army redundancies announced.

And, if recent press reports are to be believed, there could be considerably more cuts looming in addition to the 7,000 already announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

For married soldiers there are a number of factors to take into consideration and certainly for us, as a family, any decision to apply for redundancy and/or leave the Army would be taken together.

I've written before about the impact of Forces life on the employment and career prospects of spouses. Despite having much to offer, it is particularly difficult in these tough economic times.

Good resettlement advice and training will be key for troops transitioning out of the Army, but I would also like to see more being done for the "significant others" who have stalwartly supported their soldiers through thick and thin.

Why can't the MoD, at the very least, transfer unused resettlement credits from personnel to their partners at their request?

The department acknowledges the importance of families during a soldier's career and rightly provides appropriate support and allowances to underpin accompanied service – although some may dispute this given the recent assault on allowances and the continued deterioration of the Defence estate.

But little thought is given to wives and husbands when it comes to their partner hanging up their uniform.

Ministers have also spoken recently about the importance of support during the move into civilian life.

When will they realise that it's not just the soldier transitioning, but the family too?

If that whole set of people is given the tools to succeed on the other side then there will surely be a much better outcome for those who may have experienced difficulties in the past.

As well as employment, the other big impact on families will be the loss of entitlement to housing.

For those who are prepared and have their own home, the blow will be slightly

less, but anyone assuming they will have access to social housing "back home" may be in for a shock.

Local authorities are under extreme pressure and while a redundancy payout will go some way to buying a property in most parts of the country, in other areas, which are seemingly immune to recession, it may only make a small dent in the required capital.

Some will welcome the chance for a new career while others will be understandably more nervous about the future.

What has struck me in recent weeks is the number of people

not only checking the online redundancy calculator to see what they're worth, but seriously considering applying.

Maybe that's the consequence of the slow erosion of the conditions of service – by reducing the offer, the grass seems much greener on the other side and it's not such a scary step to contemplate. ■

● **Armed Forces personnel urged to check redundancy calculations following system error – page 17**

‘When will they realise that it's not just the soldier transitioning, but the family too?’

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APRIL'S EASTER ENTICERS

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P88 GEAR **BEAUTIFUL BONNET**



Calling the shots: *Route Irish*, the latest offering from television and film director Ken Loach (left), is in select cinemas now

Blinkered view of Brits

Director fails to make distinction between actions of hired guns and serving soldiers

Review: Maj Toby Hamnett, AGC

IT IS rare to get the chance to watch a film in which the Army is depicted and have the opportunity afterwards to ask the director and producer why they chose to portray British soldiers in the way that they did.

However, those were the circumstances that presented themselves when I attended the Glasgow Film Festival, which screened Ken Loach's new political thriller *Route Irish* and hosted a question and answer session with the movie's makers.

The feature tells the story of an ex-Special Forces soldier, Fergus (Mark Womack), who has swapped his military uniform for a career with a private security contractor operating in Baghdad's Green Zone. While back in the UK, his closest friend and colleague Frankie (John Bishop) is killed in an attack on *Route Irish*, the road which links the Iraqi capital's diplomatic and administrative stronghold with the city's airport.

What follows is the story of Fergus' endeavours to find out exactly what happened to a man he always regarded as naturally lucky. His

investigation leads through the hierarchy of his employers and to a conspiracy to cover up an incident in which a contractor opened fire and killed a family in a taxi and two boys playing on the street.

As more and more clues are uncovered it becomes clear that the people involved with the security firm are content to kill to preserve their commercial and personal interests.

Awaiting a court appearance in the wake of assault charges, Fergus is forced to remain in Liverpool and becomes closely involved with Frankie's wife Rachel (Andrea Lowe) as they both come to terms with the loss of the person who was the mainstay of their lives. Consequently, the widow is unwittingly drawn into the conspiracy.

In keeping with the plot, the film maintains a high level of tension throughout its 110-minute running time and is well worth going to see.

Route Irish is not, and was never intended to be, uplifting. The theme of corporate greed driving actions which disregard people's lives, both physically and psychologically, shouts loud and clear from the start. It is of note that the first adviser listed in the credits is Service charity Combat Stress.

However, what I found disappointing was that

there was no distinction between coalition forces' activities and those of the private contractors.

Flashbacks to US Army arrest operations, in which Fergus had assisted and ultimately led to his leaving the Army, depict an overly-aggressive, disrespectful and uncaring attitude to the local population. This is reinforced by the inclusion of real footage in a montage of allegations of brutality by allied troops.

Following on the heels of his sympathetic look at Republicans in early 20th century Ireland (*The Wind That Shakes the Barley*), it is no surprise that Loach feels able to link barbarity to the activities of the British Army. Sadly, he once again seems to have emphasised the actions of the few to represent the whole.

It became clear in the subsequent Q&A session that the director and his producer, Rebecca O'Brien, had decided that our soldiers, their American counterparts and the private security contractors were all part of the same corporate conspiracy to profit from the conflict.

My suggestion that the British military may have achieved some good was met with a blank look. The uncomfortable stories that Loach has heard would appear to represent his sole view of the operational campaign in Iraq. ■

From mental trauma to creatures on the loose in America, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Savage out now

SET in Dublin, this film charts a man's downward spiral following an extremely-violent and unprovoked assault. The viewer is taken through the full range of emotions experienced by Paul as he struggles to come to terms with his ordeal.

In attempting to rebuild his life, he becomes addicted to steroids and alienates those who care about him. *Savage* starts slowly but is worth persevering with. There are some humorous moments but the dark undertone is always present and there are a few genuinely stomach-turning moments as Paul succumbs to the rage that he is attempting to keep bottled inside.

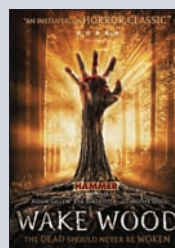
Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps



Wake Wood out now

A SUPERNATURAL story full of pagan rituals, mythology and the occult, *Wake Wood* charts the fate of a happy family following their move to a remote village. Tragedy hits soon after their arrival when their seven-year-old daughter is attacked and killed by a vicious dog. With spikes of the *Wicker Man*, it quickly becomes clear that the bereaved couple's new neighbours are hiding a secret from them and that there is a lot more to the film's eponymous woodlands than originally meets the eye. If you like your horror flicks to be of the *Carrie* variety then you are in for a treat with this "waking the dead" offering.

Paul Hill, ex-RLC



Legacy: Black Ops out now

DESPITE the name, this is certainly not an action film in any shape or form. The movie centres around an elite US special ops squad, codenamed Darkhammer, which is betrayed by a senator and subsequently captured by a European warlord. The unit's team leader happens to be the rogue politician's brother and, after witnessing the execution of his colleagues, embarks on a psychological breakdown in his room while plotting revenge. The film jumps between fantasy and flashback to completely confuse the viewer. It requires an amazing amount of attention and concentration just to follow the plot.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE





Not so funny: Comedian John Bishop plays it straight as a private security contractor working in Iraq's capital in Ken Loach's latest picture, *Route Irish*

Locked Down out now

AN UNDERCOVER cop named Danny is set up after an investigation goes wrong and sent to the jail where a prisoner he put away is in charge. His nemesis uses extreme cage fights to ensure he gets what he wants. It is soon apparent that the only way to survive is to rumble and, with help from an old martial arts expert, the lawman does just that. Starring **Vinnie Jones** and **Tony Schiena**, of *CSI* fame, as well as a selection of Mixed Martial Arts fighters such as **Kevin "Kimbo Slice" Ferguson**, *Locked Down* is a fast-paced, hard-action fight movie that offers thrills and excitement as well as a decent storyline.



Daniel Crowder, Greater Manchester ACF

Monsters out April 11

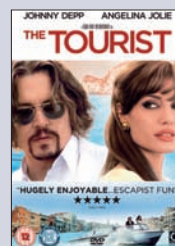
A RETURNING space probe has infected Central and North America. Half the population is quarantined, the sky is thick with Black Hawks and a huge wall separates the US from the "infected zone". Enormous creatures roam the area wreaking devastation but the opening monochrome scene doesn't hint at what's in store. The special effects are top-notch and your imagination is still allowed to run amok. Genuinely surreal moments are further slanted by oblique camera work. It transpires the containment measures cannot stop the contagion as our heroes cross the zone on their way back to normality – if only they knew.



Capt Neil Johnson, AAC

Win... The Tourist

A CRIMINAL mastermind has embezzled a fortune from a brutal oligarch and vanished without a trace. His estranged girlfriend, Elise Clifton-Ward (**Angelina Jolie**), becomes the target of a vicious posse of Russian hit men and Scotland Yard. Frank Tulpelo (**Johnny Depp**) is a run-of-the-mill American tourist who becomes seduced by Elise and is thrust into her deadly world. Optimum Home Entertainment is offering five readers a chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us the name of Johnny Depp's character. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: April 29



Friendly fire: *Operation Flashpoint: Red River* encourages players to plan ahead and work as part of a close-knit team

Welcome to reality

Codemasters target authentic approach to modern combat in Tajikistan shooter

Review: Richard Long

WHEN it comes to first-person shooters, the market is littered with all-action titles that are guaranteed to deliver explosions aplenty and high-octane adventure.

The *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* series tick all the boxes for those seeking fast-paced combat and arms-heavy conflict, but while they provide undoubted fun, the realism is sometimes lacking.

Developers Codemasters hope to address this void in *Operation Flashpoint: Red River*.

Set in Tajikistan just two years from the present day, the game sees players embroiled in a co-op platform that focuses on fighting between US Marines as they try to suppress insurgent forces and the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Operating in a four-man squad, you have the choice of working under the guise of a rifleman, grenadier, scout or auto-rifleman.

All roles have specific strengths and weaknesses and your character can be intricately customised to suit your style of play.

While *Call of Duty* may adopt an all-guns-blazing approach, a greater degree of tactical

thinking and strategy is required here, much akin to the real world.

Whether it is defending a fixed position from advancing enemies or escorting a vehicle convoy through insurgent-riddled valleys, the choices you make determine the success of the mission.

And authenticity is a key feature of the title, as creative director Sion Lenton was quick to point out at *Red River's* official launch.

"This is not all about weapons," he explained. "It is about the type of combat you engage in. You are operating in open ground and are free to make your own mistakes."

"For example, you can look down on a village and it is entirely up to you how you launch an attack. We are steering away from the Hollywood depiction of war and going down a more documentary route."

"You will find yourself doing combat sweeps, rescuing pilots and infiltrating urban areas."

"We want players to plan and give orders, working on a tactical approach to the game."

To add to the realism, Codemasters sent a photographer to central Asia to accurately capture the subject country's landscape and ensure it is mirrored on the small screen.

"Tajikistan is a beautiful place and really lends

itself to the game," Lenton added. "It looks very similar to the footage from Afghanistan."

"As you move through the missions you can see changes in the architecture, landscape and buildings. It was very important for us to replicate the feel of the country."

This effort has yielded spectacular results and there is an almost limitless expanse in which you can plan and carry out your objectives.

The gameplay is easy enough to master and throughout the campaign mode you acquire points that can be spent on improving core skills such as sprinting and reload times.

The co-op approach is very much at the forefront of the action. While reckless and gung-ho heroes achieve success in other titles, teamwork is the key mantra of *Red River* and the only way to meet your objectives is to operate as part of a tight unit.

On the whole, Codemasters have delivered a game that escapes the far-from-believable elements of other platforms and one that hits the target for those seeking more realism and authenticity in their shooters. ■

● *Operation Flashpoint: Red River* is released on all formats on April 21.

From the seedy underworld of Tokyo's Sin City to a rampant Korean horde, we check out the new releases...

Yakuza 4 for PS3

A MIXTURE of violence, gambling and extortion, as well as adult entertainment, *Yakuza 4* is set in a fully-realistic recreation of Tokyo's Sin City district. This single-person role-player unfolds through the eyes of four dangerous characters.

Similar to the *Grand Theft Auto* series, where each action impacts on the story later on, these figures take on different missions allowing the player to interact from their unique viewpoint and experience every area of the underground world. The graphics are beyond belief, as are the detailed plot and gameplay, and I recommend this to anyone who enjoys the intricacies of such titles.

Daniel Crowder, Greater Manchester ACF



Bulletstorm for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC

IN this first-person shooter you are the leader of a band of mercenaries fighting different factions on a strange world. But what sets this apart from similar titles is that it doesn't take itself seriously. From the dialogue between characters and the one-line puns to the scoring method, everything is designed to make you laugh. Racking up points from kills allows you to purchase ammo and weapon upgrades and there are hundreds of high-scoring skill shots that you'll find yourself attempting to achieve. While certainly no *Modern Warfare*, this game should definitely be in every shooter fan's collection.

Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps



Homefront for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC

IN every respect this game is stunning. *Homefront* is set in the near future where a unified Korea has expanded beyond its borders and seized territories including the United States of America. You play a resistance fighter waging a guerrilla war against a terrifying and ruthless foe in the abandoned suburbs. The gameplay is solid and you face a cunning enemy that uses cover and flanking manoeuvres. The plot is superb, with the potential for several sequels, and the visuals in each chapter are to die for. The only criticism is that it's too short. This is brilliant and the multiplayer mode will keep you occupied for months.

Lt Neil Dickie, 105 Regt RA (V)





Changing landscape: Developers Codemasters sent a photographer to Tajikistan to ensure *Red River* accurately reflects the country's stunning scenery

Dead Space 2 for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC

THE action in *Dead Space 2* resumes three years after engineer Isaac Clarke is sent to repair Ishimura's communications. After escaping from a medical facility, our hero faces a vast array of enemies as he seeks to destroy the Marker. There are plenty of sci-fi weapons to ensure the battle is pretty equal and the game keeps you guessing with a host of puzzles to get through. It also leaves you on edge, as you never know when the next attack will come, and it has an 18 certificate for good reason – it is very gory and bloody. The controls are awkward, but don't let this put you off. This is a good game with a great look and storyline.



Pte Robert Owens, 168 Pioneer Regt RLC

Dragon Age II for all formats

THE previous *Dragon Age* title proved to be extremely popular on the PC, but the console version was plagued by a cumbersome dialogue and combat set-up. Thankfully, BioWare have upped their game by improving almost every aspect for the sequel, ensuring action sequences are more fluid and natural. This time round you control Hawke, a survivor of the blight who slowly rises to power through a great deal of sword-swinging and a multitude of blood-filled encounters. If you're sick of being herded around like a goat in other games, *Dragon Age II* may just be what you're looking for.



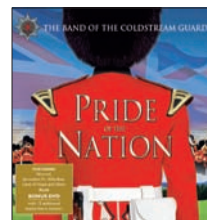
David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen

Lego Star Wars III for all formats

WHEN one of the greatest toys of all time clashes with the most successful franchise in movie history, you're guaranteed a sure-fire hit. While *Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars* will raise a few disconcerting eyebrows among serious members of the gaming fraternity, its wider audience will revel in the undoubted fun on offer. Players can explore new levels based on the popular television spin-off and are able to build and defend their armies in some of the biggest battles in the series so far. The gameplay is easy to master and there are plenty of laughs in what proves to be a less than serious transition to the console galaxy.



Richard Long, Soldier



Hitting the right note: The Regimental Band of The Coldstream Guards are hoping for further success with their second record

National treasures

World-famous musical Guards celebrate the best of British on patriotic new album

Interview: Richard Long

HAVING seen their debut release hit the top of the charts and earn rave reviews in classical circles, The Regimental Band of The Coldstream Guards have a hard act to follow on their second album.

But instead of striving for new ways to achieve success, the world-famous outfit have stood firmly by their winning formula to produce a collection of stirring music that celebrates everything which is great about being British.

Pride of The Nation features inspirational pieces such as *I Vow To Thee My Country* and *Jerusalem* and includes well-known tunes from all spheres of popular culture.

A merging of rousing anthems from Rugby Union's Six Nations Championship reflects the world of sport, while British film is captured courtesy of the score from *Chariots of Fire* and other epic movies.

There is also a tribute to the familiar sounds from some of the country's most popular and well-loved radio shows, such as *The Archers* and *Desert Island Discs*.

Director of music Lt Col Graham Jones hopes the record will build on the foundations of the band's first offering, *Heroes*, and believes the collection will strike a real chord with the public.

"This release comes on the back of the huge success of the first album," he told *Soldier*. "We were the first military band to have a gold disc and we were number one in the classical charts over Christmas."

"Once we had finished *Heroes* it was a case of 'how do we follow that?'"

"I have always wanted to do an album that related to the theme of national pride. All the tunes on this record will be familiar to the listener and will hopefully stir feelings of patriotism."

"We are taking military music to a far wider audience so people in the UK, and beyond, can listen to what we do."

The Guards signed a £1 million contract with Universal Music in 2009 and were swiftly added to the company's Decca label, which specialises in classical music.

A strong working relationship has quickly formed between both parties and Lt Col Jones was quick to praise the support being offered.

"For a military band to record an album it has to have great tunes on it," he explained. "Decca

are really good at talking to artists and setting out the right music."

"They have the ability to spend a lot of money on the production stage and that helps to make a high-quality record."

"When people listen to the theme from *The Archers* it sounds just like what they would hear on the radio."

With the band enjoying commercial success, the senior officer was quick to stress that members remain soldiers first, which means ceremonial and public duties take centre stage over any promotional work attached to the album.

However, he is determined to see the record excel and is already pondering a third release.

"I do not want to be overly confident but I am so pleased with the album and the quality of its production," Lt Col Jones added.

"Let's hope we can get this recording out to as many people as possible."

"I've always looked at this process as one step at a time. Hopefully there will be a third record a year or so down the line."

"That is something for us to discuss, but I would like to think it will happen." ■

● *Pride of The Nation* is released on April 4.

From a drowning pussycat to the UK pop scene's hottest new act, we check out the latest releases...

Who You Are by Jessie J

THE eagerly-awaited debut album from songwriter-turned-artist **Jessie J** was released a month early due to popular demand. Having listened to *Who You Are* it is easy to understand why. This album is faultless, both lyrically and musically, from start to finish and includes debut single *Do It Like A Dude* and the more recent hit *Price Tag*. She has a very distinct style that could be considered as a mix of **Adele** and **Duffy** and uses her full vocal talents to amazing effect. Jessie J is fresh, new and British and the music she has produced is very much the same. This outstanding first offering has something for everyone to enjoy and is an album well worth adding to your collection.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

Last Night On Earth

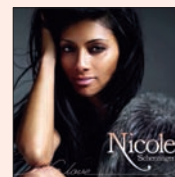
THE latest offering from indie act **Noah and The Whale** has seen very little change in the time since their previous album hit the streets. You know exactly what you are going to get from this four-piece – safe, melodic rock that is well delivered but hardly going to set the world alight or get your pulse racing. *L.I.F.E.G.O.E.S.O.N.* has been getting a decent amount of radio airplay and is catchy enough to stick in your head, much to your annoyance. If you want to relax and contemplate the world over a glass of wine then *Last Night on Earth* is the album for you. If not, simply pass it by, get yourself a pint of cider and listen to something that will set your pants on fire.



W02 Mo Morris, RLC

Killer Love by Nicole Scherzinger

AFTER the sad demise of the once-mighty **Pussycat Dolls** it was no surprise to see leading light **Nicole Scherzinger** embark on an inevitable solo career. Debut album *Killer Love* starts fairly promisingly with the catchy lead single *Poison*. However, the early optimism soon disappears as the following tracks rapidly descend into what can only be described as average pop fare at best. *Right There* sounds like a **Rihanna** cast-off, with Scherzinger even adopting the vocal style of her fellow diva, while the less said about the **Sting** duet *Power's Out* the better. Overall this is pretty uninspiring stuff and this pussycat should seriously consider getting the band back together.



Joe Clapson, Soldier



Dressed to impress: The Regimental Band of The Coldstream Guards have compiled an inspirational collection of rousing anthems on *Pride of The Nation*

Lasers by Lupe Fiasco

THIS latest offering from **Lupe Fiasco** debuted at number one in the American Billboard 200, despite a lot of very mixed reviews. I have to admit *Lasers* isn't something I would normally purchase, but with summer fast approaching this is one of those albums that gets better as the weather heats up and you'll find yourself listening to it again and again. Second track *Words I Never Said*, which features the vocal talents of **Skyler Grey**, is the undoubted highlight and offers a politically-influenced rap with synth-heavy bass that almost forces you to tap along to the sound of the beat. This album is very much like Marmite, you either love it or hate it. Personally, I love it.



LCpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

Build A Rocket Boys! by Elbow

UNLIKELY rock stars **Elbow** return with the long-awaited follow-up to their hugely successful 2008 release *The Seldom Seen Kid*. The good news is that the critical acclaim lavished on the Manchester band has had little impact on their music as *Build A Rocket Boys!* maintains the formula that has served them so well over the years. Intricate guitar work and electronic details form the musical layers for a succession of anthems that build impressively throughout. They even find room for a track entitled *Jesus Is A Rochdale Girl*, which shows they are staying true to their roots. This is an excellent effort from a group who have avoided the media glare to focus on what they do best.



Andrew Simms, Soldier

Angles by The Strokes

HAVING spent five years out of the musical limelight it was difficult to predict whether **The Strokes** would ever make the return their fans craved. Solo albums and side projects have kept the New York indie outfit occupied in recent times, but they have happily slotted back together for the release of *Angles*. Although it lacks the raw energy and excitement of 2001 debut *Is This It*, this contemporary collection is a welcome addition to the fold. There are strong elements of the 1980s' new-wave sound throughout with hints of **New Order** there for all to hear, particularly on *Games*. After a lengthy hiatus The Strokes are well and truly back and this is definitely worth a listen.



Richard Long, Soldier



Home front: Fiona Stanford's moving account of the benefits and drawbacks of marrying a soldier is priced £14.99 and in stores now

Praise for the patch

Army spouse's salute to strength and support of Service's close-knit communities

Interview: Sharon Kean

THE wife of a senior Welsh Guards officer has put the spotlight on troops' families by writing a book about the highs and lows of Forces life.

Fiona Stanford told *Soldier* that she penned *Don't Say Goodbye* – a first-hand account of a tight-knit regimental community which lost seven men during its last Herrick tour – with the hope of drawing attention to the army of loved ones behind the Service scenes and their “quiet” contribution to operations in Afghanistan.

Intent on exposing more than just the “glamorous parades and dinners”, the debut author chose to focus instead on the day-to-day “roller-coaster of emotions and upheavals” that come as a consequence of following the drum.

“I needed to explain the enigmatic military lifestyle led by those who fight for our country and by those who support them,” Stanford said.

“Above all, I wanted to tell the story of the people left behind. The support that these families, and the women in particular, give to their men and ultimately to their country, needs a voice.”

She decided to write the book after attending the funeral of Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe who, having taken over command of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards from her own husband, was killed in action in Helmand during the summer of 2009.

“I wanted the general public to know how much families sacrifice in order to help the men and women do the fantastic job that they do,” the Army wife said, recalling the experience of seeing the grief suffered by Lt Col Thorneloe's widow – a close friend – at the officer's memorial service.

“Our lives are very different because although we are ordinary people, we are put in an extraordinary situation.

“The most important thing is the camaraderie among families on ‘the patch’ and the lifelong support we give each other, because at the end of the day that's what pulls us through.”

Chronicling the impact on this group of dealing with the reality of troops returning from theatre with serious injuries or having made the ultimate sacrifice, *Don't Say Goodbye* is certainly not shy about addressing the hard truths of conflict.

“For the bereaved and families of those wounded it's about how their lives have changed and them coming to terms with it,” Stanford added. “But it's not all doom and gloom. There

are engagements, marriages and babies born, so there are upbeat stories as well.”

While the latter events are equally common to civvy street, it is the unique environment and mix of emotions presented in her literary endeavours which the Army wife believes have struck a chord with non-Service families.

“The news most people get [about the Forces community] is from the front line and involves those who are killed or hurt, so I think the book has been an eye-opener for a lot of people who didn't realise what was involved,” she explained.

However, *Don't Say Goodbye* is also proving to be a hit with the title's subjects.

“I've had letters, emails and Facebook messages from Army wives, wounded soldiers and bereaved families saying that the book has helped them – for me that is the best thing to come out of it,” Stanford concluded.

“It was a privilege to put these stories onto paper, but I also felt a pressure because for those who had lost someone it was a memorial. Making sure I got it right was so important.” ■

● Proceeds from the book are being donated to the Welsh Guards Afghanistan Appeal, www.welshguardsappeal.com

From Greek goings-on to George W Bush, a flick through this month's literary releases...

SAS: The First Secret Wars by Tim Jones

IN the current climate of Defence cuts, a title that deals with the survival of the Special Air Service (SAS) is fairly apt. I had always believed that after a glittering Second World War career, the elite unit had fallen foul of the Government's bean counters in 1945, only to be resurrected in 1951 for the campaign in Malaya. **Tim Jones** manages to explain – in meticulous detail and using documentary research – what actually happened during those interim years, revealing how the SAS endured as an effective fighting force and took part in the vicious, if unknown, fighting in Greece.



SSgt Mick Dannatt, MPGS

Rogue Male by R Field & G Gordon-Creed

BASED on the memoirs of **Lt Col Geoffrey Gordon-Creed**, **Roger Field's** fast-paced title brings to life the former's exploits on and off the battlefield. While most accounts of the Second World War are of the British stiff-upper-lip variety, this offering has a good dose of humour, from getting up the nerve to follow “the lunatics who think there is nothing to jumping out of a plane” to hiding from German soldiers in the pit of an outdoor privy while suffering from dysentery. It is refreshing to read a book relating to that period that could have been written by the modern soldier with a typical work hard, play hard ethos.



Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps

The Black and Tans by Richard Bennett

FOCUSING on the men employed by the Royal Irish Constabulary from 1920 to 1921 to suppress revolution, this is an extremely good book for anyone wishing to read about the period of terror that gripped Ireland just prior to its independence from Great Britain. The hatred, not just toward the enemy but within their own factions, of these British personnel – named after a famous pack of wild dogs in County Limerick – caused plenty of blood to be spilled. *The Black and Tans* was written just ten years before the restart of the Troubles in 1969 but the events described could, quite easily, have happened during Op Banner.



Andy Kay, ex-RS

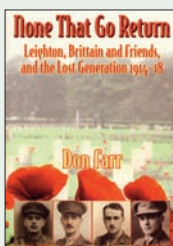


Warm reception: Hundreds of onlookers lined the streets of Aldershot for the homecoming parade of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards in 2009 Picture: Cpl Russ Nolan, RLC

None That Go Return by Don Farr

FOLLOWING four friends through their middle-class upbringing, public school education and eventual commissioning into Kitchener's Army, this title is clearly the result of painstaking research and investigation. Using diary entries and photographs throughout, the author sets context by giving detailed accounts of the subjects' lives prior to the First World War, leaving the reader, conscious of the inevitable ending, with a sense of foreboding. A well-written tale of young men's national pride and the need they felt to volunteer for the "great adventure". However, don't expect to be thrust straight into the trenches with bayonets fixed.

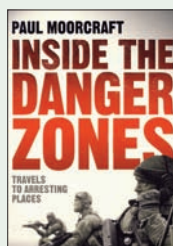
WO2 Ian Barraclough, REME



Inside the Danger Zones by P Moorcraft

FORMER freelance war correspondent and military/political analyst **Paul Moorcraft** offers his reflections on an impressive career spanning nearly 40 years in which he has encountered a host of conflicts and dangerous personalities. The human element of this book – interwoven with astute and straight-forward analysis of the overarching geo-political situations creating the events on the ground – makes *Inside the Danger Zones* a truly first-class publication. It will leave you wanting to get up, pack your bags and head to the first available location off the beaten track to grasp a flavour of the real and unpolished world.

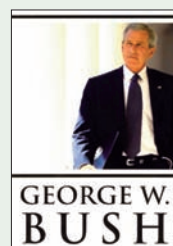
Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



Decision Points by George W Bush

POLITICAL biographies rarely give much away, so shock revelations from one of the most conservative American Presidents are even less likely. No surprises on offer in *Decision Points* then? No, but the memoirs do provide a fair degree of insight into the workings of the Bush administration and how it dealt with momentous events such as the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina. You don't get to fill the most powerful post in the world without some political savvy. Read between the lines and you do build a very different impression of one of the least popular US Presidents ever to hold office.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC





Road to success: The Jaguar XF Diesel S impresses with its raw power, luxurious interior and cutting-edge gadgets

Peak performance

Jaguar combine sheer power with fuel economy and low emissions in excellent XF

Review: Richard Long

THROUGHOUT my somewhat sheltered history behind the wheel I have always known that Jaguar has been hailed as the bastion of motoring luxury.

But the honour and prestige of owning such a car has never been a realistic possibility given the severe restrictions on the salary of a journalist.

So the chance to take temporary charge of the new Jaguar XF Diesel S was an opportunity not to be sniffed at.

The supremely-sporty car is a big unit and, thinking performance would be compromised, I felt an air of disappointment on being told that I would not be testing a petrol model. On reflection, such thoughts were utterly ridiculous.

Jaguar's new AJ-V6D Gen III S 3.0-litre engine is a rampaging beast.

Crawling through the confines of Aldershot town centre at a measly 30mph it felt as though this big cat was taking a leisurely stroll after a long sleep in the shade.

But as I put my foot down on the open road, the car became a different animal and we were

suddenly in hot pursuit of an unfortunate antelope on a grassy plain.

The high-performance twin-turbo engine is stunning and can propel the XF from 0-60mph in just 5.9 seconds, with the transition from 50 to 70mph a staggering 3.2 seconds.

Sadly, its maximum speed is electronically limited to a paltry 155mph.

Moving away from Hampshire and onto the M25 as my journey towards the flatlands of Norfolk continued, thoughts of fuel economy soon came to mind.

Admittedly, I was prepared to take a hit on the wallet but an average consumption rate of 42 miles-per-gallon meant the sacrifice was less painful than expected.

With the car now well and truly on the move, other features started to impress.

Modern machines can often get bogged down in confusing gadgets and displays. But the XF maintains a degree of simplicity and elegance while embracing 21st century technology.

The leather interior offers supreme comfort and luxury and a central control system gives access to audio, navigational and climate settings at the simple touch of a finger.

The quality continues with the dashboard,

where a high-definition digital display caters for a speedometer, rev counter and fuel gauge.

With the XF's power credentials established, and the interior clearly ticking all the boxes, it was time to consider other aspects of performance.

Diesel engines immediately raise concerns about shuddering noise levels, but hearing this cat purr was almost pure heaven.

The ride is one of complete peace and quiet and with no vibrations you could easily be forgiven for thinking you were running a petrol.

An automatic gearbox could be another bone of contention but the brains behind the XF have got the changes near perfect.

If you are unhappy you can revert to sport mode and bring the flappy paddles into play but, in all honesty, you really shouldn't need to.

The handling is also extremely responsive and the more environmentally conscious among you will be pleased to hear this car delivers a ten per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions.

With my return to *Soldier* HQ complete, I have to admit I was completely bowled over by the XF, which proved to be a privilege to drive.

It's just a shame my meagre earnings as a reporter mean a week-long test drive cannot become a full-time reality. ■

We take a closer look at the host of features included in the Jaguar XF Diesel S...

Driving made easy

WHILE the thought of taking control of an automatic car may deter those seeking the ultimate driving experience, the XF's gearbox packs an almighty punch with the changes and responsiveness almost perfectly set for quick acceleration when needed. If you're still not convinced, simply shift the setting to sport mode to bring the flappy paddles on the steering column firmly into play. There's no messing around with ignition keys, the ferocious AJ-V6D Gen III S engine triumphantly roars into life at the touch of a button. Harnessing this beast also comes easy courtesy of the simple switch that forms the handbrake.



Mark out of ten: Ten

Home interiors

THE supreme comfort offered inside the XF makes taking to the road a true pleasure for the lucky driver. The interior is decked in luxurious leather and there is more than enough legroom to ensure long journeys are not a chore. The climate can be controlled at the touch of a button and heated seats offer welcome relief from the chilling winter weather. When the sun finally shines, the air conditioning takes over to make you even cooler as you cruise the highways. Despite this being a sport saloon, the boot is deep, spacious and offers ample storage room. There are also cup holders aplenty, just watch out for those annoying spillages on your upholstery.



Mark out of ten: Nine

The magic of the small screen

NO car is complete without its raft of in-house entertainment. The XF's options are operated by a central touchscreen digital control system that takes you through a multi-frequency radio and CD player. If you still can't find the tunes you want, don't worry, as this model includes an iPhone/iPod adapter that allows you to instantly upload your favourite tracks straight to the stereo. The console also features a highly-detailed satellite navigation system and climate control mode. The all-encompassing computer will even help you reverse into the tightest of spots with a parking aid that ensures you avoid any hazards to the rear.



Mark out of ten: Nine



Life in the fast lane: The new Jaguar XF Diesel S can hit a maximum speed of 155mph while also delivering an impressive fuel economy of 42 miles-per-gallon

Hot under the hood

THE mighty AJ-V6D Gen III S three-litre engine makes the XF the most advanced, powerful and efficient Jaguar diesel ever.



This big cat roars from 0-60mph in just 5.9 seconds and boasts an equally-impressive maximum speed of 155mph. But this car is not all about brute power and stunning performance. With prices at the pump continuing to spiral, the sport saloon is far from being a gas guzzler and has a fuel economy of 42 miles-per-gallon – which is 12 per cent better than the 2.7-litre V6 diesel engine. The vehicle's CO₂ emissions have also been reduced by ten per cent in a salute to the environment, meaning this is one caring and thoughtful feline.

Mark out of ten: Ten

Digital dreams

THE XF is awash with cutting-edge technology and the dashboard department is no different. After firing up the engine the digital display immediately flashes into life with a speedometer to the left and rev counter to the right. The fuel gauge, gear details and clock are nestled neatly in the middle of the two dials, giving you all the information you could possibly need while at the wheel. But it is at night-time when you really notice the difference. While cutting through the darkness the interior illuminates with a series of glowing blue lights that give the impression you are in control of a fast-air jet, rather than a road car.



Mark out of ten: Nine

Service-specific sales

IN the current financial climate, there is no doubt that splashing your hard-earned cash on a state-of-the-art XF represents a significant investment. With prices starting at around £30,000 you have to be sure this is the car for you. But luckily for serving personnel, Jaguar Military Sales offer hefty discounts on the amount civvies have to pay for their motors. All members of the Armed Forces are eligible to receive 13 per cent off the price of any vehicle in the British car-maker's range. For more information call Peterborough-based Marshall Military Sales on 01733 213231 or visit the company's dedicated website.



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SOLDIERSPORT

Picture: Graeme Main



HEAD TO HEAD: REDS LOCK HORNS WITH FORCES RIVALS IN HARD-FOUGHT INTER-SERVICES CAMPAIGNS

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PREMIERSHIP CROWN



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COURT BATTLE ENDS
IN NARROW LOSS

Army launch winning assault

Boxers celebrate title 28 after overpowering Navy rivals in Combined Services showdown

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC

THE Army's dominance of the boxing ring continued in spectacular style at the Combined Services Championships as the all-conquering team inflicted a devastating defeat on their Royal Navy challengers.

Big hitters Spr Adam Whitfield (RE), Cpl James Allen (REME, pictured right), LCpl Martin Stead (RLC) and Rfn Emmanuel Izonritei (4 Rifles) led the charge as the Service stars secured their 28th successive title at Aldershot's Combat Sports Centre.

With special guests James DeGale and Ricky Hatton watching in the wings, the squad recorded a comprehensive 7-4 win on bouts to accompany walkover victories for Pte Shamim Khan (RLC) and Cpl Shaun Dick (5 Scots).

Flyweight Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) was involved in a pulsating clash with Navy challenger LPT Gareth Smith in the night's opening encounter.

Both fighters gave sublime attacking performances and landed a host of scoring shots, particularly to the body.

But Williams was subjected to a standing count in the final round before the judges delivered a narrow 35-34 points score in favour of Smith.

With the fireworks of the first bout complete, Whitfield set about securing an Army win against AET Jake Beer.

The England international was in fine form and landed a series of well-directed punches in what proved to be a performance of total composure and sheer class.

As Beer opened up, Whitfield simply picked off his opponent and, after inflicting two standing counts in the last round, he celebrated a commanding 45-27 win.

Army captain Allen adopted a similar approach against AB Ross Murray.

The 57kg fighter scored consistently throughout the contest and landed a

flurry of shots to the body and head in a particularly strong second round.

Murray struggled to find any rhythm and the 31-9 scoreline was a true reflection of Allen's dominance.

After knocking out ETME Anthony Smith in the opening round of their bout last year, Stead was expected to make light work of his Navy rival in their 63.5kg match-up.

While the Great Britain international failed to deliver the same outcome, he showcased his considerable skills in a controlled performance against an improved Smith.

The final bell saw Stead record a resounding 26-15 win.

The 67kg bout between LCpl Steve Turner (3 UKSR) and Mne Louis Walker followed in the same fashion as the Army surged ahead.

In a tight opening, both fighters landed some strong shots but Turner appeared to have the better of his opponent with some accurate punches to the head.

Good combinations in the final round ensured the advantage was maintained as Turner went on to take the contest.

LCpl Gav McGee (5 Rifles) suffered a narrow 28-24 defeat to ETWE Mark Flowers, while Cpl David Passarelli (RE) had to rely on a countback to see off the challenge of Mne Jay Gardiner after their bout ended in a 16-16 draw.

One of the fights of the night saw Gdsm John Pontone (1 Coldm Gds) involved in a bruising encounter with Mne Greg Welling.

Both boxers showed little regard for defensive work and launched a barrage of attacking shots in what was an energy-charged contest.

At the final bell, Welling was awarded a 37-35 win but the result could have easily gone the other way.

A tentative bout between Cpl Alex Mansfield (1 PWRR) and LPT Paul

Ormston saw the Navy pick up a much-needed victory before Izonritei put the Army back on the front foot with a powerhouse showing.

The heavyweight looked in ominous form and was unlucky not to connect with a series of booming hooks. After seeing his fighter given a standing count in the opening round, the Navy coach threw in the towel to prevent further damage to his athlete.

The final contest on the card saw super-heavyweight Bdr TK Taukeinikoro (RA) record a 17-15 win over AB George Evans, much to the delight of his teammates.

Army coach Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC) was thrilled with the outcome and told *SoldierSport* the margin of victory could have been even greater.

"The competition looked very close on paper and the Navy fighters were really up for it," he said. "However, we had done our homework and I think the best team won on the evening."

"There were some great performances and for guys like Whitfield and Stead it was good to get some rounds in ahead of the Amateur Boxing Association championships."

"It could have easily finished 12-1 and the ones we lost could have gone either way."

"Williams was involved in the bout of the night and I still think he should have won that one."

"As a coach you are always looking to win the first fight. The Navy were delighted to take that but I knew we had strength in depth."

"I was quite worried about Pontone as he was up against a strong opponent. I told him to go and make his family proud and he did that."

"It was fantastic to win on competitive bouts. We were hoping to do more of a number on them but the Navy were on good form." ■

"We had done our homework and I think the best team won on the evening"

**“ THE COMPETITION
LOOKED VERY CLOSE
ON PAPER AND THE
ROYAL NAVY FIGHTERS
WERE REALLY UP FOR IT ”**

– SGT TONY DAVIS





Midfield maestro: Pte Jess Till (RLC) fires the ball forward during the Army's nail-biting 0-0 draw with the Royal Air Force at Aldershot Town's EBB Stadium

Title success for resolute Reds

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Mike Weston

A GOALLESS draw with the Royal Air Force saw the Army women's football team crowned Inter-Services champions for 2011.

Having beaten the Royal Navy 2-1 a week earlier, the players took to the pitch at Aldershot Town's EBB Stadium knowing a point was all that was needed to lift the trophy after their Forces rivals were held to a stalemate in the tournament's opening fixture.

The Reds could have taken the lead in the early exchanges when Gnr Bianca Ross (RA) went clean through, but her shot was well saved.

After surviving the initial barrage, the RAF soon established a foothold in the game and Cpl Siobhan Davies rattled the woodwork with a powerful header from a free kick.

The Army goal continued to lead a charmed life and keeper Gnr Roxy Roberts (RA) was at full stretch to tip a vicious drive from SAC Chelsea Lindley onto the crossbar shortly after the half-hour mark.

As the first period drew to a close, Cfn Maxine McIver (REME) fired over following some neat work on the left before Ross again went close.

The second half proved to be a cagey affair as the hosts remained solid without over-committing.

Man-of-the-match Roberts proved to be a commanding presence in goal, confidently claiming the barrage of high balls that were launched into the area.

Skipper Sgt Kristina Wright (AGC) and Cfn Yvette Kemp (REME) marshalled a determined defensive unit, while Pte Jess Till (RLC) and Sig Amanda Turnbull (R Signals) bossed the midfield.

Sig Rachel Wheatman (R Signals) showed some deft touches in the attacking third and Ross was a powerful presence on the left flank.

McIver chased and harried the RAF defence all afternoon and her efforts deserved to be rewarded with a goal.

Speaking afterwards, head coach Capt Sandra Hodgson (RLC) told *SoldierSport* she was fully confident her team would lift the trophy.

"I didn't think at any stage we would lose the game," she added.

"If they had scored I am sure we would have as well. We had a few nervous moments but we were never going to lose with the talent we had out on the pitch.

"I am delighted. It was a really good game involving two teams who are technically very similar and both have got some superb players.

"We knew it was going to be a tough battle and we just wanted to get the result."

Hodgson insisted her side refused to play for a draw and said that with McIver operating as a lone attacker the team still posed a considerable offensive threat.

"She is a fantastic striker who can play up front on her own and we remain capable of getting results that way," the head coach explained.

"She came into the season quite late. The first time I saw her was in the game before the Inter-Services and we are lucky to have her.

"There is no dead ball with her and she chases absolutely everything." ■





Goal-shy Army pay the price

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army men returned empty-handed from the Inter-Services football championship – despite finishing an encouraging campaign against their Forces rivals unbeaten.

Goal difference proved to be the deciding factor in this year's tournament as the Royal Air Force retained the much-coveted trophy for a fourth season.

The Reds battled their way to a 1-0 victory over the Royal Navy in their opening fixture, meaning a win against the airmen would guarantee the title.

However, a 1-1 draw at Aldershot Town's EBB Stadium left the competition in the balance and when the Light Blues romped to a 4-1 scoreline over the Senior Service, Army hopes were dashed for another year.

The defending champions had an element of luck on their side when the Navy goalkeeper was sent off as his team held a 1-0 advantage.

With no substitute stopper on the bench, they took full advantage to plunder the goals needed for an emphatic triumph.

The Army started their heavyweight clash with the RAF in fine form, dominating possession for long periods.

But goal-scoring opportunities were at a premium.

LBdr Ryan Kane (RA) fired over inside the first ten minutes, while forward Sig Sam Agar (R Signals, pictured) and Sgt Alan Jordan (R Signals) both went close.

The Army finally took the lead as the interval approached. Skipper LCpl Jay Bates (R Signals) pounced on a loose ball in midfield before drilling an unstoppable shot into the top corner from 25 yards.

With the Reds surviving the early exchanges of the second half unscathed, the title looked theirs for the taking.

But the RAF slowly found a way into the match and eventually grabbed an equaliser through winger Cpl Alex Woodhouse, who fired home from just inside the area.

Speaking at the end of a promising season, head coach WO2 Joe Collins (R Signals) told *SoldierSport*: "We had victory in our hands when it was 1-0 at

half-time, but in the second period we just froze and did not play as well as we can do.

"However, we have had a good campaign and I think the squad has developed well in what has been my first season in charge.

"We've recorded our first Inter-

Services win in seven matches and that is something we can definitely build upon for next year. Hopefully the mindset has changed and the players now believe

they can go out and hold their own at this level."

Collins said Agar, Bates and Cpl Robert Cooper-Tomkins (RE) were among the stand-out performers and singled out SSgt Kev Hayley (RAPTC) for particular praise.

He added: "There is nothing flash about him, he just goes about his business and has done really well.

"We have also brought in WO2 Simon Bell (RE) as our high-performance coach. He has been working on building confidence and team spirit and the lads have taken to it very well." ■

"The players now believe they can go out and hold their own at this level"



Winning feeling: The Army women trampled over their Royal Navy challengers, recording a 5-0 victory on their way to another Inter-Services hockey title

Army taste agony and ecstasy

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

A LAST-gasp goal from a penalty corner helped the Army women retain their Inter-Services hockey crown in what proved to be a tense final fixture against the Royal Air Force.

The stunning strike ensured the hard-fought clash finished all-square and meant the relieved Reds team was able to celebrate another title courtesy of goal difference.

While such narrow margins fell in favour of the women, their counterparts in the men's squad were less fortunate.

They saw their championship hopes dashed by a single goal as the Royal Navy snatched the crown.

Despite having just seven days of preparation ahead of the tournament, the women found some majestic form in their opening match at HMS *Temeraire*, as they easily brushed aside the Senior Service challenge.

A fluent attacking display,

spearheaded by player of the tournament Cpl Amanda Potgieter (REME), saw the visitors romp to a commanding 5-0 victory in a game where their defence was rarely troubled.

Skipper SSgt Claire Ryding (REME) and Maj Paula Nicholas (AGC) controlled the encounter from the back, enabling the team's offensive unit to create a host of scoring opportunities, particularly from penalty corners.

While a vastly superior Reds side ultimately outclassed their Navy opponents, the RAF posed a much greater threat to the Servicewomen.

The Army twice found themselves trailing to their well-drilled rivals and had to rely on goals from Capt Kate Surman (REME) and Nicholas to secure a 2-2 draw.

With the teams locked at the top of the table, it was the Army's attacking

masterclass against the Navy that ensured they won the contest courtesy of goal difference.

Speaking afterwards, relieved coach WO2 Cheryl Campling (AGC) told *SoldierSport*: "We are absolutely delighted. We did not have the best build-up due to availability issues and we only had seven days together ahead of the tournament.

"We also had a lot of new players coming through this year. They performed superbly and coped very well with the pressure we faced against the RAF.

"We found ourselves 1-0 down and then 2-1 behind, but we scored from a penalty corner in the last eight minutes in what was a great end to the game.

"It was fantastic for the crowd but not so good for the RAF, who were absolutely devastated."

While a draw and a win ensured the women celebrated Inter-Services

"They performed superbly and coped very well with the pressure"

success, the same results were not enough for the men's team.

The Reds battled their way to a 3-2 victory over the RAF and looked on course to secure a famous Army double.

The airmen struggled to cope with their opponent's well-drilled short corner routines, which created all three goals in a sublime offensive display.

Double Olympian Maj Guy Fordham (AMS) spearheaded an attack that simply proved too strong for the RAF, while Maj Chris Lane (RA) ran the game and was outstanding in the middle of the park.

But it was not all one-way traffic and the Army had to thank goalkeeper Sgt Dan Cattermole (R Signals) for a succession of smart saves, particularly in the second half.

While there was an element of control to their opening win, the men endured a thrilling encounter with the Navy.

The end-to-end match saw defensive work brushed aside as the two sides battled out a 5-5 draw.

With the Senior Service enjoying a 4-3 victory over the airmen, the Army missed out on the trophy due to the fact they had scored one less goal than their Forces rivals.

"We are massively disappointed," skipper Cattermole told *SoldierSport*.

"Our preparation was very good and this is one of the closest Inter-Services we have played in. All three teams were in with a shout.

"We are gutted to lose it this way. We

missed a penalty against the Navy and that ultimately proved costly.

"We were 3-1 up at half-time and cruising but we made a couple of defensive howlers and passed the ball straight to their forwards.

"It was end-to-end stuff in the last 15 minutes, they went 5-4 up, we missed a penalty but managed to score at

the death. It was an awesome game.

"Overall I would say our performance was seven out of ten, but we have to be pretty happy with the way we played on the day."

Despite such a narrow loss, Cattermole said there were plenty of positives for his squad to take from an exhilarating campaign.

Newcomers 2nd Lt James Hudson (RA), Gnr Alex Clarke (RA) and Capt Harry Morse (REME) all performed admirably on their Inter-Services debuts, while Fordham (pictured) used his experience to guide the team.

"Over the course of the season we have had a squad of 30 players which we have kept together throughout," the skipper added.

"We are looking to move forward with this group.

"It is not the end of the season as we now have the County Championship to concentrate on.

"The RAF and Navy will be playing in the tournament but they are in the division below us so we will not get to face them.

"Once we finish with that we can start thinking about getting our Inter-Services revenge at the indoor competition that comes later in the year." ■

"We made a couple of defensive howlers and passed the ball to their forwards"



SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Cpl George Abip, RAF

RUNNERS from Headquarters Task Force Helmand, the United States Marine Corps, Afghan National Security Forces and the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team have been put through their paces in a half-marathon relay race at their small base in the Helmand city of Lashkar Gah.

Teams of four took to the start line for the event, which saw each athlete completing two laps of the course before passing the baton to a willing colleague.

Colchester-based 216 (Para) Sig Sqn were the overall winners, coming home in a time of 1hr 9min 20sec.

Organiser Lt Ross Arnold (216 Sig Sqn) said: "The event was planned back in December with the idea that it would be glorious summer sun by March and a great way to finish the tour.

"Needless to say it was performed in true British weather – fog and puddles.

"We chose to do a half marathon as the base is pretty tight for space and we thought it would inspire a bit of departmental rivalry."

Each team paid a small entry fee to take part in the event and a total of £1,228 was donated to Help for Heroes.

LCPL Ryan Hogarty (23 Engr Regt) will lead a team of ultra-fit personnel in a bid to complete nine marathons in the space of nine days at their base in Camp Bastion.

The challenge starts on April 1 and will involve 15 members of the 16 Air Assault Brigade Reconnaissance Force.

They will be running on behalf of a colleague who was seriously injured on tour, while also raising vital funds for the ongoing work of military charities Help for Heroes and BLESMA.

The team has set a sponsorship target of £5,000 and donations to the cause can be made by logging on to the website www.justgiving.com/mickey-mooney or www.bymycharity.com/9in9

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Driving force: Dynamic centre LSgt Tinny Hiscock scored two tries to help 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards lift their first Army Premiership crown since 1982

Guards end trophy drought

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

APULSATING second-half comeback guided Rugby Union stars from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards to a 28-9 victory in the Army Premiership Cup final at Aldershot.

The win ended 29 years of hurt for a team that has not lifted the trophy since 1982 and offered sweet revenge for their narrow loss at the same stage of last year's competition.

Fierce rivals 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh were the opposition once again and the Tidworth-based soldiers looked set to retain their title after gaining the upper hand in an opening period that was dominated by the boot.

Guards fly half Gdsm Rob Sweeney missed a succession of early penalties and opposite number Pte James Read took full advantage by converting three kicks to open a 9-0 lead.

But as the first half drew to a close they established a vital foothold in the game. Sweeney jinked his way infield following a scrum inside the opposition 22 before offloading to winger LSgt Tyson Vuvueika, who bundled home.

Prop LCpl Chris Budgen joined the action at half-time, but the Army forward was unable to keep 2 R Welsh in the ascendancy.

An attempted clearance from Read was charged down by the superb LCpl Sprinkler Jayne, who passed the ball to fellow centre LSgt Tinny Hiscock for an easy score under the posts.

Sweeney found his range to kick the extras and then slotted his first penalty of the match just minutes later as the momentum firmly shifted.

Fullback 2nd Lt Felix Wright piled more agony on the defending champions when he lunged forward to score in the corner before a stunning break from Jayne allowed Hiscock to

cross for his second try of the afternoon.

Sweeney hammered the final nail in the coffin with a well-struck penalty in the last minute.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* after the final whistle, Welsh Guards rugby officer Maj Alun Bowen said: "1982 was the last time we won this competition.

"We lost in the final in 1987 and have been involved at this stage for the past three years.

"We have now managed to lift the title and we are absolutely delighted.

"This team has been together for a long time. Prop forward LCpl Mel Lewis is leaving the Army in the summer and I think the boys put in a bit extra for him.

"The turning point was half-time. We missed a few penalties in the opening period but the wind was very difficult for the kickers. We knew we had to take our time, play to our strengths and show great belief." ■



PARTING GIFT

FOR LCpl Mel Lewis, victory was the ideal way to end a superb Rugby Union career with the Welsh Guards. "It is brilliant," he said. "The boys really put their bodies on the line. We were awesome in defence and that was shown by the fact that 2 R Welsh were not able not break through our line."



MAIN MAN

CENTRE star LCpl Sprinkler Jayne was at the heart of the Welsh Guards best attacking moves. The dynamic back charged down a clearance to create a try for LSgt Tinny Hiscock and was a constant threat throughout an enthralling second half in which his side piled on the points.



KICKING GAME

A DETERMINED 2 R Welsh side looked set to retain their Army Premiership title after controlling the opening period. Fly half Pte James Read was in sublime form with the boot, kicking three penalties with deadly accuracy to establish a 9-0 lead ahead of the Welsh Guards' fightback.

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Picture: British Cycling

On the right track: Cpl Terry Byrne (2 Para) has made rapid progress over the past two years and is now world champion in the team sprint discipline

Service stars shine brightly

Report: Richard Long

WORLD champion cyclist Cpl Terry Byrne (2 Para) led the Army charge at the Combined Services Sports Awards, just days after winning gold on the track in Italy.

The soldier, whose leg was amputated below the knee after he stepped on a mine in Afghanistan, was presented with the special prize for adaptive sport after a superb two years on the bike.

His rapid rise was highlighted at the UCI Para-Cycling World Championships last month, where he took first place in the team sprint and won a silver medal in the C4 kilo event.

Byrne first considered competing in the sport in 2008, as he watched the Paralympic Games during his recovery.

"I was being a typical big-headed

Para and thought 'I can beat them'," he said on collecting his award.

"I was lucky enough to get a place on a British Cycling talent identification day through Battle Back. I pushed out 1,200 watts on one leg and they put me straight into the squad.

"The hardest part is actually getting on the Great Britain team due to the strength in depth we have.

"It is all about next year now [the 2012 Paralympics]. London will be the biggest opportunity for my era of athletes. I am going to take a week off and then I will be straight back training harder than ever."

The Army offshore sailing squad was named team of the year after an outstanding campaign in 2010.

The *British Soldier* crew won a number of international racing

certificate awards and finished second in the Royal Ocean Racing Club championship rankings.

Maj Angus McLeod (Scots) completed an Army hat-trick when he was named sportsman of the year.

He excelled in the field of target rifle shooting by winning the Hopton Trophy at the UK Open Championships and helping Scotland to the Home Nations Match Rifle crown.

However, the undoubted highlight was the silver medal he won in the full-bore rifle pairs' event at the Commonwealth Games in India.

Junior bobsleigh world champion Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) was runner-up in the sportswoman of the year category, while Army boxing coach Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC) missed out on the sports official title. ■

Football's history men

ARMY officials made football history during Notts County's clash with Bristol Rovers.

The fixture at Meadow Lane marked the first time a team of serving soldiers had taken charge of a Football League match and the personnel oversaw a 1-0 victory for the visitors.

Referee Maj Danny McDermid (RLC) took centre stage along with assistants WO1 Andy Halliday (RAPTC) and Sgt Declan Ford (REME). LCpl Rob Ellis (RAMC) was the fourth official.

Speaking prior to kick-off, McDermid said the

game represented a unique achievement for the foursome and the Army Football Association.

He added: "I first started officiating 24 years ago and this marks a special day.

"It was a Service fixture in Antrim and the game had to be halted 20 minutes before the end because a Chinook needed to land. The Army FA provides tremendous opportunities for soldiers who aspire to become a referee and there is an excellent system in place to support everybody who wants to progress."



Picture: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC



WINTER sports stars from 1 Logistic Support Regiment have once again reigned supreme at the Army Alpine Ski Championships. The all-conquering squad raced impeccably during the ten-day event at Serre Chevalier in France, adding Service honours to their success at the 1 (UK) Armoured Division competition earlier in the season. Skiers from 3 (CS) Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers were runners-up in the team event, with The Light Dragoons finishing third. In the men's individual contest, defending champion Capt Matt Shepherd (RLC) was knocked from the podium by Sgt Dougie MacPherson (RLC, pictured), who was in fine form in ideal conditions on the piste. Sgt Mike Atkinson (REME) and Capt Peter Balfour (1 SG) were second and third respectively. In the ladies event, the superb Maj Nikki Porter (RADC) returned from maternity leave to reclaim her title from Maj Mel Hilton (RLC), who finished third behind Capt Angie Fewster (RA). This year marked the 20th anniversary of the competition being held in Serre Chevalier.

SPORT SHORTS

OFFICER Maj Rob Shenton (REME) is tackling the gruelling Marathon Des Sables to raise money for MacMillan Cancer Support.

The 254-kilometre race is regarded as one of the toughest physical challenges in the world and takes competitors six days to complete.

Maj Shenton will be running in memory of his late father, who died of lung cancer.

To support his fund-raising effort visit www.justgiving.com/Robert-Shenton

RUNNER LCpl Steven Taylor (RE) will be taking to the start line of the London Marathon this month in a quest to raise £1,500.

The endurance ace is taking part in the challenge to support the Rangers Charity Foundation, which works closely with UNICEF and The Prostate Cancer Charity Scotland.

Donations to the cause can be made online at www.justgiving.com/steven-sorelegs-taylor

ARMY anglers travel to Holland next month to go head-to-head with their Forces rivals in the Inter-Services Overseas Challenge.

The event will see seven teams competing for success in Zwolle while also raising money for military charity Help for Heroes.

Organisers are planning a daily raffle which will give entrants the chance to win top-of-the-range kit.

Service finals hit the mark

THE Army basketball finals produced another gripping spectacle on the court with strong showings from personnel involved in all three competitions.

In the major units contest, players from 28 Engineer Regiment celebrated a fine win over their opponents from 13 Air Assault Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps.

The Army School of Physical Training (pictured) lifted the minor units trophy after defeating players from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, while the HQ Land Forces team tasted victory in the women's tournament.

Army Basketball Union secretary Capt Dave Wells (RAMC) was delighted with the success of the competition and believes the sport is going from strength to strength within the Service.

"The standard of play was just fantastic

this year, all the teams were very competitive," he told *SoldierSport*.

"The pool stages were keenly fought and both went down to points difference, it was that close.

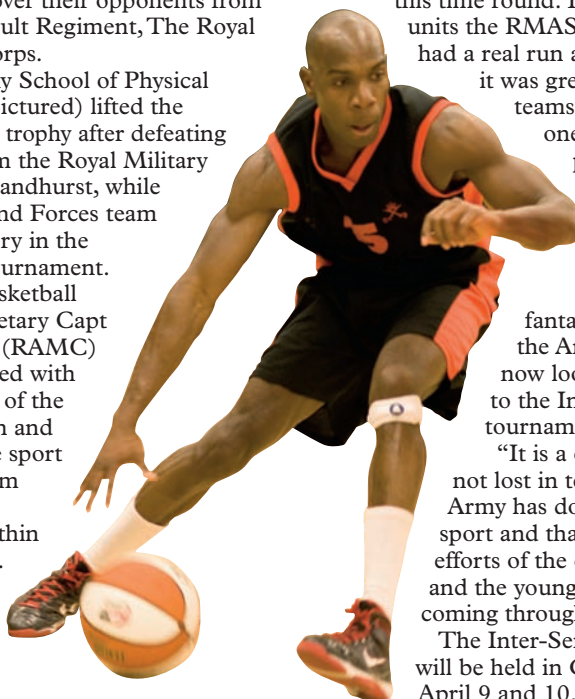
"The major units is always very competitive and that was the case again this time round. In the minor units the RMAS and ASPT had a real run at each other,

it was great to see. Most teams had at least one representative player in their ranks and that really helped the competition.

"Basketball is in fantastic shape within the Army and we are now looking ahead to the Inter-Services tournament this month.

"It is a contest we have not lost in ten years. The Army has dominated the sport and that is down to the efforts of the coaching staff and the young talent we have coming through the ranks."

The Inter-Services contest will be held in Grantham on April 9 and 10. ■



SPORT SHORTS

MORE than 250 serving personnel were among the capacity crowd at London's O2 Arena for the NBA showdown between the New Jersey Nets and the Toronto Raptors last month.

Their visit was made possible courtesy of military charity Tickets For Troops, who offered free admission to the clash as part of their ongoing support of the Armed Forces.

For more information on the scheme visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

FAMILY and friends of the late Maj James Bowman (RGR) are to embark on the Race Across America to raise money for three military charities.

The nine-day endurance challenge sees cyclists travel 3,000 miles from the west to east coast of the USA and the four-strong team, named Swift and Bold after the motto of the Light Infantry, begins its attempt on June 18.

Maj Bowman led his company through some fierce fighting in Helmand province and was killed in July 2010 when a renegade Afghan soldier turned on his British counterparts.

Cycling in his memory will be sister Louisa Bowman, brother David Wright, friend Martin Williamson and Army colleague Maj James Cousen.

An eight-person support crew, including older brother Brian Wright, will also be on hand to assist the team.

"There are going to be very tough and emotional times during the race, however, the strength we will all get being united together because of James will help," Louisa said.

"He was used to pushing himself to the limit both physically and mentally but I am not sure he would think we are capable of doing this."

The team will be raising money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity, Care For Casualties (The Rifles) and The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

To sponsor the USA-bound cyclists visit www.bmycharity.com/teamsiffandbold

TICKETS are now on sale for the 2011 Inter-Services Twenty20 cricket competition at Lord's.

A below-par Army side lost to the Royal Navy in last year's final and all three Forces teams will be targeting success on Tuesday, June 28.

To book your seat for the contest at the world-famous venue call 020 7432 1000 or log on to www.lords.org.ist20

WYVERN Gliding Club is holding a series of introductory courses for Servicemen and women who are interested in taking to the skies.

The sessions will teach potential pilots the basic principles of flight and how to fly a glider and are being held from April 11 to 15, May 18 to 20, June 27 to July 1, September 5 to 9 and October 17 to 21.

Anyone interested in taking part in the courses on offer should email wyverncourses@hotmail.co.uk



Marginal defeat: A 3-1 win over the Royal Navy could not secure title success for the Army Under-23s

Reds rue missed chances

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

GOAL difference proved to be the deciding factor in this year's Inter-Services Under-23 football campaign, with the Army narrowly missing out on top spot.

After beating the Royal Navy by a convincing 3-1 scoreline in their opening fixture, the Reds had high hopes of victory when they locked horns with the Royal Air Force at Cosford a week later.

But a hard-fought 1-1 draw left the tournament in the balance and when the airmen inflicted a 5-1 hammering on the Senior Service in their second match of the tournament, the trophy was snatched from the Army's grasp.

Despite seeing his team miss out on the title by just two goals, coach SSgt Sean Cochrane (RADC) told *SoldierSport* there were plenty of positives to take from an unbeaten run that included triumphs over some strong sides.

"The lads were quite down as they really wanted to win the Inter-Services," he said.

"But they should be very happy with

what they have achieved over the course of the season.

"We have finished the campaign unbeaten, which is a complete contrast to what happened last year, and we have defeated some talented and professional clubs along the way.

"We have never beaten the likes of Aldershot or Farnborough up until this point, so they should be very proud of that in particular."

Cochrane highlighted turning points in both Services matches but said he couldn't ask any more of his players and is now looking ahead to the 2012 competition with relish.

"I thought we could have scored one or two more goals against the Navy and we conceded a stoppage-time goal when we really didn't need to," he added.

"After equalising from the penalty spot against the RAF we had a few chances late on and on another day we could have won the game.

"But on the whole we have to be pretty happy with the way things have gone this year.

"There are a couple of players who will push on into the senior squad and we have got a few to come back from operations, so the future is bright." ■

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SPORT SHORTS

THE Army Athletics Association (AAA) development group has continued to go from strength-to-strength with encouraging performances on the indoor circuit.

A 14-strong team took to the track at Sheffield for the Royal Air Force invitational event and the Service stars finished second behind Loughborough University.

Since the creation of the group, six of the 19 registered athletes have set indoor personal bests and 12 personnel will travel to Portugal later this month to train with the senior squad ahead of the new outdoor season.

The initiative was launched to offer high-quality, technical training for Servicemen and women who wanted to compete in the sport throughout 2011.

Plans are now being considered to expand the scheme and create three regional groups for programmes this winter.

The AAA is looking for suitable leaders and coaches to help run the sessions. For further information on the development project call Maj Paul Flavell on 01258 485221.

FIGHTERS from 7 Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps were crowned winners of the Inter-Unit British Army Germany Boxing Championships after achieving one of the narrowest victories in the competition's history.

With the scores deadlocked, the nine-man team secured the title in the final contest of the evening as they recorded a five bouts to four triumph over 5th Battalion, The Rifles.

Speaking at the end of a terrific night of action, 7 Regt captain LCpl Adam Griffith said: "It is fantastic that we have won, it is an amazing feeling to lift the trophy and the whole team did a magnificent job."

"It was a very close contest and in the end it all came down to the final heavyweight fight, which we were fortunate enough to win."

"I am very proud of the team and am looking forward to taking them to the UK to compete in the British Army Boxing Championships. If we continue our training we will have a really good chance of winning there."

JUNIOR soldiers at the Army Technical Foundation College Winchester have taken to the ring for the establishment's inter-squadron boxing finals.

All fighters, male and female, underwent a six-week build-up programme ahead of the competition, as the sport is not part of the common military syllabus.

Volunteers put in additional work in the evenings and at weekends with Capt Rab Lundie (RAPTC) leading the training.

JS Mark Bielby (RE) had the honour of being named best boxer on the night, with JS Jack Morrison (R Signals) taking the title of most gallant runner-up.

The best coach award was shared between Sgt Billy Thurston (QDG) and Cpl Matty Campbell (R Signals).



Close call: The Army overpowered the Navy (above) but suffered an agonising defeat against the RAF

Narrow loss for court stars

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

A SLENDER defeat at the hands of the Royal Air Force saw the Army netball team miss out on top honours in this year's Inter-Services campaign.

After a convincing win over the Royal Navy in their opening fixture, the Servicewomen had high hopes of victory as they took to the court at the Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre.

But the visitors proved to be tough opponents and fought their way to a narrow 36-32 triumph, an effort that saw them crowned tournament champions.

Speaking afterwards, Army captain Maj Laura White (REME) told *SoldierSport* the RAF posed a considerable challenge but insisted the teams were well matched in all departments.

"To be honest, it could have gone either way," the officer said. "We decided to change our attack each quarter, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."



"Our shooting stats were better overall but they played really well. They are a tight squad and have a very strong team."

"But we performed superbly. We had good strength in depth and a number of players have now been selected for the Combined Services, so we are moving in the right direction."

The Army were in inspired form against the Navy as they coasted to a 44-21 victory in their first match.

White and Capt Kelli MacPherson (AGC (ETS)) scored consistently at the net, while goalkeeper Cpl Nordia Masters (AGC (SPS), pictured left) was outstanding at the heart of the defence, where she made life extremely uncomfortable for the opposition attack.

All three players have been named in the Combined Services squad for a series of fixtures later this year, along with Cpl Louise Binnie (AGC (SPS)), Capt Nkoya Wright (RAMC), Cpl Ellie Lakosolomone (AGC (SPS)) and LCpl Serafina Serukeitoga (RLC).

Pte Ali Taylor (RLC) was also selected after her strong showings in the Army development squad. ■

final word



We asked members of the Army hockey and boxing teams what opportunities sport offers them and why it is important to the Service

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: GRAEME MAIN



LCpl Martin Stead (RLC)

People think we come here for time off, but we are actually training as hard as international fighters and those on Team GB. The Army boxing club is known all over the country as one of the best and that's something to be proud of. We take our role seriously and within the Service it's recognised that we will be disciplined and committed. It's not in our interests to be lazy – we train hard, fight easy.



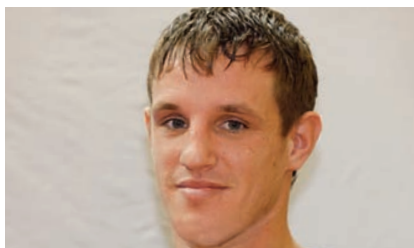
Capt Lucy Butler (RLC)

Participating in team sports contributes massively to the quality of life for individuals within the Army. It provides an excellent opportunity to develop skills for our profession, such as leadership, teamwork and a fighting spirit. By being involved in Army hockey I've been able to tour South Africa and New Zealand – experiences I would not get in other walks of life.



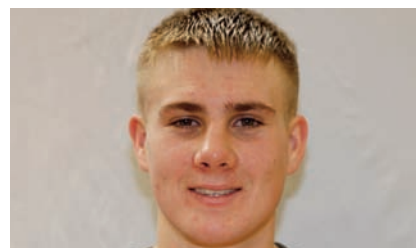
Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC)

In our new centre of excellence we're not far off Team GB in terms of our training. It's a fantastic place and gives the guys and girls I'm coaching an exceptional chance to develop as fighters. Boxing underpins all the values and standards of soldiers and the team ethos has been clear to see over the last 18 months. Civvy boxers are left open-mouthed when they see what the Army offers.



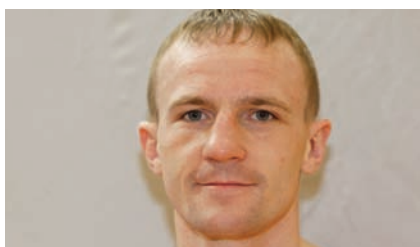
LCpl Gavin McGee (Rifles)

Army sport is extremely valuable for the morale of troops on operations because they can watch out for their regiment's results and get a boost when the Army does well in competitions. Sport also keeps soldiers active and means they are fitter than the standard required of personnel. All sports teams will know that success comes with taking the Service core values very seriously.



Pte Ashley Williams (R Welsh)

It takes a lot of commitment to train and compete for an Army sports team and it really is a privilege to have access to such a professional set-up. I had 15 fights as a civilian and the gym here is of a lot better standard in all aspects. As a civvy you have to monitor yourself and you're unsure whether you're doing the right thing, but here you're watched 24/7 and nothing goes unseen.



LCpl Shaun Dick (Scots)

Sport as a whole is highly regarded by the Army because it instils the ethos that we should be the best. Being part of the boxing team can put your soldiering career on hold, but I am happy because I love the sport. On operations you see things you don't see here but that's not to say boxing isn't hard work. I joined the Army to gain a better life and pursue boxing and it's paid off.



SSgt Sharon Stones (REME)

I value sport within the Army highly. Apart from the team-building aspect it has introduced me to people who have been able to give guidance and advice in other areas. It is also an important networking tool. If the Army were to get rid of sport we would be losing the fun element. It is not something that is handed to you on a plate but there are some great opportunities on offer.



LCpl Damian Wilson (RE)

Sport is huge in the Army and has a good reputation for a reason. People are now joining up because they look at things like football, rugby and boxing and see the successes we have had. A few years ago civilians might have said Army boxers were just fit, but now they know we are skilled in the ring. A civilian has to work a full day then train for two hours, whereas we train non-stop.

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