

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

OLYMPIC FIRST!

Artingstall heads for Tokyo and history books

FINDING FEMALE FORM

Virtus changes and the race to boost Army data on women

TARGET DOWN

The app tracking your trigger finger on the ranges



EYE OF THE STORM

Combat service support gets a slice of the action



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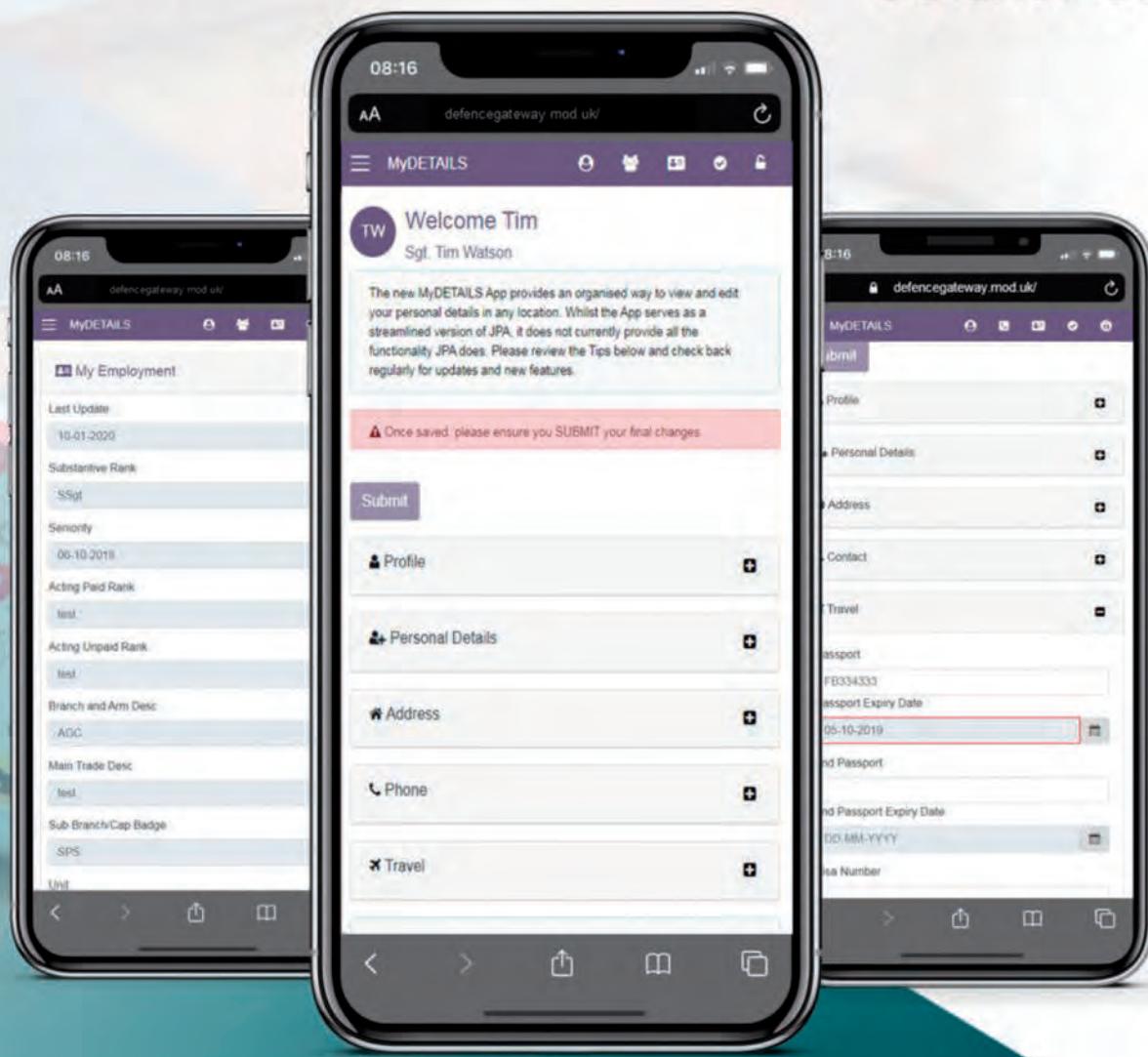
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I found the move to civvy street really, really tough. It took me a good two years to get to grips with how life works

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Soldier turned property mogul – page 27



“
We can
change
the
culture of
training
”

Servicewomen pushed to
the limit in quest for life-
changing data – page 42



Female friendly?



WHEN Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) steps into the Olympic boxing ring this month (page 64), she will become the first ever Servicewomen to do so.

Army support, she tells *Soldier*, has been vital in helping her find peak form.

On the flip side, Capt Lauren Taylor (REME) outlines how body armour designed with only men in mind has been holding her and others back in the day job (page 38).

Becoming female friendly, it seems, is something of a work in progress for the Army (page 42).

And what about culture change?

Something that struck me as we quizzed you on this topic (page 74) was how strongly opposed so many females are to the idea of special treatment.

Understandable, of course. But if women just keep “fitting in” to such a male-by-design environment, are they inadvertently helping to uphold the behaviours that cause them problems?

If the 90 per cent are to act on the things that only disadvantage a few, does that minority need to become more outspoken and honest about what needs to change? And would that not boost operational effectiveness rather than undermine it? We'd love your views.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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Picture: Graeme Main

Far more to do for women

Report calls for more female-friendly military, three years on from lift of infantry ban

BARRACK shirts may have been made smaller (page 13), body armour redesigned (page 38) and physical performance data collected (page 42) but the Army still has lots to do before it can be considered truly female-friendly.

That is the conclusion of a major report into the lives of Servicewomen past and present.

We Also Served: The Health and Wellbeing of Female Veterans in the UK used information from charities, the NHS and MoD plus those working with former personnel.

It found that although there has been progress in making the military more inclusive, a significant proportion of female soldiers still struggled to fit into its "masculine culture" and experienced sexism and sexual harassment.

Women, it said, feel as though they must adopt masculine traits to fit into its environment.

Top of its recommendations was for more to be done about the culture of Service life and sexual harassment – issues it said "have long been discussed but continue to persist".

The study was carried out by the Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research at Anglia Ruskin University.

Report author Lauren Godier-McBard commented: "Although it is clear that attitudes are slowly improving, there remains a lot to do to make women feel like they truly belong in the Armed Forces in 2021."

"We hope the recommendations will be acted upon as priority issues."

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty, said close attention would be paid.

But he added: "The majority of women have long and fulfilling careers in the military."

This time last year Lt Gen Ivan Jones, former Army gender champion, told *Soldier* that sexist conduct remained an issue in the ranks.

But he said that lockdown had given some male personnel better insight into the gender-related challenges women face in the workplace such as childcare responsibilities. ■

LAB WORK

The science experiments aiming to learn more about women's physical limits – page 42



SOLDIER

Editor Sarah Goldthorpe
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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

Assistant Editor Becky Clark
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor Cliff Caswell
ccaswell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Art Editor Tudor Morgan
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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

Photographer Peter Davies
01252 787103 (94222 7103)
pdavies@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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

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

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

Managing Editor Steve Muncey
smuncey@soldiermagazine.co.uk



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A taste of Army activity across the world

GLOBAL SITREP

1. ATLANTIC OCEAN

GPS-FREE ZONE

FORMER soldier Ian Rivers is a month into his bid to become the first person to complete an unsupported solo row of the Atlantic Ocean's northern route.

The 55-year-old, who served in 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery before joining the elite forces in a 27-year career, departed from New York on a 3,000-mile course for the Isles of Scilly. Using only the sun, stars and a sextant to guide him, he does not have access to GPS for navigation and has been rowing for between nine and 12 hours a day.

"I wanted to do something to test me and get back to the basics of the original ocean navigators," he said ahead of the challenge. "GPS is amazing but when you plot a route and let the computer guide you, you miss lots of things along the way."

Rivers hopes to complete his bid in late August or early September and aims to raise more than £500,000 for the SAS Regimental Association's Sentinels programme and St Michael's Hospice in Herefordshire.



2. BELIZE

SAPPERS GET STUCK IN

FACILITIES at British Army Training Support Unit Belize will be in good shape for future exercises thanks to the efforts of troops from 53 Field Squadron, 39 Engineer Regiment.

More than 100 soldiers have been working hard during Exercise Sailfish on a series of construction tasks both within Price Barracks and the surrounding jungle training estate.

Officer Commanding, Maj Richard Graham (RE), said the ten-week package was a chance for troops to boost their trade skills in an austere environment, while supporting the growth of the station as a regional operating hub.

"We have improved and developed more than 1.3km of track to facilitate rapid insertion to, and extraction from, live-firing ranges," he explained.

"Additionally, we have upgraded a remote base at Cooma Cairn in the Baldy Beacon Mountains, demolishing old dangerous buildings and refurbishing existing structures to enable future Infantry training."

Personnel have also carried out civil assistance tasks in the local community, visited Mayan ruins and explored rainforest cave systems – all while adhering to Covid safety measures.

The package culminates early this month in a three-day jungle survival package led by Belizean trackers.



Pictures: 2Lt Barker Pilsborth, RE

“
I was in the
form of my life
”

Doping drama hands Army bobsleighter late gold – page 69

1. ATLANTIC OCEAN

To donate to Rivers' appeal visit virginmoneygiving.com/fund/sentinel

3. FALKLAND ISLANDS

'WE WILL REMEMBER'

LIBERATION Day commemorations in the South Atlantic saw a return to normality this year after the 2020 events were scaled back with Covid restrictions.

Islanders joined forces with military personnel in paying tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the conflict with Argentina 39 years ago.

A thanksgiving service was held at Christ Church Cathedral in Port Stanley followed by a wreath laying at the war memorial. Troops later paraded through the capital.



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4. GERMANY

5. CYPRUS



NEW rates for local overseas allowance come into force this month. Find out what it means for you on page 22



4. GERMANY
DANGER CLOSE

TROOPS deployed on Sennelager Training Area had a rare opportunity to experience the power of the 105mm field gun up close during a so-called "inoculation shoot".

Part of the live-firing phase of Exercise Tallinn Dawn, the serial saw members of the Royal Tank Regiment Battlegroup hunker down in their armoured vehicles while proximity and point detonation artillery rounds landed 70m from their position.

Maj Mark Lewis (R Welsh) from Collective Training Group explained why the method had been used – for the first time in nearly 20 years.

"It's so that soldiers understand the effect of weapons systems and

what combined arms warfare is," he said. "It also helps develop their trust in the fire teams to deliver accurate covering fire."

With a stint on Operation Cabrit looming in September, the wider exercise was a step in the RTR's preparations for its first mission as a battlegroup in around a decade.

CO Lt Col Simon Worth (RTR), who took over three days before the package kicked off, said troops were keen to make their mark in Estonia.

"It's an opportunity to deepen our competency and to contribute to Nato and UK defence," he commented. "People are excited and energised to go."

AMPHIBIANS THRIVE IN NATURAL HABITAT

THE Army's wide, wet gap crossing experts took to the waterways of north Germany for a two-week shake out of specialist skills.

In temperatures topping 35 degrees Celsius, 70 members of Sennelager-based 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron were put through basic infantry drills before consolidating their amphibious training.

Commenting as Exercise Neptune's Abyss drew to a close, WO2 Keith Stubbs (RE) said: "Using seven rigs we bridged a total of 537m across the River Weser in Minden, Hameln and Jossen.

"Everyone was glad to be out on the water again after the disruption caused by Covid and we are now a step closer to full operating capability in July 2022."





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Picture: Peter Davies

ENTRIES to the annual Sanctuary Awards are open until the end of this month. Organised by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the scheme showcases sustainability efforts across defence – in the UK and overseas. There are six categories, with one of the winners awarded the Silver Otter Trophy for the best establishment, conservation group, community-led project or individual conservation effort on the MoD estate. Last year this was bestowed on Chicksands, home to the Intelligence Corps. The site's grade-two listed garden had been neglected but a team restored its wildlife pond, flower beds and grapevines to make it a valued recreation area. "The awards showcase our commitment to tackle the climate change and sustainability challenge, rightly recognising the positive impact our projects and people are making," said Maj Gen David Southall, the Army's director of basing and infrastructure. Visit gov.uk/guidance/ministry-of-defence-sanctuary-awards

Goggles will 'transform' the fight

BRITISH troops are poised to become more formidable when fighting after sundown with the imminent arrival of new night vision kit.

Army equipment chiefs say the lightweight image intensifying goggles plus clip-on infrared thermal imager (pictured right) will offer a battle-winning capability.

It fuses the next-generation night vision equipment with a powerful heat-detecting capability.

With deliveries due to new Ranger battalions from January, the combo gives wearers a wide field of view and ability to see targets 500 metres away.

It replaces the existing helmet-mounted system, procured as an urgent operational requirement for Op Herrick more than a decade ago.

Lt Col Mike Baxter (Mercian), who oversees the evaluation of personal kit at Army Headquarters, said mixing the two assets would offer a "step change" in capability.

"Each system is state-of-the-art, but when combined they transform the way we fight," he told *Soldier*. "They can also be integrated into our digitalised soldier systems, such as the dismounted situational awareness capability."



Picture: Instru Precision

He continued: "The latest kit delivers an effectiveness that is several times greater than the in-service equipment.

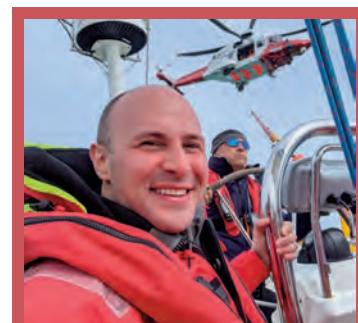
"But this field is moving fast and we're looking ahead."

The package follows multi-million pound deals with Kent-based firm Instru Precision and thermal imaging specialist Thermoteknix in Cambridge.

Announcing the arrival of the assets, Defence Equipment and Support boss Maj Gen Darren Crook told reporters: "Ensuring that our soldiers maintain a battle-winning edge while keeping them safe is at the forefront of our minds.

"The new goggles and thermal imaging clip-ons will do both, meaning the Armed Forces can continue to protect our nation's interests."

“This field is moving fast”



Coastguard call

TROOPS taking part in a sailing expedition around the UK had a dramatic twist with their adventurous training when they found themselves participating in a coastguard exercise.

The five crew aboard the Royal Artillery yacht St Barbara V had to keep their vessel steady as a specialist paramedic was winched aboard from a hovering helicopter.

The boat is taking crews from across the Army on the 12-leg Exercise Dragon Magellan. Sailing out of Gosport, it is due to return there in September.

Col Jules Facer was acting as skipper when the coastguard radioed.

"You do not get this type of call very often and our troops absolutely loved it – it was great training for them as much as it was for those in the helicopter," the officer said.

The expedition was continuing as this issue went to press, when the boat was passing the village of Ullapool in the Scottish Highlands.



Picture: Graeme Main

GAME ON FOR LIONS STAR

BRITISH and Irish Lions star Luke Cowan-Dickie made a flying visit to Middle Wallop to officially open the Army Aviation Centre's new esports suite.

The Exeter Chiefs forward arrived at the site via Wildcat before witnessing a PT display and cutting the ribbon on the £80,000 facility, which boasts an array of cutting-edge gaming kit and accessories.

Featuring ten PCs and ten PlayStation 5s, as well as hi-tech monitors and headsets, the project was funded by the Land Warfare Centre and is designed to give personnel on initial trade training something to do on camp. It will also double as a venue for the Army Air Corps' esports team.

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Commitment to the female cause

Picture: Peter Davies



Soldier's work singled out in latest Queen's birthday honours list

A SENIOR soldier has spoken of her pride at making history by assisting women into ground close combat roles at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick.

WO2 Sheridan Lucas (RLC) said it had been an honour to help create the first integrated male and female platoons as a company sergeant major at the base.

And she admitted being stunned to hear that her trailblazing work had been recognised with an MBE in the 2021 Queen's birthday honours line-up.

"I was very lucky to see the first female recruits, having taken them through their training and watch them pass off," she told *Soldier*.

She added: "I am shocked and overwhelmed – the role at ITC was a real privilege."

WO2 Lucas, who is currently based at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, was among more than 50 Service personnel to receive awards in the latest roll call.

The list reflected troops of different roles, ranks and cap badges.

It included CSgt James Lambie, who was made an MBE for his compassionate and innovative approach to troops undergoing rehab.

The senior NCO, currently a company quartermaster with 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, had once been in the same position and said he relished the opportunity to return the favour for his soldiers.

Elsewhere, troops stepping up in support of NHS colleagues and driving Op Rescript forward were singled out for recognition.

MBE recipients included Maj Andrew Buckley (RAMC), who had been on a fellowship with Strategic Command's medical innovation unit when the outbreak began last year.

The doctor's research included work on a data pooling tool, showing how the pandemic was unfolding. He also used his expertise to take forward a ventilator programme.

Maj Buckley, currently working at the Army Medical Directorate, said: "I'd never even begun to consider myself as someone deserving of such a prestigious award."

"I was just thrilled to have been lucky enough to work in such unbelievable teams during the pandemic."

Brig Sara Sharkey was awarded the CBE for overseeing cloud hosting and the setting up of remote working during the crisis.

“
I am shocked
”

WO2 Sheridan Lucas, RLC

Getting shirty

■ A NEW unisex barrack shirt has been designed and will be issued to personnel from this month.

It comes in smaller sizes than the previous garment and is tailored so that those of a shorter stature don't end up with the pockets tucked into their belts.

The changes were made after complaints about the former version from personnel. Here are the full details of all the shirt's modifications:



NEW FEATURES

- **Pocket angles** changed for better accessibility.
- **Pockets scaled** to the dimensions of the garment rather than being one size
- **Sleeves now of a tailored design**, with angle changed to prevent lots of spare material under the arm
- **Smaller 150cm** height size available
- **Chest sizes amended** so they increase in increments of 5cm rather than 8cm

THAT LIST IN FULL...

Queen's birthday honours 2021

KCB Gen Timothy Radford **CB** Lt Gen Douglas Chalmers; Maj Gen Neil Sexton **KBE** Lt Gen Christopher Tickell **CBE** Col Jeremy Bagshaw; Brig James Senior; **OBE** Maj Gregory Andrews (RE); Lt Col Robert Cloke (Int Corps); Lt Col Elizabeth Fieldhouse (RAMC); Lt Col Shamus Kelly (RRF); Lt Col David Pack (RGR); Col Daniel Rea; Lt Colonel Dylan Read (RLC); Maj Christopher Roberts (RAPTC); Rev Andrew Totten (RAChD) **MBE** Lt Col Piers Ashfield (Gren Gds); Maj Matthew Bagshaw (REME); Lt Col Duncan Bailey (AGC (SPS)); Sgt Keith Baker (REME); Ssgt Jamie Barrett (RL); WO1 Angus Bartaby (AAC); Maj Andrew Buckley (RAMC); Capt Paul Colville (Scots); Lt Col Robert Davison (Lancs); Capt Jayne Donaghue (AGC (SPS)); Lt Col Richard Green (Gren Gds); Maj Gerald Hedger (RA); WO2 Richard Helmn (Yorks); Maj Luke Hoare (AAC); Rev Alan Jeans (RAChD); Maj Gavin Kimberlin (Mercian); Csgt James Lambie (Para); Maj James Lowen (REME); WO2 Sheridan Lucas (RLC); Maj Norman Macleod (ACF); Maj Kenneth Pickering (ACF); WO2 James Powell (Para); Capt Joseph Read (AGC (ETS)); Capt Michael Ridley (R Signals); Capt Vivekjung Shah (QOGLR); Ssgt Simon Spriggs (Int Corps); Lt Col Alasdair Steele (Scots); Maj Toshiaki Suzuki (Para); Maj Christopher Taylor (RAMC); Lt Col Patricia Walters (RAMC); Maj Damian Warren (RE); WO1 Daniel Windfield (RLC); Maj Nicholas Zorab (R Welsh) **RRC** Col Sharon Findlay **ARRC** Ssgt Tracey Culley (QARANC) **QVRM** WO2 Andrew Eke (RLC); Col Thammy Evans; Maj Cyril Stevenson (RLC); WO2 Samuel Vandal (RE)



TRAINING VISITS PLANNED

ARMY training bosses have been warned that their protocols could come under scrutiny as the Health and Safety Executive carries out snap visits over the coming months.

The move, which has the backing of Army HQ and the MoD, will see inspectors arriving at bases unannounced between mid-September and November this year.

Read [ABN 047/2021](#) for details.

IN NUMBERS

3,600

Members who have joined the Army Parents' Network Facebook group since it was set up four years ago. The private forum supports serving parents and the chain of command with information and advice

CRIME CAUSES EXPLORED

THE numbers of military veterans who have fallen foul of the law is to be investigated in a new project.

Led by social justice charity Nacro, the 18-month programme will examine how some Service leavers end up in the criminal justice system, how they might be identified in future and the type of support that is available to them.



BANGER SPOTS AVAILABLE

PLACES are still available for teams wanting to take part in the inaugural UK veterans banger rally.

The event – which is raising money for SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and the Captain Tom Foundation – starts at the National Memorial Arboretum on September 7 and features legs to Llandudno, Torquay, Skegness, Newcastle and Runcorn.

Visit [veteransbangerrally.co.uk](#)



Signals shape new era

EW trades and training opportunities are set to dramatically improve the life chances of the Army's 6,000-odd Royal Signals personnel.

Project Caduceus is the biggest organisational overhaul in the corps' 100-year history.

Capt Gaz Mackenzie (R Signals), who is on the project team, said every soldier and officer – including those in the Queen's Gurkha Signals – would be affected by the changes.

"We need to update our knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the modern battlefield," he explained.

"Previously, we were trained to operate in the Cold War scenario and latterly in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the digital revolution and rise of the cyber domain required us to radically change."

The programme is not due to be completed for several years, but some changes have already received positive feedback from troops.

These include a new culture of continuous professional development, an effort to get soldiers applying more analytical thinking, up-to-date technical and leadership training and the introduction of industry-aligned

qualifications that are also relevant to civvy street

"The standout element for me is the upskilling," Capt Mackenzie continued. "This will give our existing personnel the knowledge and skills they would have gained had they joined more recently."

He added: "I started out as a systems engineering technician and we were very much capability focused – all learning was based on the equipment we used. Promotion was also complex and involved many factors out of my control."

"But now soldiers will be given the opportunity to have through-life training to prepare and challenge them for each stage of their career."

It is hoped one benefit will be better retention of personnel.

"So far this has been a real success story," Capt Mackenzie said.

"At the start there were doubters. People tend not to like change – especially soldiers. But they are starting to see the benefits."

"The project has been turning heads in the wider military and the Australian and Canadian forces too. We often receive comments asking how we have managed to procure this learning for our people."



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LAST month's spine line clues were probably guessed by those belonging to the airborne fraternity.

(Brig James)

Chiswell, (Brig John) Clark, (Brig James) Martin and (Brig Peter) Wall were – or are – commanders of 16 Air Assault Brigade, the Army's rapid response airborne formation.

This month we have teamed up with Walking With the Wounded to offer one reader a free team place at this year's Cumbrian Challenge on September 11.

Worth £280, the prize will see you and three mates tackle a route across the stunning peaks of the Lake District at your chosen difficulty level.

Visit [join.walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/event/cumbrian-challenge-2021](http://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/event/cumbrian-challenge-2021) for more.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us what links the words on the spine of this month's magazine. Answers, including daytime phone number, to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by July 30.



SPINE LINE COMPETITION

NEWS IN NUMBERS

500

Veterans who have received help and support from Forces charity Launchpad. The organisation, set up in 2013, has two houses in Liverpool and Newcastle to help prevent homelessness and unemployment. Visit veteranslaunchpad.org.uk

“
There are so
many who
deserve the
award
”

Could your next idea help Nato?

UK's top serving officer says troops will have vital innovation role

BRITISH personnel with great ideas will play a key role in helping Nato meet future threats, its most senior military officer has told *Soldier*.

Speaking to this magazine after the alliance's latest summit in Brussels, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach (shown right) said new technologies would be at the heart of Nato's response to challenges such as climate change. And troops on the ground have a vital contribution to make.

“Innovation can't just be left to universities and think tanks,” the outgoing military committee chairman explained. “Some of the best ideas have come from the soldiers themselves – often in a way that the designer or engineer who built the equipment hadn't thought of.

“For example, we have to do something to reduce the weight of batteries that Service personnel carry, and to bring artificial intelligence to the battlefield.

“We can also do more to reduce our use of fossil fuels by using technology such as drones more effectively. It's not a primary military task but it's time we had that conversation.”

Last month's summit – the first to take place since 2018 – stated that Russian aggression remains a primary



threat to Nato.

However, in a new development, China's growing influence was also named as a concern.

Reflecting on the implications for UK troops, ACM Peach added: “The rise of China is shifting the global balance of power and challenging the rules-based international system that has kept us prosperous for the last 60 or 70 years.

“It is modernising its forces, is aggressive in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives and is very active in Africa and the Middle East.

“So wherever British soldiers deploy they will have to think about China.

“It's a serious business. The military contribution through Nato is really important, and personnel must understand that they are part of a bigger thing.”

ACM Peach is retiring from the Forces after a 50-year career.

Selfless nurse put in the spotlight

A RESERVIST who assumed various roles in the fight against Covid-19 has had her efforts acknowledged at the British Journal of Nursing Awards.

Cpl Juliet Bale (QARANC) was a runner-up in the “infection prevention nurse of the year” category, with her commitment to nursing drawing praise from organisers.

The soldier, who works as the infection prevention and control lead at South East Coast Ambulance Service, was initially called to arms when she volunteered to attend a patient with suspected symptoms who arrived in the country from Wuhan in January last year.



With no confirmed cases in the UK at the time, Cpl Bale donned personal protective equipment and obtained the required blood, nose and mouth swabs which were delivered to a local hospital lab.

She later contributed to national Covid guidance, volunteered as a nurse at London's Nightingale Hospital and helped with the national vaccination programme – all while completing her master's course.

“I feel incredibly humbled to have been shortlisted,” the soldier, who serves with 254 Medical Regiment, said. “There are so many nurses who have stepped up and gone above and beyond during the pandemic who deserve the award.”



Crisis call

Picture: Graeme Main and Freepik

Listening service throws lifeline to struggling soldier

ASUICIDAL soldier was saved from potential harm thanks to the quick thinking of staff on the defence anti-bullying helpline.

Civvy call handler Vicki Behenna-Byrne explained how the "highly emotive" incident unfolded during her shift on the 24/7 service earlier this year – a few months after the facility was set up.

"The caller wanted to remain anonymous," she told *Soldier*.

"They explained what had been happening in the workplace and I was listening to them and providing them with support.

"At first they said they were feeling tired, which didn't particularly ring any alarm bells. But that led to them saying they had been having suicidal thoughts.

"I carried on listening – I wanted to allow them space to talk.

"They began to open up a bit more, so I asked whether they felt comfortable disclosing further details so that I could get them the right support. And they did.

"There was no pressure, but they gave me their name, location and military ID. I just wanted to make sure they were safe and weren't going to act on their thoughts. They were quite emotional and upset.

"My manager then contacted the soldier's local medical centre, who alerted the on-call doctor."

The helpline team was later informed that the individual concerned remained safe and well.

"We couldn't thank the medical centre enough for how quickly they reacted," Mrs Behenna-Byrne added, saying it was a call she would "never really forget".

"It's quite emotional talking about it – even now," she continued. "I wouldn't say I saved a life, but I think the caller felt reassured.

"I want other personnel to know we are here for them too. If people just want to offload anonymously and not progress anything, or just need an ear to listen, we are here.

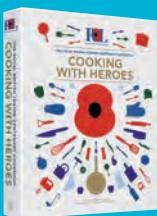
"And we are completely external to the MoD."

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, said the story showed the value of such services for the military.

"It is important that everyone knows the support that is available to them and uses it if needed," he said.

Run by employee support organisation Health Assured, the helpline was set up last September following recommendations in the 2019 Wigston Review into inappropriate behaviour in the Armed Forces.

It is a safe space for any member of MoD staff who has experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination and is staffed by trained advisers and counsellors.



■ SOLDIERS and celebrities have come together to create a cookbook marking the 100th anniversary of The Royal British Legion. *Cooking with Heroes* features contributions from 150 military personnel, as well as recipes from well-known chefs such as Jamie Oliver and the Hairy Bikers. It celebrates cuisine from 100 areas of the UK and Commonwealth, with each dish accompanied by an inspiring story from troops who hail from the region. WO1 Alun Evans (REME), who helped produce the book, said it "brought home the breadth of heroic deeds" in Service history. Buy the book, priced £19.95, at stjamess.org/product/cooking-with-heroes



“
I just wanted to make sure they were safe
“

BOXER PROTOTYPE GETS GOING

■ THE Army reached another significant step in its Boxer programme when welding work began for the creation of its first prototypes.

More than 500 platforms will be delivered in a £2.8 billion deal announced in 2018, and the Service is set to receive infantry carrier, specialist carrier, command vehicle and ambulance variants.

The majority of the fleet will be built in the UK by contractors Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) and WFEL, supported by a nationwide supply chain that will secure some 1,000 jobs.

Rheinmetall will develop and fabricate initial prototypes at its plant in Kassel, Germany, where the first series vehicles will also be produced.

Workers at the plant will share technical knowledge, particularly their specialist welding expertise, with British colleagues at RBSL.

Delivery of the highly protected 8x8 armoured vehicles is due to begin at the end of 2022, with the first platforms then scheduled to be ready for service in 2023.

NO DETAILS REQUIRED

The defence anti-bullying helpline is open to all Service personnel and MoD civil servants and can be contacted 24/7 on

0800 783 0334
or
+44 161 830 2535
(overseas)

It is independent of the military and callers can remain anonymous



AIR YOUR VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION

■ VIEWS are being sought on whether immigration fees should be waived for foreign and Commonwealth soldiers if they want to transition to UK civvy street.

Currently troops face forking out almost £2,500 if they want to stay after their service.

But ministers are suggesting this could be cut out for those who serve at least 12 years.

The Royal British Legion says this is far longer than a typical UK national serves and should be reduced further.

Have your say at surveys.mod.uk before July 7. Results will be published this autumn.



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

AS I PUT pen to paper this month the reality is dawning that my time in this job – a role I never expected to have – is fast drawing to a close.

It has been a packed couple of years and, while the end may now be in sight, life remains as hectic as ever. There is much I'd still like to see achieved and I hope some of my bigger unfinished projects will be continued by my successor.

There have certainly been many high points in my time as Army sergeant major and the opening of more opportunities to women has been one.

We are now seeing the first female troops in ground close combat roles, which would have been unimaginable when I joined up nearly 25 years ago.

I've also chaired seminars on gender issues, where soldier witnesses have bravely put forward their own negative experiences of serving so we can learn from them.

It has been humbling to hear these stories. They remind us both how far we have come and how we must strive to do better.

Kit is one example of where we still need to improve for our serving females – for too long they have

put up with designs based around the male physique. They must feel comfortable in, and able to operate with, their issued equipment.

So in this issue it is great to see a female cohort of officer cadets at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst testing a version of Virtus specially tailored to their bodies (page 38).

Their feedback will be invaluable in shaping future design.

It is worth pointing out that what we wear in the Army is about so much more than clothing – we're not talking about the likes of a shirt for the office.

We need it to stay safe doing our job as much as it is part of our collective identity.

Virtus is actually very good. The kit is far better than anything I was issued as a young soldier.

It is still not perfect, but the design team have been continuing to work hard to make adjustments based on the feedback.

If you have a concern about Virtus then my plea – as always – is to raise it through the established channels.

Make your views known in the right way so that they can be addressed – and changes built into future versions of the kit. Let's work together to move forward.

“
We must strive to do better
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q Do you have a favourite course?

A Definitely the platoon sergeant battle course – tough, interesting and I met some great people



A fair climb

THE first senior soldier entry course of the new centralised Army officer selection board is taking place next month.

There have been a series of online briefs to set candidates up for success.

It's a big change, but I hope people see it as an opportunity, not a threat.

This is a time to create parity across the Service and set one common standard to become an officer in our great team.

I went through something similar when the Infantry centralised

its board, so I know what it feels like – but people don't need to be concerned.

Having this all done in one place, with staff who are properly resourced, trained and held to account will make sure we take the right people into that cohort.

I visited the pilot last year and the Programme Castle team have worked really hard to ensure fairness for everyone.

Rest assured there has been soldiers' input – and my input – to make it as positive as possible.



■ SOLDIERS have truly proved their versatility during the Covid crisis – and even troops from non-medical backgrounds have been trained to administer vaccines. Personnel from 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery are a case in point. I recently visited the Larkhill-based gunners to hear more about their work across the country, in a totally different role from the day job. They join colleagues deployed in many roles in support of the NHS. You should all be very proud.

SIERRA ALPHA VICTOR ECHO



PUMA ECOBOOST MILD HYBRID

PROUD TO OFFER CURRENT AND FORMER MILITARY PERSONNEL SAVINGS ON SELECTED VEHICLES.

 **BRING ON
TOMORROW**

Model shown is a New Puma ST-Line X 1.0 155PS Mild Hybrid Electric Vehicle (MHEV) Petrol 6 speed manual with optional LED Headlights and Driver Assistance Pack. Fuel economy mpg (l/100km) (Combined): 47.9 (5.9). CO₂ emissions 135g/km.

Vehicle shown may not reflect latest UK specifications.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes only; they only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

Search: Ford Military Sales

ford.co.uk



MEMORIAL IN NUMBERS

33

football pitches
that would cover
the memorial site

its distance, in
metres, from
Gold Beach

700

tonnes
of stone
used in
the build

3,700

22,442

names listed on the pillars



● Take a virtual tour via the
British Normandy Memorial app



SALUTING THE FALLEN

■ A MEMORIAL to the 19 Gurkha soldiers killed on operations over the last two decades has been unveiled at Helles Barracks, Catterick.

An honour guard of Nepalese troops took part in the service while a bugler played the last post.

Capt Ram Rai, who has been overseeing the structure's installation at the trainee accommodation, said: "The new recruits will learn respect from this – it is an awesome piece."

Pictures: Kiran Ridley and Peter Davies



Heroes of D-Day honoured

IT WAS not what veterans had in mind for the official opening of their long-awaited British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer.

But last month, on the 77th anniversary of D-Day, the impressive monument was opened in near silence by a tiny group of dignitaries as the main audience watched the event on a big screen at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Their location was a far cry from the 50-acre hillside site overlooking Gold Beach in Ver-sur-Mer, but it nevertheless provided a fitting place to remember the 22,442 Servicemen and women who fell on D-Day as well as during the Battle of Normandy in 1944, and whose names adorn the impressive structure.

Around 100 Normandy veterans turned out for the event, which also included coverage of The Royal British Legion's service of remembrance in Bayeux, a two-minute silence and a formal presentation of their Legion d'Honneur to Normandy veterans.

Doug Farrington (pictured near left), 95, who served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, said the event had been "wonderful" – albeit from a distance.

"The new memorial is really important – it's not for us, it's for the lads who didn't come home, the real heroes of Normandy," he told *Soldier*.

"Obviously it would have been fantastic to go to France, but in many ways this was better because I was able to meet up with loads of other veterans and friends that I remembered from the MV Boudicca two years ago."

The £30m memorial was funded by the UK government, private donations and fundraising efforts after years of campaigning by D-Day veterans.

Lord Peter Ricketts, Chairman of the Normandy Memorial Trust, said the opening represented a "dream come true" to the veterans.

In a video message on the day, the Prince of Wales, the trust's patron, added that watching by satellite link "in no way obscures the enormous regard, and admiration, in which we hold our veterans".



Picture: Cpl Nathan Tanuku, RLC

Pandemic pride revealed

TROOPS' pride at their work during the Covid crisis has shone through in the latest continuous attitude survey results.

In an interview with *Soldier* about the 2021 poll, Director Personnel Brig Nathan Sempala-Ntege said the intensive deployment on Op Rescript had likely influenced the outcome.

In particular, he pointed out that some 81 per cent of soldiers said they were proud of their organisation – a growth of six points on last year.

There was also growing contentment with flexible working opportunities, which had increased due to the coronavirus restrictions.

The senior officer said: "The Army has a can-do attitude when it comes to problem solving and this is something that we have seen in the pandemic.

"People have been able to put their skills to use at a time of great need and this has contributed to a sense of

pride of being in the Service."

On flexible working, he added: "I don't think we are going back to the status quo before the outbreak.

"Clearly it is not possible across all parts of the Army, but we must offer these practices where we can in order to attract and retain the right people."

Satisfaction with Service life and basic pay were up compared to the last survey.

However, only a third of respondents were satisfied with catering and just 22 per cent with facilities in barracks.

Brig Sempala-Ntege said that only a third of respondents believing the Army would act on the study's findings was also "disappointing".

He stressed that robust action was being taken in several key areas – with accommodation for single soldiers top of the list.

A top-level review of catering is also now under way.

MEDALS MOUNT

DISTANCE runner Maj Brett Bader (AGC (ETS)) has finished a painstaking fundraising challenge that has seen him tackle 17 marathons and more than 110 half marathons in the past 12 months.

The Reservist initially set himself a target of completing five local events in 2020 – but having caught the running bug his ambitions soon escalated.

"When lockdown kicked in, I started looking at ways to keep fit," the officer told *Soldier*.

"It began with a walk and run and then I built up my distance."

"I've done the London Marathon, as well as events in Riga, Penang and Miami – I've

been all over the place."

With Covid-19 protocols meaning travel has not been possible, Maj Bader has been competing in the virtual realm – with his efforts logged on *Strava*.

"They've all been official races and the aim was to collect a collage of medals from around the world," he explained.

The runner has covered around 2,000 miles and raised more than £1,000 in his various challenges, some of which have been completed in a rhino suit to raise awareness of one of his charities – Save the Rhino.

Proceeds will also be donated to Epilepsy Research UK.



FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

Signallers surge

ENDURANCE runners LCpl Declan Gaffney (pictured), LCpl Niter Gurung and LCpl Duncan Smith (all R Signals) covered 100 miles in the space of three days as part of the national Captain Tom 100 campaign. The trio tackled the challenge near their Staffordshire barracks. "It was great to be able to do this for Captain Tom," said LCpl Gaffney. Visit uk.virginmoneygiving.com/declangaffney



Amount raised: £925
For: Royal Star and Garter



Packing a punch

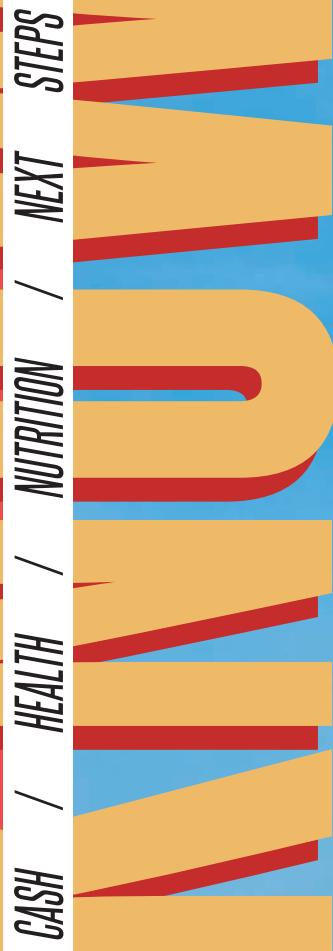
PROFESSIONAL boxer and former soldier Perry Howe (ex-RE) has been selling his sporting merchandise, with one pound from every sale going to military charity SSAFA. He also raffled tickets for his shows in support of the cause. Visit justgiving.com/fundraising/perry-howe

Amount raised: £2,000
For: SSAFA

Peak performers

TWO loggers took on the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge in aid of SSAFA. Pte Regan Smith and Pte Dave Brewer stormed the 39-mile hike over Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough in less than 16 hours. To donate visit gofundme.com/f/yorkshire-3-peaks-x2

WHAT'S NEEDED TO LIVE ON ABROAD



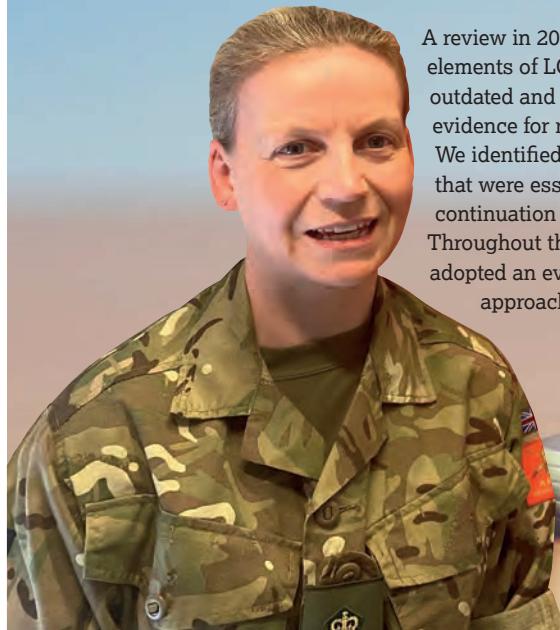
LOA: the lowdown

Soldier grills Service pay chief on shake-up to local overseas allowance

▶ FROM this month, personnel serving abroad will see their LOA rates change as part of the biggest overhaul to the system since it was introduced in 1981.

The big news is that payments will no longer be rank-dependent, but that's not the whole story, as Army Pay Colonel, Col Louise Green, explains...

Why is this being done?



A review in 2015 found that elements of LOA had become outdated and some of the evidence for rates was flawed. We identified improvements that were essential to justify its continuation as non-taxable. Throughout the project we adopted an evidence-based approach

What are the main changes?

Rank-banding will be removed. All officers and soldiers will now receive the same amount based on their personal circumstances. Also, vehicle and respite provision – which contributed towards travel costs – are no longer included as part of LOA. Instead, troops will claim these costs in lump sums when the expense is incurred

How were the new rates calculated?

Using information from a commercial data provider called Employment Conditions Abroad to compare UK and overseas living costs. We then added a location factor that considers legal, vehicle and other requirements and an environmental factor, which takes into account remoteness, quality



of life and air quality. A booklet explaining how the rates are calculated is available via the QR code below

Which overseas stations have gone up the most, and which have gone down?

Belgium, Germany, Kenya and Falkland Islands-based personnel have all received increases to daily rates, while soldiers in Brunei and Cyprus will see reductions. However, the new figures are not directly comparable to the old ones because vehicle and respite are now claimed separately

Some locations have decreased significantly – why?

Because the data shows this was required to meet a comparable UK living standard in those countries. And remember that without the rank-banding, vehicle and respite elements, the rates will be lower. Direct comparison remains unhelpful

Which ranks have gained or lost the most?

Changes in daily rates mainly depend on your location. However, the introduction of one rank-band will mean that corporals and below will move up, while lieutenant colonels and above will move down

When will I get the extra money if my rate has increased?

Immediately – in your July pay packet

If my LOA is decreasing, will I lose it all at once?

No. Reductions will be phased in gradually over three years from this month, split equally over the transition period, to give people time to adjust. The QR code will show you how your payments will decrease. You can claim vehicle costs incurred from April 1 of this year, however

Won't this make serving in some overseas bases unattractive?

Commercial data, which takes account of the environment and location, still provides a contribution to the cost of living in each place. Where there are special circumstances, overseas commands can apply for additional factors to be considered in the LOA rate. The process and forms are in **JSP 752**

What kind of response have you had from personnel?

While communicating the changes via a series of virtual town hall meetings we received positive feedback for the vehicle provision, the removal of rank-banding and for retaining split net pay – whereby troops can pay a proportion of their wage directly into their overseas bank accounts without additional charges. Concerns were raised regarding specific in-country costs and these points can continue to be highlighted through the chain of command – via the JSP



Eat to beat re-entry fatigue

Foods to help conquer post-lockdown lethargy

► AFTER months of confinement, it stands to reason that a more normal routine can seem a bit full on.

Besides getting enough sleep, these tweaks to your diet can help boost energy levels if a few weeks of semi-freedom have left you feeling drained...

Get your five a day

Fruit and veg are good sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre – essential nutrients that your body needs to work properly. Try to eat a variety of different types, whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced

Aim for balance

Starchy carbs – such as potatoes, wholegrain bread, rice or pasta – should make up just over a third of what you eat. Eat some protein, too, including beans, pulses, eggs, meat and two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily

Eat at regular intervals

To sustain consistent energy levels try to eat three meals a day, with healthy snacks such as fruit or low-fat yoghurt in between if necessary

...and don't skip breakfast

Go for options such as porridge made with lower-fat milk or water, low-sugar, high-fibre breakfast cereals or boiled or poached eggs with wholemeal toast. If you can't face eating as soon as you get up, take a piece of fruit to eat on the go

Get enough iron

Being low in iron can make you feel tired and run down. Red meat, green vegetables, beans, nuts and fortified foods such as breakfast cereals are good sources

Stay hydrated

Make sure you drink plenty of fluids – the government recommends six to eight glasses every day. Water, lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks are healthier choices. Alcohol can not only dehydrate you but disturb your sleep, so limit your intake

Cut down on sugar

Don't be tempted to seek out the immediate pick-me-up of a sugary snack. The energy rush wears off quickly and it's bad for your teeth and waistline, too. Choose low-fat yoghurt, nuts or dried fruit instead

Be wary of so-called superfoods

No single food or supplement can compensate for unhealthy eating. Most people don't need to take vitamins to improve their energy levels – they can get all they need through a healthy, balanced diet



GET SUPPORT

For more dietary advice go to www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well or the Defence Nutrition Advisory Service page on Defence Connect

Self starters

Two entrepreneurial veterans reveal how they got their post-Army ventures off the ground

THE PRODUCT DEVELOPER

► AFTER deciding to tread a non-traditional path after service, former Royal Artillery colonel Barry Jenkins has taken on a host of different roles including music impresario, charity auctioneer and investment bank adviser.

But over a cocktail in 2018, he came up with his most unusual idea yet – a phone charger with a military twist.

Tell us about the product

It's a 10,000-milliamp per hour portable power pack in the shape of a jerrycan

Where did you get the idea from?

I was served a cocktail in a miniature aluminium jerrycan and it stuck with me. It's such an iconic piece of kit, known by anyone who's served in the military, anywhere in the world. I ran with the link between refuelling and powering your phone on the go

What's the USP?

Apart from the shape, it's rugged, you can choose what logo or cap badge you want on the side and part of the profits go to support Blesma, the limbless veterans' charity. Also, other than the electronics which are made in China, everything else is made in the UK. That puts the unit price up, but I'm proud to be investing in British firms

How long did it take?

Three years. The lead time is extraordinary. That was part of the learning curve

What other skills did you have to learn?

Marketing, design, sales, PR – everything. In the Army, if I want to attack a position I know I need engineers to cross that river, I know I'll need some signallers, artillery and so on. But with this I didn't even know what I needed – was it an engineer or a designer? And where do I find one? That's the fun of it, but it keeps you awake at night. It was an absolute white-knuckle ride



What setbacks did you encounter?

Covid – and not being able to meet people face-to-face. And because batteries are hazardous goods, the electronic testing process took longer than I hoped. But it's incredibly rewarding when it all comes together. I was out walking the dog when my phone pinged for the first time to tell me someone had made a purchase online – it's a great sound

Any breakthrough moments?

Getting myself a good accountant. They know everyone and mine introduced me to a mentor, who encouraged me along the way. You need a few hints, someone to hold your hand

How did you finance it?

Partly with my gratuity from leaving the Army, but this has cost me much more than I expected. It's a terrifying gamble. You can look for investors, although you will have to pay them back and you risk losing your intellectual property. It's also





worth talking to your resettlement officer about any grants available

Any tips for fellow Service-leavers?

If you genuinely believe your product will sell, even in a crowded marketplace, then go for it. An entrepreneur is someone who takes risks and soldiers are taught to take calculated risks. Listen to that gut instinct you are trained to develop in the Army

● To contact Barry Jenkins or find out more about the product go to **fueltheadventure.co.uk**, where *Soldier* readers can also take advantage of a 15 per cent discount by quoting the code "SOLDIER15" before September 10

THE PROPERTY MOGUL

▶ **PAUL** Tinker, a former corporal in the Royal Engineers, struggled to find his feet after leaving the Army in 2008.

Outwardly, life was good. After a stint in the construction industry he began working for a global energy company, where he rapidly climbed the ranks.

However, the experience left him feeling burnt out and using alcohol as a crutch, so in 2018 he went sober and began making a name for himself in property development.

Tell us about your company

It's called the Construction Training Academy. My niche in the property space is refurbishment project management. There's no other person teaching it in the whole of the UK. I've also built a property portfolio of my own

Where did you start?

I took redundancy from my last job and used that money to start a business as a handyman. I put an ad on a Tesco noticeboard and my first job was mounting a TV in someone's house. Word spread and within three weeks I was hired to build an extension, at which point I decided I needed to hire another labourer. Within six months I had 17 guys working for me all over Lincolnshire. We turned over £300,000 that first year, which was really exciting for a start-up

What was your next step?

I founded a property development company to start buying properties, as well as a health and safety consultancy and the training business, which is where I spend most of my time now. I'm also writing for magazines, doing podcasts and I've appeared on Sky TV discussing my journey. And from next month I'll have a regular slot on a new radio station called Tradio

Did you make any mistakes on the way?

When I started I lost £9,000 on a property because I didn't know what I was doing. So I went away and got educated. The key to unlocking profit is adding value effectively and efficiently. It's so doable, given the right skills and training – that's what I teach now

What is your five-year plan?

We will have a property portfolio worth £5 million. This year alone we will add £1 million in value. Just like in the military, if you don't plan you can't be

disciplined, and you won't achieve your goals. It's like getting into a taxi without knowing the destination. You'll stay on the spot

Sounds like everything has fallen into place...

I love what I do now, but I found the move to civvy street really, really tough. It took me a good two years to get to grips with how life works – for example, getting used to the idea that there was no medical centre and having to pay for prescriptions, basic stuff like that

How did your decision to quit drinking affect your life?

I wouldn't have built the business to the stage it's at if I was still boozing – it's the focus; the ability to remain motivated all day without thinking about that first drink. I get up at 0500 every morning and have a strict regime. I'm so much more organised and disciplined. I don't ever see myself drinking again

● Contact Paul Tinker via constructiontrainingacademy.com





Helping you make the most of your money

Financial products and services exclusively for those who support and serve in the Army and their families. Forces Mutual understands the needs of the Armed Forces and we're here to help you make the most of your money.



Kit & Personal Possessions Insurance



Car Insurance



Personal Accident Insurance



Life Insurance



Mortgage Advice provided by
Tenet Mortgage Solutions



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BETHEBEST

App trial taps into troops' competitive spirit ➤



“
Superiors
can see who
is an effective
soldier
”

IN THE cut and thrust of a combined arms exercise – with heavy armour rumbling across the countryside and artillery rounds thudding in the distance – one missed shot from an individual soldier might seem fairly insignificant.

Alongside hundreds of colleagues and convoys of hardware, it is – at times – difficult for those on the ground to appreciate their role in the overall scheme of the mission.

But would personnel take more care if they knew every round was being assessed?

That's one of the questions Collective Training Group chiefs are aiming to answer during initial trials of a new application called *MyMimir*.

Named after a wise figure from Norse mythology, the software tracks individual performance during live and simulated firing, physical training and more – think running app *Strava* for military drills.

The resulting data allows commanders to monitor their

teams' progress, while encouraging some healthy competition among users.

At least, that's what Col Mark Ellwood, who oversees activities at British Army Training Unit Suffield, is hoping.

“I sometimes see soldiers going through the motions and turning bullets to brass without worrying much about where the round goes,” he said.

“But any battlegroup is merely the sum of its parts. So, if every element is striving for betterment, you will ultimately end up with something that is more effective as a whole.

“It is good for personnel to have some objective feedback, rather than subjective.

“When they know they are being assessed we see a higher percentage of accuracy.”

Testing is in its early stages and first to get hands-on with the tool were members of C Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh while they were prepping for Op Cabrit on Exercise Tallinn Dawn in Sennelager.



Over the course of their seven-week stint in Germany, troops from 9 Platoon used it to track their performance in the live-fire and tactical engagement simulation (Tes) phases of the package and during camp-based activities such as the soldier conditioning review (SCR).

Data is recorded in a number of different categories, including "move" for fitness, "fight" for shooting accuracy and hits sustained, and "think" for military annual training tests (Matts).

Fus Dominic Cunningham, whose results revealed he had achieved the highest number of kills during the field exercise, said he had enjoyed the competitive element.

"There's a leader board, where you can see who got what," he explained.

"So, I can look at it and know what standard I need to maintain to stay at the top.

"It also shows how accurate you are by recording suppressive fire – that's how many times you got within one metre of the target. Anything past that is just wasted rounds.

"Anyone can make up a statistic and say, 'I killed 30 people today,' or 'I was the best suppressor', but this proves whether you're telling the truth."

Created by contractor 4C Strategies, *MyMimir* is an individualised version of *Mimir*, an in-service system that analyses unit performance.

However, while the app is focused at the soldier level, Business Development Manager Rich Bullock explained it is very much geared towards boosting collective training outputs.

"It is a tool to thicken the information and better understand the individual's contribution to the battlegroup," he said.

"It's not a stick to beat troops with but gives commanders an opportunity to see where they could improve their capability.

"On exercise there are long periods where people are sat in vehicles waiting for their next tasking and they can begin to lose sight of their relevance to the bigger picture.

"This will give them evidence to see where they can add more value."

Fus Cunningham agreed the fact he was being evaluated was in the back of his mind while trialling the software.

"You can't be lackadaisical and think you'll get away with it – you have to be on point because you know someone is watching," he concluded.

And highlighting a further benefit of the hard data, the



30-year-old added: "Another good thing is that it can also show you that 'grey man' – the guy you don't know anything about because he doesn't speak much.

"He might be really good, but no one notices because he doesn't put himself in the limelight.

"So, with the app, not only can you see how well you're doing, but also your superiors can see clearly who's an effective soldier."

Feedback from 1 Royal Welsh will now be used by 4C Strategies to improve *MyMimir*'s user interface and capability before wider trials later in the year.

If all goes well, it could become a permanent fixture of Army training in future.

Find out the testers' verdicts overleaf.



The votes are in

Troops from The Royal Welsh reveal how *MyMimir* measured up...

What works well...

“ Mainly I’m into the fitness side of it, so it’s good to see my scores on the SCR. It also gives you exercises you can do to improve, which you might not have known about.

My max deadlift was 200kg, but it has suggested reps to do at a certain weight that would hopefully increase that further. I think it would be useful if it also gave dietary guidance for those who want to gain or lose weight.

It’s easy to say ‘oh, I did really well over the mile-and-a-half run’, but this shows everyone your actual time. And if you were slow, it gives you distances and timings to get faster.

It’s good to be testing it. Right now, we can say we’re the best in the British Army. Okay, we’re the only ones using it, but I’ll take that! ”

Fus Eric Holleyoake



What it does...

“ It’s split into different components. The ‘think’ section shows you your Matts, where you are with them, what score you get and when they’re going to expire.

The ‘my team’ tab breaks it down within the platoon so you can go and see each individual’s marks throughout the exercise you’ve just conducted – so how many hits you achieved against other people, how many times you got hit and so on.

‘Move’ is for fitness data like your SCR results.

The overview lets you see your overall performance, training progression and what’s coming up on the exercise, as well as your role and competencies.

I think the concept is fantastic – it really allows individuals to home in on weak spots in their capability and try to enhance them in the future.

It’s just a case of getting it to a really polished application and making it user friendly.

If that’s achieved then it will be game changing for the Army. ”

Cpl Lloyd Thomas



And room for improvement...

“ You have to have a smartphone and 4G access to be able to use it – and for some of the older guys it wasn’t that straightforward to use.

Also, it doesn’t currently take into account different roles or where you were during a serial – so, whether you were more forward than other sections or in reserve, for example.

If you’re doing an assault you’ll get more kills than if you’re in a suppressive phase, or if you have a GPMG gunner you’ll take more suppressing fire.

In my opinion, as a soldier, you should be professional at all times, not just because you’re being monitored by an app. ”

LCpl Dylan Williams



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EYE OF THE STORM

Combat service support step forward on **Salisbury Plain**

ACCORDING to Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, one of the most important conclusions from the *Integrated Review* was the need to develop a “sharper, more expeditionary and dangerous British Army”.

But fighting at range is as much about the supply of bottles, batteries and bandages as it is bullets, which is why Exercise Wessex Storm this year has been placing more emphasis than ever before on CSS – combat service support.

“We are being tested in a way we have not experienced before on Wessex Storm,” Lt Col Jim Edwards (pictured below), commanding officer of 7 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, said.

“Rather than doing support to training, which is typically what has happened in the past, we are now training to support.

“We are moving with the battlegroup and are in the tactical battle with them, rather than dipping in to service certain elements of the exercise.”

One of the objectives of this year’s package was to validate the battlegroups of 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, who are to be at high readiness for possible deployment with the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) Light Brigade, which can be sent anywhere in the world at short notice (see “Coming Through”, page 36).

CSS for the outfit is provided by the Light Brigade Support Group (LBSG), which is made up of elements drawn from 102 Logistic Brigade.

“The JEF Light Brigade is scalable and there are a number of tasks it could be asked to contribute to, all the way from modestly sized humanitarian assistance missions at one end to high-intensity warfare at the other,” explained Lt Col Edwards, who was commanding the LBSG during Wessex Storm. ■



“
We are in the
tactical battle
with them
”







The Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) is a northern Europe coalition that can quickly respond anywhere in the world, with allies or on behalf of organisations such as the UN or Nato.

Its members include Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The JEF Light Brigade is the British Army's contribution to this formation, made up of sub-units validated to be at high readiness to deploy. They rotate on an annual basis, except the headquarters, which changes every two years.

7th Infantry Brigade, the Desert Rats, currently provide the headquarters, with a signals squadron in support.

Royal Artillery sub-units offer 105mm Light Guns, the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System, tactical UAS, radars and counter fires. The brigade also has Istar and electronic warfare teams, as well as light protected mobility, infantry and light cavalry, all of which need to be kept fighting by the Light Brigade Support Group (LBSG).

Brig Jasper De Quincy-Adams, commander of 7th Infantry Brigade, told *Soldier*: "Wessex Storm has provided the perfect opportunity to test and develop our thinking on

21st century soldiering, and sustaining ourselves is a key element of the JEF.

"We must not become a burden to our allies or partners, so we are dependent on the LBSG.

"On this exercise, for the first time in many years, they have been simultaneously tested across multiple training areas against the most demanding enemy and have routinely been required to protect themselves and join both the Infantry and cavalry in the fight.

"They have taken everything we can throw at them in their stride and proved to be a truly great team."



"102 Log determines what the support should be for any given deployment. It could be down to sub-unit or squadron size, led by a major, if it was a single battlegroup doing a very bespoke operation. But at the other end of the scale we might see a whole logistic regiment, an equipment support battalion and a medical regiment called in.

"For this exercise I have something in the middle, with my headquarters providing command and control of the battle support area and three sub-units – 68 Logistic Squadron, 4 Close Support Company, REME and 12 Medical Squadron – providing the three pillars of CSS.

"We've got 170 vehicles and 350 individuals out here but at its largest this formation could grow to 1,500 soldiers."

As The Royal Irish troops and Royal Scots Dragoon Guards moved around Salisbury Plain so did the combined headquarters and main storage facility – the A2 or second echelon area – located between 20 and 40 kilometres behind the lines and containing the personnel, vehicles and equipment to support the battlegroups.

Distribution points (A1 echelons) were established closer to the combat units to supply them at short notice and maintain their fighting efficiency.

With these support facilities and their supply chains built into the scenarios, troops enjoyed an opportunity to train with a heightened sense of purpose.

"It's been a really good few weeks so far and getting to work with the whole supply process, rather than just dipping in to facilitate the units on exercise, has benefited the private soldiers in particular," said logistic specialist Cpl Christopher Sarsen (RLC).

"We've had the chance to look forward and rearward – bringing materiel into us, establishing distribution points in the battlegroup's area of responsibility, and then pushing it forward to the units.

"At the same time, we've also managed the stuff coming the other way – be it injured soldiers or broken vehicles."

Cpl Tom Jones (RLC, pictured above) added: "We feel a lot more involved than we normally do.

"I'm the 2iC of the rations troop and supplying two battlegroups at once means we've been really busy as they each have 600 people who need four days' worth of rations at any given time.

"I've not been involved in an exercise of this scale in the four years I've been in the Army, and it's been a great experience, very realistic, and we certainly feel part of the big picture."

Techniques, tactics, and procedures were also reassessed and looking back proved important for moving forward.

"We've been providing force protection, as well as the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards doing that here," explained LCpl Aron Jones (RLC, pictured opposite).

"This role was phased out for us at the end of the Afghan era and I think it's a good thing it's been brought back – we should be doing this, in my opinion.

"We can learn more about our trades and about force protection too."





“
It has good
stealth
advantages
”

He added: “Hopefully, we’ll get the chance to do this again because we’re getting to work with a lot of different cap badges and roles – we have the military working dogs here, for instance, and half our private soldiers haven’t even seen them before, let alone worked with them.

“It’s good to chat to others about their jobs and how to cooperate better.”

The LBSG may also introduce other revised tactics and procedures depending on the conclusions from the after-action reviews.

One successful innovation has been to take the headquarters out of its usual tent and put it in four linked Iso containers with workstations, cabling and connections pre-plumbed in.

It means the facility can be up and running almost immediately after arriving at a destination and can be shut down and on the move to a new location in a fraction of the time it would take the tented equivalent.

“It’s not the first time this has been done but it is a first for us and it’s been very successful,” said Lt Col Edwards.

“It also has good stealth advantages – we have nets on the containers for this exercise, yet in an industrial or urban

landscape these would blend in perfectly without camouflage.”

Other areas of experimentation include trying to provide higher levels of support forward.

“To move people for treatment or recovered vehicles back for repairs and then have to take them to the front line again degrades the battlegroup’s combat effectiveness,” explained Lt Col Edwards.

“We’ve been looking at surgical teams bringing their skills forward and 22 Field Hospital will be coming into this second echelon location during Exercise Wessex Storm.

“They will be using a scaled down facility so we can do proper surgery here, rather than moving the casualties further back from the area of operations.

“It’s the same for the CSS groups we send forward; they have tailored themselves such that they have increased their capability to recover and repair.”

Just how many of these innovations will stick is hard to predict right now, but one thing is certain – the Army is becoming more expeditionary by design and the CSS specialists, who are so critical to sustaining operations at range, are determined not to be left behind. ■





FINDING FEMALE FORM

Virtus body armour is being tweaked to account for the shape of women's bodies, and not before time...

IT'S 2013 and Cpl Lauren Taylor (REME) is climbing the ladder that takes her to the top of a surveillance tower at Patrol Base Ouellette in Nahr-e Saraj.

It's a struggle. The climb is vertical and consists of around 20 steps, the heat is searing and she's loaded up with tools and equipment. But the main problem the electronics technician is grappling with is her own body armour.

"We had the Osprey system back then," she recalls. "I had to go up the tower regularly to work on the thermal imaging equipment but climbing the ladder was difficult because the front plate was too large for me – I had to lift it up with my hands so I could raise my legs high enough to reach the next step."

"It was a nightmare because it meant the climb took a lot longer than it should have done and the threat from snipers was very real."

Eight years on, much has changed in the soldier's world.

She returned safely from Op Herrick 18, commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) in 2017, is now working at 6 Armoured Close Support Battalion's headquarters

and is expecting her first child later this month.

But one factor has remained constant throughout her career – the requirement to wear body armour that doesn't fit her properly.

"I can't quite believe the situation has not changed much since I was in Afghanistan, especially since women have been employed in front-line roles for so long now," she tells *Soldier*.

"I stand five feet tall in my boots so I do struggle with kit in general and while Virtus is miles better than Osprey, it still has issues for many females."

"You are meant to fit side plates, for instance, but they make the kit baggy so it doesn't fit snug to my body. Even without them, and with everything done up fully, it's still too big for me."



Capt Lauren Taylor (REME)



▲ Cadet wearing in-service tactical vest – front view



▼ Cadet wearing prototype tactical vest – note the narrower shoulder straps

“
I knew
my agility
would be too
restricted
“



▲ The prototype features cutaways around the shoulder for greater mobility and better seating of a rifle butt

“The daysack also sits too high on me, so in some positions it pushes my helmet forward.

“Also, every time I kneel down my body armour is pushed up because it is too long in the body – the front plate rises above my top lip and I get a gaping area above the shoulders.

“I don't feel very professional giving orders in front of soldiers while looking like that.”

After Virtus was introduced in 2016, the Army quickly recognised that parts of the system were too large for smaller Servicewomen so it has been working hard on developing a modified version along with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

“Virtus has been incrementally developed since entering service, based on user feedback and equipment failure reports,” explains Maj Scott Russell (Scots), who is attached to DE&S as requirements manager (survivability).

“We recognise that some parts of the system are too big for smaller female soldiers, and are aware that the vest does not always provide the correct fit.

“A significant amount of research is now ongoing to determine how the system should be improved to fit these users.”

Thanks to an understanding commanding officer and her own determination to improve equipment for women, Capt Taylor has been involved in the project from the early stages.

“Back in 2017 my CO told me he didn't think it was right that I had to just make do and, having previously worked in kit procurement with DE&S, gave me a contact there who was working on Virtus,” she says.

The officer was invited to provide regular feedback, with her experiences and opinions helping to shape the first prototypes designed with women in mind – equipment that is now being tested by eight female cadets at RMAS.

“So far the group have used it on a ten-day exercise in Brecon, and between now and the end of the trial they will be training with it at Sandhurst, including range work and deploying on a further exercise,” explains Maj Russell.

“Throughout this time teams from DE&S and DSTL have come

out to assess how the kit is performing.

“Feedback has been really positive so far and we feel we're on the right lines, but it's a process that still has some way to go.”

For some females, one drawback with the in-service Virtus system is the yoke, which cannot be adjusted enough and, consequently, the load carriage system sits too low on the body, sometimes resting on the hips.

“Women tend to have shorter backs than men but the new version is much more flexible and seems to have addressed that problem,” says Maj Russell.

“The modified vest also has a different cut across the shoulders, with narrower straps, and it's slightly shorter in order to raise it up the torso.

“And around the arms we've trimmed the material back where the shoulder straps meet the chest section of the kit and underneath the armpits.

“This has created a 'shooter's cut' that increases the range of arm movement and makes it easier for smaller, more slender troops to seat the gun butt in their shoulder properly and fire the weapon accurately.

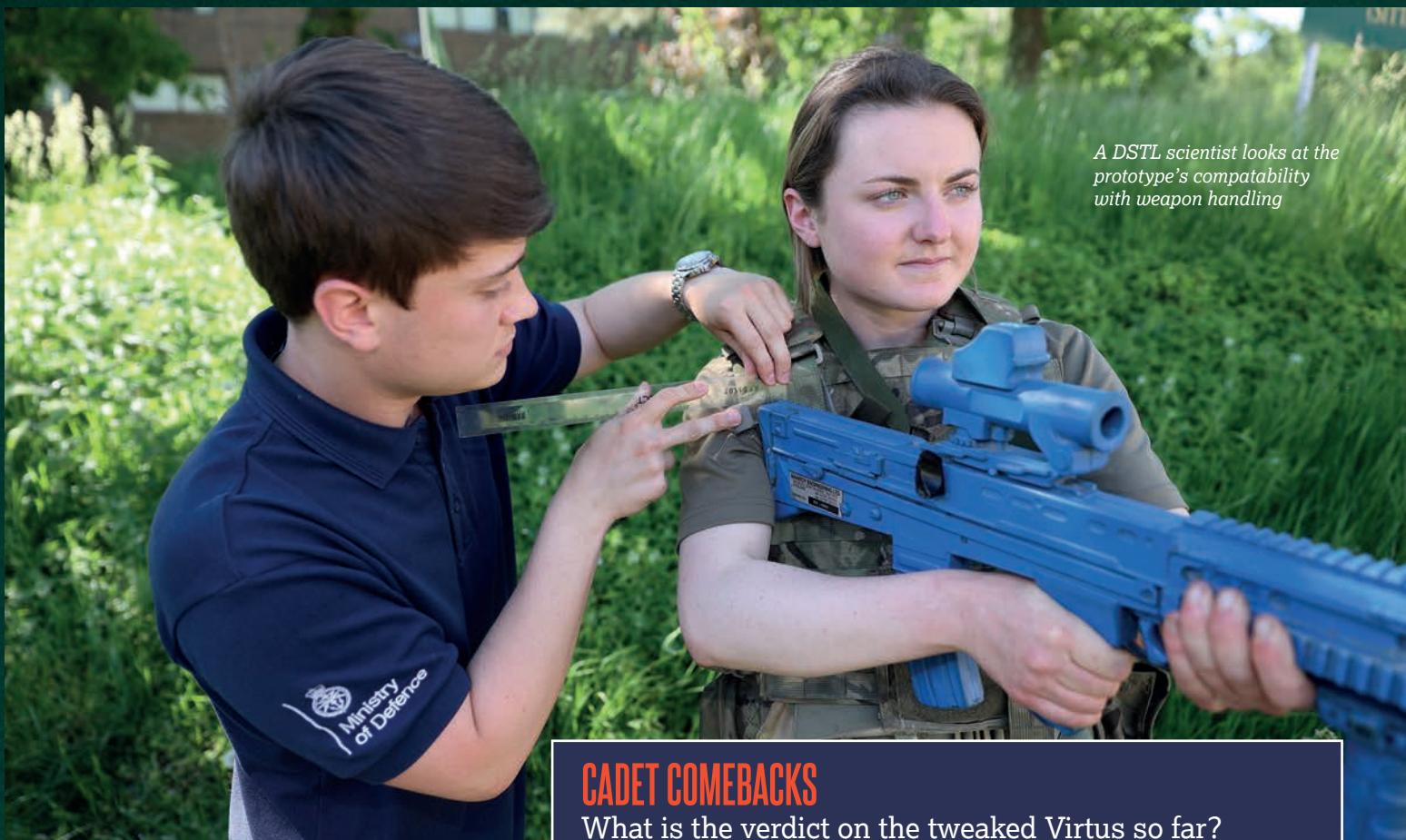
“Finally, because the vest sits higher, we've shortened the length of it marginally by removing a slice of material at the top and bottom of the plate pocket.

“However, we've not reduced the amount of coverage for females by cutting back the vest – they will get at least the same degree of protection as users of the standard Virtus system.”

While new armour plates are in the pipeline, the use of the in-service single-size Osprey versions are a challenging design constraint for the development team so, for now, they are focusing on modifying the scalable tactical vest (see “The scientist says” overleaf).

When the new, variable-size armour becomes available, more design changes will be introduced to further refine the modifications for women – changes that can't arrive quickly enough for Capt Taylor.

“I really hope the new equipment is developed soon and all females are given the chance to show their full capabilities,”



A DSTL scientist looks at the prototype's compatibility with weapon handling

especially as they're now being employed in close combat roles," she adds.

"You cannot expect them to do the same job as men if it's not a level playing field because of the equipment they've been given. They might be the fittest, the fastest, the strongest, but if their gear isn't right then they're going to be behind their peers from the off.

"Personally, I don't feel I've achieved as much as I could have done in my career because of the kit I was given.

"There was a time when I would definitely have tried P Company or the commando course if my armour had fitted me better, but I knew my agility would be too restricted to perform to my best.

"This might sound trivial to those individuals not affected by this, but it's a really big deal to those of us who are."

There's no doubt it should be a big deal to everyone, especially as the top brass keep emphasising that the future of the Army revolves around realising the full potential of its people.

Until issues such as this are properly fixed, those words will ring hollow because they cannot possibly be applied to the 11 per cent of personnel who are female. It's that simple. ■

CADET COMEBACKS

What is the verdict on the tweaked Virtus so far?

Ocdt Roko Silatolu (5ft 7ins)

With the existing kit many of us have had problems on the ranges trying to get the butt of the rifle comfortably into the shoulder because the straps are too large and cover that area of the body. It slips off the material as the weapon recoils and that affects accuracy. The new kit has addressed this by slimming down the width of the straps which means I can seat the rifle butt properly.

Ocdt Bethan Fairfax (5ft 4ins)

I was really upset when they said we would have to give this prototype back – it's that good. We've had it for a few weeks, out at Brecon and on the ranges, and it is so much better for me, especially when lying prone. With the existing Virtus I find it hard to lift my head in that position – and I'm not the only one who's been reporting that. As you lie down the vest and body armour can ride up your body so when you put your head back you are fighting against it. This new kit fits our torso better so it doesn't do that. Also, because the prototype sits higher the range of movement in our hips is increased and I feel I can run faster.

Ocdt Rachael Andrews (5ft)

Even the smallest size of the existing tactical vest comes down too low on me. It stops past my hips and the webbing isn't even around my backside, it's over my legs. So for me this prototype is a game changer. The new yoke allows us to fit the kit closer to the body and to raise the vest and armour plates up on our torsos more. That, in turn, means we can move our legs more freely and it's really noticeable how the cutaways allow our arms to move more freely.



▲ The yoke on the prototype (left) has raised the load carriage system away from the hips, increasing comfort and leg mobility



THE SCIENTIST SAYS...

"I've been closely involved with the development of this female-inclusive Virtus design and it's actually the first of four prototypes we plan to fully assess.

This one utilises the Osprey plate, the current armour, so it's a bit of an interim solution. New more flexibly-sized armour is in the pipeline but for the moment this prototype design is trying to address any drawbacks with the vest while working with the in-service plate.

The whole point of this study is to provide an evidence base for changes that should be implemented and to what degree. It's a case of striking the right balance between the human and coverage – or protection – factors."

**Dr Sam Saunders (pictured left),
Exercise physiologist and human factors
practitioner, DSTL**

The Virtus development team are seeking detailed feedback from users of the in-service system to help them refine the female prototypes even further. To contribute, scan the QR code



WELCOME TO...

THE GIRL LAB



Servicewomen put under the microscope in quest for life-changing data



Pictures: Graeme Main
Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

ON A side of the globe where academics have dedicated their time to researching the behaviour of coked-up honeybees and whether wet underwear is physically compromising – and yes, those are real studies – it is hard to believe something as basic as “optimal training for female soldiers” has never been properly scrutinised.

The UK, after all, is home to some renowned scientific institutions. And almost three years have lapsed since our infantry roles were opened to women.

But to those of us accustomed to working in organisations where male is the norm – and the British Army is certainly one – this is actually very believable.

And it's all down to something known as the “gender data gap” – in other words, a lack of stats about women and their bodies.

This can be seen in all areas of life, from medicine, where treatments are largely based on research using men, to technology, where everything from car to smartphone designs are set to male dimensions, or “the male default”.

According to feminist campaigner and author Caroline Criado Perez, such a whopping oversight has already been disastrous for female health.

In Britain, for example, women are 50 per cent more likely to be misdiagnosed following a heart attack (heart failure trials generally use men).

And although males are more likely to crash a car, women involved in collisions are nearly 50 per cent more likely to be seriously hurt.

This, she says, is what happens when you forget to account for half of humanity.

Thanks to the work of the British Army, however, this data problem is being tackled for the UK military.

The Army Health and Performance Research Team was set up in 2015 to provide evidence – or stats – that support Servicewomen as they take their place on the front line.

Working out of a special lab at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, its ten civilian experts are undertaking world-leading research to plug away at vital knowledge gaps around the female body, what it can do, and when it does that best.

“There has been a big assumption that women are the same as men, or just smaller versions of them physically,” explains Prof Julie Greeves, the physiologist leading the team. “That’s an assumption we make as a society.”

“Servicewomen are now being pushed to their physiological limits so it is important we understand what that limit looks like for them.”

"What does success look like for females? Not just in the phase one space, but through their career, after having children, when they are returning to work or going through changes with the menopause."

Hormones, it seems, play a huge part in female performance – but not simply as a limiting factor, as is often assumed.

Prof Greeves' team is examining something known as "the oestrogen advantage" when it comes to women's musculoskeletal function.

"Regular periods are needed for physical health," she continues. "So we need to abolish this idea that not having periods is preferable. This isn't normal."

This finding has already spawned the beginnings of an education campaign to help women better understand their menstrual cycles.

Another topic is muscle mass.

"There's a misconception that women can't lift heavy weights," the expert continues. "And that's really important because there's a lot of lifting with military activities."

"We need them to be strong."

Women may have 20 to 30 per cent less muscle mass on average than men, but through its tests the team is finding that females can address this very effectively with the right PT.

"Our team is seeing substantial gains in strength when the programme is developed appropriately and I think that is really exciting," Prof Greeves adds. "Women are highly trainable."

"And one area where they outperform men is endurance. When you think, that is very characteristic of field exercises."

Cutting-edge research requires cutting-edge kit, and Prof Greeves' team bounces from one study to the next using its various gadgets and measuring apparatus.

A machine called a Biomed captures muscle strength, and an innovative OsteoProbe and scanner does something very similar for bones.

"It shows where bone has grown denser because of load bearing exercise, but can also reveal things like stress fractures," explains team member Rebecca Double (pictured above), who is





“
One area where they outperform men is endurance
“

currently investigating the effects of different contraceptive drugs on bone strength.

“That helps us work out what levels of exercise are beneficial and what are damaging.”

A DXA whole body scanner allows the team to highlight injury, examine the brain and measure body fat and its distribution. They can also look in detail at certain areas of the spine or the hips, for example, to find wear and tear.

Another piece of tech that could be finding its way to the lab soon, courtesy of innovation funding, is a wearable device to track ovulation.

Together, these machines will give the team a growing picture of what factors impact on the performance of women. »

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» And it is already gaining the attention of other nations.

“We are absolutely world leading with this,” Prof Greeves says. “We have many counterparts who are learning a lot from us at the moment.

“Our team is bringing the very best science into defence and it’s important soldiers know that.”

As well as providing the basis for new policies and the development of more suitable training in future, the team hopes this work will support its participants and their colleagues on an individual level too.

“Soldiers taking part in these studies get to know more about their own bodies,” the professor adds.

“I think that’s really empowering.

“Women taking control of their own health is important to me. And this is about providing the toolkit so they can do that.”

Deploying on operations with childcare responsibilities; promoting up an organisation designed for and dominated by men – in numerous ways women have already proved their worth and resilience in the British Army. But being left out of the health stats picture for so long has without doubt put them at a disadvantage.

Understanding that equality is not about treating soldiers the same, but treating them fairly, the Army Health and Performance Research Team’s work will level the playing field and ensure women boost operational effectiveness by playing to their own strengths – not those of men.

“This research is designed to be an enduring function,” Prof Greeves concludes, “and we feel privileged to be undertaking it.

“But what is really important is not just doing this work, but making a difference with it.

“We can change the culture of training.” ■

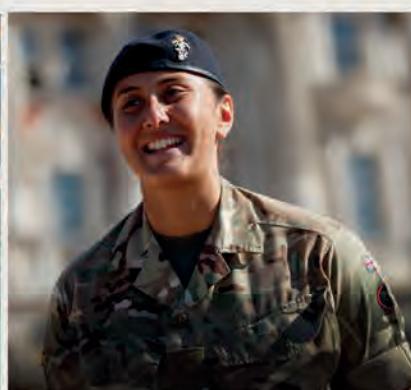
Food for thought

To learn more about the gender data gap in UK society read *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed For Men*





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Help those forced to ship out

THE Army was in Germany for a considerable length of time and this naturally led to people falling in love, starting families and buying property over there.

Then came the utterly poor decision to pull out – and with no plans in place to assist anyone who had put down roots in the country but had to leave.

Not all wives are "dependent" on their partners and the crux of my issue is why there is absolutely no financial support, such as voluntary separated (Volsep) and get you home travel allowance (GYH(T)), or the over-37 package.

My home in Germany is closer to me than if I were to be based in Scotland and had a house in Cornwall. It is my family home and where I go some weekends and during every leave.

Volsep would greatly help me with the cost of travel and make it easier to leave my family in Germany, as would the over-37 package. There may even be a case for involuntary separated (Involsep) allowance as I had no choice but to leave Germany after 12 years serving there.

There are, probably, relatively few people in my situation so it would cost the Army next to nothing to improve it, and it would show that there is actually some compassion and thought for the people who were based in Germany but had to leave their partners and kids behind because of the poorly executed withdrawal plan.

The mental health effects of being forced to work away from your family for long periods cannot be underestimated.

– Name and address supplied

Col Louise Green, Army Pay Colonel, replies: I empathise with your circumstances, which although relatively rare are not unique.

From a policy perspective the questions you raise are underpinned by the home base principle. This provides a basis for allowance policy on the understanding that the UK is the home base for the British Army.

The allowance construct supports both accompanied and unaccompanied service, but differentiates between those who make a personal choice to move with their family on assignment and those who could not.

Service personnel who choose not to move their family are categorised as Volsep.

Individuals where other factors or Service reasons prevent a genuine choice to serve married accompanied are categorised as Involsep. Regrettably, the reasons you state for serving unaccompanied do not appear to meet its criteria.

Similarly, GYH(T) is only paid when both the family home and duty station are within the same country.

If, however, there are additional factors that you have not mentioned, I would advise you to seek advice from your personnel administrator, who can advise on submitting a case to the pay and allowances casework and complaints cell.

You may be able to adopt flexible working and can discuss this with your chain of command.

“
Why is
there no
financial
support?
”

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
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SOLAR FLARE UP

● LIVING near 3 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment's Gibraltar Barracks, I can see a large expanse of roof space on the workshops and the recent addition of the officer's mess, but there is not a solar panel anywhere in sight.

There's also a huge car park area that is hardly used.

It is a shame because the land outside the fence is rare and excellently maintained heathland.

I don't know whether this a public and private partnership problem or down to the MoD but, whatever the reason, it's not a good example of achieving a carbon zero effort. — **Keith Winkworth, Blackwater, Surrey**

Donald Johnstone, Directorate of Basing and Infrastructure, Army Headquarters, replies: The Army is embarking on the large scale delivery of ground-mounted solar panels across 80 sites.

Moving forward, we expect all future infrastructure to meet the net zero 2050 legislation, which would include incorporating renewable energy sources as part of the buildings' fabric.

Current initiatives include four solar farms being trialled across the Army estate. Assessment studies on another 76 sites have begun as well as a £1.5 million pilot project to install electric vehicle charging bays and a solar carport at the Army HQ which will help shape future MoD policy in this area.

FAMILY GONGS GALORE

● MY family's combined medal collection might be of interest to readers.

There are 35 in total, spanning three generations – my grandfathers', father's, three siblings' and mine.

Apart from Korea and the 1991 Gulf War they cover every conflict from the Second World War to Afghanistan – as well as the Silver and Golden Jubilees. I wonder how many British Army families have amassed a similar amount?

— **Gordon Fraser, ex-Scots DG**



‘Medal policy deters volunteers’

● HAVE seen the issue of service medals in Nigeria become a discussion point in *Soldier* and I can confirm that neither myself or any other staff on Op Turus were eligible for the West Africa General Service Medal.

This is because we were not serving in the joint operating area (JOA), which was in the north-east of the country.

It is a real shame as the operational output, the time away from family and the difficult conditions, are easily comparable to those in the JOA.

I often hear this deployment being compared with Op Shader, which I believe is apt. Op Turus staff and those with the British military advisory and training team easily had a comparable job to those in Taji and other Iraqi locations and without doubt endured more hardship than those who earned the Op Shader medal without bar in places like Cyprus and Minad.

I think this marks a real lack of understanding from senior ranks of the value of medals to junior officers and soldiers. I understand the publications and have read the DIN but I would be very keen to hear the Army's response.

Op Turus was a small job that many people don't know about so I fear it didn't get the attention or recognition it deserved. It also has reduced in scale so I'm worried it will be forgotten about.

Failure to recognise the hard work and sacrifice of those deployed to Nigeria but outside the JOA demonstrates a lack of understanding of the job, a lack of recognition to the soldiers and officers and will not encourage retention. It will lead to fewer soldiers volunteering for these deployments as well. — **Name address supplied**

Col Jim Taylor, Assistant Head, Personal Services, replies: Service in Nigeria has been reviewed and recognition through the General Service Medal 2008 was granted for a specific geographical region.

Individuals deployed there for 30 continuous days or 45 accumulated days are eligible.

Those working outside of the region or who do not accrue the required number of non-continuous days are not.

The Army does not have the authority to independently broaden medallic recognition. This is conducted through the Operations Recognition Board (Orb) in conjunction with Permanent Joint Headquarters and the other single Services.

The current Defence Instructions and Notices on medallic recognition for Op Turus will be reviewed soon. Any updates to policy will be disseminated by the chain of command in due course.

As a standing member of the Orb, the Army supports the review of requests for operational recognition. It also supports activity, led by the MoD, to continually improve the medallic recognition system.

Army senior leaders are also aware of the sensitivities around the perceived lack of medallic recognition. This is a regular agenda item of the people campaign board, where senior leaders discuss issues affecting recruiting and retention at the strategic level.

If you require further information, please contact my team directly.



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CAREERS

The Recruit for Spouses Career Academy has joined forces with Virgin Red to offer a free mentoring programme to military spouses. Mentors from the company will include employees in areas such as business development and portfolio management. For more details on the mentoring programme visit recruitforspouses.co.uk/spouses/career-academy

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

Forces Families Jobs is a platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk



DIARY

July 20: Social Media Spouses Live at the Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, 1000-1500. A networking event to help military partners further their social media skills to grow their business or find a new career. Tickets £5, with proceeds going to the BFBS Big Salute. For more information log on to eventbrite.co.uk/e/smspouses-live-harrogate-tickets-151790123345

July 24: Tiger Day 15 at the Tank Museum, Bovington. A chance to see history's most infamous tank, plus other Second World War-era armour, in action. All remaining tickets for the event – which was postponed from June – were on sale as this issue went to press. For more details visit tankmuseum.org

September 4: Irreverent Warriors Silkies Hike in London. A 22km fundraising and awareness-raising walk from the US-run organisation (irreverentwarriors.com) which seeks to improve mental health and prevent veteran suicide through camaraderie and humour. Open to all British military personnel and veterans.

Until September 5: History of

Bombs, an exhibition by Ai Weiwei at the Imperial War Museum, London. The internationally renowned artist takes over the building's iconic atrium with a new artwork exploring international migration and the relationship between the individual, society and the state. Visit iwm.org.uk

From September 12: Foe to Friend, an exhibition at the National Army Museum, Chelsea examining the UK's 75-year presence in Germany. The free showcase includes stories from troops and explores the changing relationship between the two countries since 1945. For more details visit nam.ac.uk

November 6: Militia fair and auction in association with Duke's Auctioneers at The Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. Collectables, memorabilia, arms, armour, uniforms, insignia, books and art. Lots on display November 3-6. The auction will also be live-streamed on the museum's YouTube channel.

Until further notice: World War 2: War Stories, an exhibition at The Tank Museum in Bovington. The story of the Royal Armoured Corps through a series of campaigns and battles, 1940-45. It brings first-hand accounts together with films and displays containing artefacts that have not been displayed before.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
adviceasap.org.uk

Army Families Federation:
01264 382324;
mil 94391 2324;
aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:

armylgbt.org.uk;

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
army.mod.uk/welfare-support

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togetherall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124;
blesma.org

Blind Veterans UK:
(formerly St Dunstan's)
020 7723 5021;
blindveterans.org.uk

Care After Combat:
careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Centre for Veterans Health, King Edward VII Hospital:
020 7467 4370;
cdunne@kingedwardvii.co.uk

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
0800 323 4444;
combatstress.org.uk

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

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901;
felixfund.org.uk

Forcesline:
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

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988
forcespensionsociety.org

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or
01980 846 459;
helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
highground-uk.org.uk
07951 495 272

Humanist, Atheist and Non-religious in Defence Network:
defencehumanists.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or
0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
mutual-support.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
ngvfa.org.uk

PoppyScotland:
0131 557 2782;
poppyScotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058;
rfea.org.uk

Remount:
01451 850 341;
remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
0131 550 1583;
legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
01622 795900;
rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
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svronline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:
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spaces.org.uk

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975;
ssafa.org.uk

Stoll: 020 7385 2110;
stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400;
nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676;
starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

Troop Aid:
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;

troopaid@icloud.com; troopaid.info

uk4u Thanks!:
01798 812081;
uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);
gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service

WVRS: 02920 232 668



SEARCHLINE

As part of its national Supporting Our Armed Forces project, **Mesothelioma UK** has commissioned a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum and is looking for donations towards its £40,000 fundraising target. From £10 to £500, if you can support the campaign to honour personnel who lost their battle with cancer, visit mesothelioma.uk.com/armed-forces-memorial-donation

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU? No. 951



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TEN details have been changed in this picture of an Apache from 655 Squadron, 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps onboard the HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier. The training included qualifying new pilots in the art of deck landings and take-offs and allowing ground crews to master the maintenance of aircraft at sea.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 951, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than July 30. A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the

differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a **Streamlight Protac H5-X USB torch** worth £120.

This lightweight tactical light offers 1,000 lumens and can be powered with either disposable batteries or a rechargeable cell. It also has a variety of settings, including solid light and strobe, and an inbuilt clip means it can be easily attached to belts.

Visit streamlight.com for more information.

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

May's winner: Sarah Christian, Stockbridge, Hants.





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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

FILMS OF LOVE AND WAR

Cinema fanatic adds remarkable personal colour to Second World War

► SETTING SAIL down the River Clyde on his 21st birthday, leaving behind a new bride he wouldn't see for several years, my grandfather's Second World War story was, in many ways, a common one.

A snakeskin displayed in his dining room cabinet recalled the moment its venom almost killed him in India; boxed up letters showed his middle initial altered each time to tell grandma which country he was in. Snippets of personal history like this float round many British families. And it is within this detail where universal experiences become unique ones.

For most of us, however, these titbits are as close as we will ever get to knowing what soldiers were really thinking and feeling during the world's deadliest war.

And the stony silence that many of them brought back ashore after the conflict only compounded this.

So when I sat down to watch *Harry Birrell Presents Films of Love and War* last month, I was completely unprepared for the light it would shed on the thoughts, fears and emotions of men who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with my grandfather.

In this fascinating one-and-a-half-hour documentary, Second World War officer and cinema fanatic **Harry Birrell** tells a rather different kind of war story.

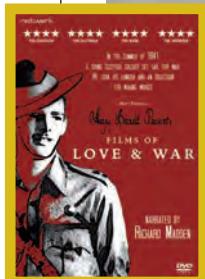
Thanks to the efforts of his granddaughter, actor and writer **Carina Birrell**, footage he shot



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BOOKS

P61
TOP GEAR

MOVIES



● Harry Birrell Presents
Films of Love and
War is out now
on DVD and
Blu-ray

With his beloved cine-camera during his wartime service in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Burma is brought to the big screen. And the result is moving.

"We were aware that Harry had this passion for cinema, and had shot loads of films during the war, but as his grandchild I had no idea of the extent," Carina (shown below) told *Soldier*.

Around seven years ago, some 20 years after her grandfather's death, she uncovered a huge stash of reels sitting in metal trunks in her dad's garden shed. Alongside them were diaries documenting Harry's childhood, adolescence and military career.

In *Films of Love and War*, the two are stitched together seamlessly under director **Matt Pinder**.

Voiced by *Game of Thrones* star **Richard Madden**, the excerpts serve as the perfect script.

"I think it is definitely unique," Carina said of the title, which has already toured independent cinemas around Scotland.

"You see these extracts from historical



civilians they encounter.

"He did it for the joy of it; he just loved making films and sharing them with friends and family," Carina added. "And that is a constant source of inspiration to me."

"But this project has also been the majority of my education on military life."

"At school I had such a small amount of understanding around the world wars; I didn't feel connected to that time in history."

"This has taught me everything I know."

"Through a personal connection it suddenly becomes relatable."

The same has applied to young audiences around Scotland.

"The response so far has been phenomenal," Carina continued. "I have had 18- and 19-year-olds coming up to me, really personally affected by the film."

"Harry made it so relatable – it was all about capturing the human universality of a situation."

This particular Serviceman did not see front-line action. But in many ways that is what marks this feature out.

It is a wonderful celebration of the everyday, on operations and at home, and how such moments are, ultimately, the ones that define us. ■

VERDICT:

A first-class, first hand account
★★★★★

INTERVIEW: SARAH GOLDSHORPE, *SOLDIER*

OUT NOW ON DVD/DIGITAL

**Drunk Bus**

Out now

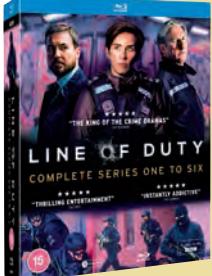
THIS traditional buddy film follows the story of Michael, a shy graduate bus driver obsessed with his ex-girlfriend, and his Samoan unit of a bodyguard, with the unlikely name Pineapple. The juxtaposition between the two brings predictable humour, but it is the sub-story of the challenge of growing up that takes centre stage. As the Jiminy Cricket-esque Pineapple quotes "change doesn't happen when you get knocked on the canvas, but when you decide to get up". Before you know it, Michael is coming out of his shell and in bed with a nurse prone to night terrors – with the obvious comedic results. A predictable but nonetheless quite touching portrayal of one man's attempt to find friendship.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

WIN**Line of Duty: Blu-ray box set**

IT HAS been billed as one of the best Brit cop dramas for years – a favourite with viewers as well as critics for tense plots and powerful on-screen performances. Following the trials and tribulations of anti-corruption unit AC-12, the six seasons of the BBC's *Line of Duty* have become a TV phenomenon. Each series focuses on a new case investigated by the outfit, led by Supt Ted Hastings (Adrian Dunbar), DI Kate Fleming (Vicky McClure) and Det Sgt Steve Arnott (Martin Compston). Now the complete box set is

being released in full high-definition glory on Blu-ray for the first time on July 12 – together with a bundle of extra features. *Soldier* has teamed up with Acorn Media International to give away one of the 12-disc sets, worth £74.99.



● To stand a chance of bagging it, tell us which part of the UK the Metropolitan Police Service covers. Send your answer to **comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk** or our usual postal address by July 30.

**PICK OF THE MONTH:****THE WAR BEAT, PACIFIC****Media in the deadly battle against Japan**

THE combat correspondent is not a new concept – the passing of morale-boosting tales back to the home front dates back centuries.

But it wasn't until the Second World War that the phenomenon really took off.

With international news agencies and independent journalists all vying for column space, the battle to get the stories out was almost as fierce as the fighting on land, sea and air – and often, the Pacific theatre was overlooked.

In *The War Beat, Pacific* Steven Casey diligently uncovers how the unsung newsmen, embedded with the troops on faraway atolls and battleships, scribbling away



The War Beat, Pacific
THE AMERICAN MEDIA AT WAR AGAINST JAPAN
Steven Casey

● *The War Beat, Pacific* by Steven Casey is published on July 1 by Oxford University Press, priced £26.99

BOOKS



BOOK RELEASES



on rotting paper or on unwieldy typewriters, tried to send their reports home.

What often isn't told is the danger that went with the job, with many of the writers falling victim to the same bombs and bullets as their footslogging counterparts.

While some of the names, such as Ernie Pyle, have become synonymous with battlefield correspondence, far more have been lost to history.

Fortunately, some are memorialised in the pages of this book.

What Casey (pictured above) also covers well is the fluctuation between unwavering support and downright obstruction that the US military afforded the media.

Gen Douglas MacArthur, for example, initially despised the press, but soon realised he could use them for his own political gain.

Hacks who were onside would be



privy to sensitive information, better accommodation and use of broadcast radios to relay their messages back to the US mainland.

The anti-MacArthur mob, meanwhile, would find themselves held up on stuffy ships until they toed the right line.

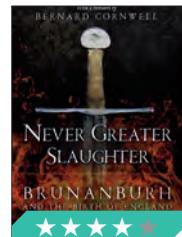
Packed with lessons that have been learnt, forgotten about and relearnt through Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf, this title is certainly a must-read for any media-savvy soldier. ■

VERDICT:

A compelling account of the men behind the first draft of history



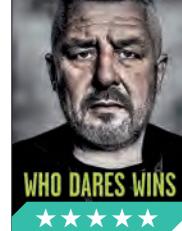
REVIEW: CPL SCOTT ROBERTS, RIFLES



THE Battle of Brunanburh does not stand out in historical memory like Agincourt or Waterloo, but this offering makes strong claims for its importance. It was fought in 937 in the Wirral against an alliance of Vikings, Scots and Irish, and won by Alfred the Great's grandson, Athelstan.

With a foreword from Bernard Cornwell, best known as the author of *Sharpe*, the book combines archaeological detective work and forthright battle narratives to fill a hefty gap in readers' knowledge of England's Dark Ages.

Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian



Who Dares Wins

by Phil Campion

THE sequel to *Born Fearless*, which dealt with the author's Special Forces career, this brave account reveals the darker side to his story. Abused as a child in care, he was mentally scarred for life. One day, post-service, he stood up to give a talk to a group of social workers when, for no reason other

than the speaker before him mentioned abuse, he found himself opening up to a room full of strangers about his own experiences. As well as obviously being a catharsis for him, the book is a riveting read about how he confronted his demons.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



Between the Devil and the Deep

Blue Sea

by Colin Freeman

THIS is the story of how two retired British Army officers, John Steed and Leslie Edwards, freed the crews of three ships from the clutches of Somali pirates through fundraising, negotiation, and some extreme – but justified – risks. Although author

Colin Freeman is a survivor of piracy himself, his insight never really comes through. The book is light reading despite the subject, but does important work in drawing attention to a problem that – in the writer's view – governments refuse to engage with and the media selectively reports on.

Pte Richard Thomas, Int Corps



Pathfinders

by Cecil Lewis

CONTINUING the Imperial War Museum's classics series, this is about the crew of a Wellington bomber on a sortie over Kiel. The author flew in both world wars and was also a renowned author and co-founder of the BBC. His book draws readers into the lives of the tight-knit crew, a mix

of officers and senior NCOs from all corners of the globe. It is well written and an interesting portrayal of the mentality of Britain and the Empire at the time. A worthwhile read.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



PICK OF THE MONTH:

TOYOTA HILUX INVINCIBLE

Rugged pickup continues to refine and deliver

► THE Toyota Hilux has been in continual production for over half a decade.

Not only does this mean that there are literally millions of these vehicles lugging kit and people around the planet, but also that Toyota has had plenty of time to perfect the pickup truck recipe.

To liken a Hilux to an AK-47 would be a bit of a cheap shot, but there's a reason you've seen one in the back of the other – and that's because they're both built to last.

I've driven a few over the years and while this latest Invincible crew cab is the most refined, it still ticks all of the practical boxes.

I know some of you will be looking at this and wondering why you wouldn't just choose a van over a pickup. The problem with a van is, they're not pickups.

Jump in a Hilux and it feels like you're in a car. The cabin is a comfortable place to be, with features that all feel like they've been thought out – but remember, this is a workhorse first and a show pony second.

The touchscreen is handy and easy to use, although in the time I was driving it I couldn't figure out how to adjust the brightness, which got a bit distracting at night.



The drive has been improved through work on the suspension and despite still running leaf springs at the rear, the ride is now much better thanks to the base settings being set to cope without a load in the bed, rather than with.

It doesn't bounce around like it used to and is all the better for it. The auto gearbox is smooth and the 2.8-litre diesel motor makes light work of accelerating away from the lights and cruising at motorway speed.

I made full use of the inside and out – piling four children into the cab and filling the bed with a few bits and pieces to drop off was a doddle.

You can leave a couple of ratchet straps in one of the storage compartments for when you need to secure your load.

This new Hilux has defined the pickup market and then outlived recent competitors from

Volkswagen, Mercedes and Ford.

It ticks all the boxes as easily as it shifts all the boxes. If you're looking for rugged, go-anywhere motoring but still want a heated seat and creature comforts, test drive one of these. ■

VERDICT:

The perfect practical pickup



REVIEW: JOHN HOGAN, EX-RE

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SOLDIER SPORT

PACE SETTERS »

THE Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Series is back in full swing after the Covid-19 outbreak scuppered its plans for 2020. Races have already been staged in Wimbish and Edinburgh and further events are planned for the coming weeks. Read more on page 71...







TOKYO TICKET SECURED

BOXER SETS SIGHTS ON OLYMPIC STAGE AFTER OVERCOMING QUALIFYING HURDLE

BOXER Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) will fulfil her lifelong dream when she steps into the ring to represent Team GB at the Olympics this month.

The soldier secured her place at the Tokyo Games after a nerve-shredding campaign at last month's European qualifiers in Paris, where she suffered a shock loss to Bulgaria's Stanimira Petrova before triumphing in a winner-takes-all box-off.

The result means Artingstall will become the Army's first female boxer to compete at the Olympics and the 26-year-old told *SoldierSport* the emotional rollercoaster she experienced in the French capital will hold her in good stead for the bigger tests to come.

"I fought on the first day of the qualifiers against Belarus," she added. "I went in feeling relaxed, I found my rhythm and range and had a really good flow to my boxing.

"Then I had a rest day. I was watching everyone else on the team qualify – they were absolutely flying, and I was ecstatic for them.

"But it was quite overwhelming to see them do so well and know I had to produce the next day. I went back to the hotel thinking it was down to me to complete the team.

"That night my mentality was not 100 per cent right and I woke up the following morning with the same mindset.

"I warmed up for the fight with Petrova knowing I had beaten her comfortably before – I had to be on my A game, but I knew I was capable of getting the job done.

"I usually make eye contact

with my opponent, however, after a couple of seconds that dropped. I had to take a step back and try to get a grip, but she won on a split decision – I was heartbroken.

"Physically, I was in the best shape I could be, but you need to be mentally prepared for big tournaments like this. It is something to work on."

Fortunately, Artingstall's hopes were not extinguished with the defeat as she went on to face Sweden's Stephanie Thour in a box-off, a contest she won via a unanimous verdict to cement her Olympic spot.

"I managed to pick myself up and go again," she continued. "I was a lot calmer – even though if I did not win I would not be going to Tokyo.

"I was relaxed and found my flow and rhythm again. I went back to the way I box, rather than standing on the spot and overthinking things, which is what happened in my bout against Bulgaria.

"When the decision was announced I wanted to scream, but nothing came out. I was absolutely over the moon to get the job done and I still cannot put it into words."

With qualifying complete, the focus now is on ensuring the team peaks once more for the Games themselves.

Although medalling is the obvious aim, Artingstall is not putting that pressure on herself and is determined to enjoy the Olympic experience as a whole.

"I cannot wait for the opening ceremony," she explained. "They are the things that give you the memories you do not get from other tournaments – not many people get to say they've experienced that.



**"I STILL
CANNOT
PUT IT
INTO
WORDS"**

"Qualifying was the hardest part. If I was to pressure myself with the target of a medal I could have a wobble. I would rather go in knowing I've done all the training I could do, enjoy it and let the hard work speak for itself.

"At the same time I would love to win a gold medal and I will be giving it my all."

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic means the Games will have a distinctly different feel compared to previous years but the fighter insisted the restrictions will not sour things on a personal level.

"It is still the Olympics and the best countries in the world will all be there," Artingstall said. "Everything in the village will be very similar and Japanese spectators may be allowed in.

"For us as a boxing team, the toughest part has been the qualifying process. It was delayed for so long and we just wanted to get it done.

"We've done that now, and everyone is buzzing.

"The support I've received from across the Service has been amazing.

"I've had so many messages on social media, from senior officers and soldiers, and that has really helped me get my name out there.

"Without the Army I would not be where I am now. They have allowed me to take my foot off the gas in terms of work so I can focus on my boxing – this isn't a sport you can do one day on, one day off." ■



ROBERTS RISES TO THE CHALLENGE IN DEBUT SEASON

RUGBY league star Sgt Carrie Roberts (REME) has described winning the Challenge Cup as the “pinnacle” of her sporting career after she helped fire St Helens to a convincing victory in the showpiece fixture.

The centre powered her way to the line for her team's sixth try in a 34-6 defeat of the York City Knights in the first women's final to be broadcast live on terrestrial television – an effort that followed a brace in Saints' triumph over holders Leeds Rhinos in the tournament's semi-finals.

“It is an amazing feeling and a first for me,” Roberts told *SoldierSport* as she reflected on the club's success.

“It was pretty tough going in the first 15 minutes. There was a lot of media coverage in the build-up to the game and the cameras were in our faces as soon as we came out to warm up.

“I think the occasion may

have got the better of us in those early stages. But after that we managed to settle down and started to go through our processes. We produced some great strike play across the field, which is one of our strengths.

“The best part was the fact we had fans in the stadium, and we've had so many nice messages from people saying how inspirational we are.

“Growing up, I never thought playing league for St Helens would be an option.

“But now there are youngsters who are buzzing about the game and a lot of money is being pumped into the sport. It is great to see.”

Lifting the trophy proved to be a fitting reward for the soldier's powers of perseverance.

Roberts was recruited by St Helens on the back of a stellar campaign for the Army in 2019 – in which she starred for the Reds as they won the Challenge Shield



**“WE
DESERVE
THIS;
WE’VE
REALLY
GELLED”**

and Inter-Services titles. Her form also saw her welcomed into the England set-up.

In a bid to make the most of such opportunities she applied to join the Service's elite sports programme, which has allowed her to step back from military life to train as a full-time athlete.

However, the coronavirus outbreak saw the 2020 schedule completely wiped out, meaning Roberts' debut only came at the start of the current campaign.

“We worked so hard during pre-season training,” the Servicewoman, who has also represented the Army in rugby union and boxing, explained.

“Winning silverware has been our main goal since 2019.

“We've had so many Zoom sessions since then and have trained in groups of six when restrictions have allowed. I think we deserve this; we've really gelled as a group.

“St Helens have nine

internationals with loads of experience and World Cup campaigns to their name. Being around them means my skill levels have got better and I have improved a lot in terms of fitness and performance.

“Also, the elite sports programme has given me the time I need to recover after games. The matches have come thick and fast and if I’ve not been playing or training with St Helens, I’ve been away training with England.

“So I’m really thankful for the support the Army has given me.”

Roberts and Saints have now set their sights on a domestic double, with the club currently sitting top of the Women’s Super League table.

And she is also focusing on a home World Cup later in the year.

“The final squad has not been named yet, which means training is brutal and so competitive,” Roberts added.

“I played for England in 2015 and back then there was not a lot going on with the programme. But now there is a massive difference – it is so professional.

“The game has really grown and the coaching staff have so much support behind them.

“Personally, I’m taking every game as it comes. It is out of my control but, God willing, I will be there for the World Cup.” ■



WORLD CUP IN NUMBERS

TEAMS COMPETING IN THE WOMEN'S SHOWPIECE

8

DAYS OF ACTION, WITH THE TOURNAMENT STARTING ON NOVEMBER 9

18

DATE IN NOVEMBER FOR THE CONTEST'S FINALS DAY. THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S MATCHES WILL BE PLAYED AT OLD TRAFFORD

27

PREVIOUS CAPS FOR SGT CARRIE ROBERTS IN AN ENGLAND SHIRT. BOTH CAME AGAINST FRANCE IN 2015

2



FRIENDLY RIVALRY BUILDS

CHALLENCE Cup winner Sgt Carrie Roberts (REME) will line up against a familiar face as the England women's rugby league team step up preparations for this year's World Cup.

The squad were due to face Wales as this issue went to press, with LBdr Jess McAuley (RA, pictured) in contention for a place on the wing.

Close friends, the duo have been mainstays of the Army's rugby union set-up in recent seasons and formed a dynamic combination from outside centre and the wing.

Like Roberts, McAuley caught the eye of the national selectors during the Reds' successful rugby league campaign in 2019 and she jumped at the chance of pulling on the red jersey.

“Playing for Wales has always been an aspiration,” she said. “Representing my country is something I'm very passionate about.

“I had a good season with

the Army in 2019 and got invited for a trial with Wales on the back of that.

“Being involved with such a talented group has really helped me. We've all pretty much come over from rugby union and there are some great players who bring a lot of flair. It is an exciting time.”

And McAuley admits she is relishing the opportunity of locking horns with her friend, while being slightly anxious at the same time.

“I'm looking forward to it,” she added. “We've never played against each other before and have always been a partnership for the Army.

“It will be a totally new experience and I'm a little nervous as I know how good a player she is.

“We were joking not long ago, saying that I would be staying with her in the build-up to the game as it is being played close to where she lives. I'm allowed to stay, but I'm not allowed to speak to her the night before the match.” ■



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

ARMY athletes made their long-awaited return to the track at the Inter-Corps Championships.

Held over two days to comply with social distancing rules, the contest offered some much-needed live action for those who were largely restricted to the virtual realm in 2020.

While record-breaking times and distances were in short supply, Army Athletics secretary John Killoran said it was a successful competition.

"People were just glad to be back," he told *SoldierSport*. "The lanes were full for every event.

"While the numbers were not as big as usual due to work commitments, there were lots of individuals taking part and it was a great couple of days."

An Army Medical Services team boasting the talents of England international Sgt Danielle Hodgkinson (pictured) won the women's competition, while the Royal Logistic Corps triumphed in the men's draw.

In other news, organisers have decided to cancel the 2021 Inter-Services Athletics Championships after the tempo of the day job meant the three teams were struggling to field full squads.



REDS IN SHOW OF STRENGTH



THE Army women's cricket team have been showcasing their new-found strength in depth as they build towards this season's Inter-Services campaign.

The Reds have enjoyed a hectic run of fixtures with a series of double-headers allowing them to give game time to their established players, as well as emerging talent.

Cambridge University, the British Police and the MCC all provided this opportunity in recent weeks – matches that came on the back of a hard-fought Inter-Corps sixes tournament.

"That proved to be really successful, with 60 girls turning up," Army player-manager Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS)) told *SoldierSport*. "It was very competitive, and a lot of new players were involved.

"We have more youngsters coming through who have played cricket at school or university and I think there is now greater awareness that this is a sport for females."

The Inter-Services Twenty20 competition was being staged as this issue went to press, with the 40-over format following at the end of July.

However, both will have a distinctly different feel as the Royal Navy will not be fielding a side in 2021.

"It is disappointing as they are usually our main opposition," Vaggers added. "We have a new captain in Lt Connie Cant (RA) and she is going to have some tough calls to make in terms of selection." ■

"SHE IS GOING TO HAVE SOME TOUGH CALLS TO MAKE"

● RECORDS tumbled as the Army men took on the Stragglers of Asia in a one-sided warm-up fixture ahead of this season's Inter-Services 50-over competition.

The Reds' total of 479-4 was a new high score for the team, who also saw a new individual milestone posted at their Aldershot home.

Pte Tade Carmichael (RLC, pictured) blasted 20 fours and six sixes on his way to an unbeaten 168. He was ably supported by Bdr Graham Wiseman (RA), who struck 153 from just 59 balls.

The visitors struggled in reply and were dismissed for 108.



MONTH IN SPORT

July's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services Time Trial Championships
WHEN: July 11
WHERE: Taunton
NEED TO KNOW: Having competed in the virtual realm during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Service's top cyclists return to the road to face off for the first Forces title of the season



WHAT: Inter-Services 50-over Cricket Championships
WHEN: July 13 to 15
WHERE: RAF Vine Lane
NEED TO KNOW: Forces cricket returns to the fore as the military's top players battle for honours in the longer format competition. The Army won the title last time out in 2019



already been staged in the south and north, with the top performers heading to Aldershot for the showpiece of the track and field season

DEEN IN NUMBERS

SPEED, IN MPH, CLOCKED BY THE TEAM IN THEIR FIRST WHISTLER RUN

97

NEW TRACK RECORD, IN SECONDS, POSTED AT THE EVENT

50.6

RANKING AT THE 2015 WORLD CHAMPS

5

YEAR CAREER IN THE SPORT FOR THE SOLDIER

15

WINTER OLYMPIC CAMPAIGNS TO DATE - THE FIRST OF WHICH CAME AT THE 2014 GAMES IN SOCHI

2



DELAYED DELIGHT FOR DEEN

BOBSLEIGH driver LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds) has been awarded a retrospective gold medal for his efforts at the 2017/18 World Cup event in Whistler, Canada.

The decision was made after the Russian team that topped the standings was stripped of its victory due to an anti-doping rule violation.

Deen, who is preparing for the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, was originally awarded silver after his four-man team set a new track record in the opening run.

However, they were pipped to gold thanks to the Russians' efforts in the second run.

"On that day we were at our best, setting a new speed and track record against the best teams in the world," the 40-year-old said.

"I was in the form of my life, which has now been rewarded retrospectively."

"To be awarded that gold is a fantastic triple achievement

that I will treasure."

It is the first time that a British four-man squad has won a gold medal in bobsleigh.

Deen recently welcomed a new member to his squad in the shape of former long jump star and Olympic champion Greg Rutherford.

A campaign has also been launched to fund a new sled and cover other costs in their bid for a Winter Olympic medal next year.

"I have a fantastic team of athletes with huge potential," the soldier added. "We're training hard, I am driving really well and I have the experience to deliver again on the biggest stage of all."

"We are improving and we plan to shock the world when I secure the right equipment."

"This will be my last Olympic Games and I'd like to thank my regiment and my sponsors for their support which has allowed us to continue to compete." ■

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MOUNTAIN BIKING



RIDERS SAVOUR COUNTRY TEST AS SERIES RESUMES

HAVING seen the 2020 season decimated by the coronavirus pandemic, the Service's mountain bikers are busily making up for lost time.

Since its resumption, the Cross Country Mountain Bike Series has staged two legs and has further races planned for the coming weeks – including the Army Championships in Aldershot on July 21.

More than 100 riders took to the course at Carver Barracks in Wimbish for the contest's opening round, where LCpl John Matthews (RE) was victorious in the men's senior category.

Pte Tobias Turnham (RE), WO1 Jason Betts (RE) and Sgt Davie Donaldson (RAC) won the juniors, masters and grand masters respectively.

"The amount of thanks we have received for getting this on has been really nice," series secretary WO1 James Cooper (REME) told *SoldierSport*.

"We are so pleased it is up and running again."

"To have more than 100 people here is a pretty big turnout. Our last race was in the summer of 2019 and there's been a big lay-off, but we've used that time to build a case for funding from the Army Sport Control Board which means we can now offer these events for free."

The series is designed to attract newcomers and is staged on courses that are challenging, but achievable. Those who excel can then push for places on unit, corps or Army teams.

"It provides an opportunity for people to be recognised," Cooper added. "The Army team will come down to show face, give them an idea of what it's all about and highlight the fact there is a stepping-stone process."

"There are guys who started with us four years ago and are now part of the Service squad."

WO2 James Stewart (Lancs,



(pictured left) is one of those looking to progress this season.

He competed in the series for the first time in 2019 and was instantly hooked, but when the 2020 campaign was cancelled, he faced a lengthy wait for his next race in Wimbish.

"I love the fitness side of it," he explained. "It is about going flat out for four or five laps and leaving everything on the course."

"It is great to be back. I raced here in 2019 when it was pouring with rain, it is quite a technical course with twists and turns but there are no big descents or climbs – it is a great venue."

"The Army Championships will be my main goal this year and hopefully I can then push for a place on the Infantry team."

SSgt Steve Jacobs (REME) topped the standings in the men's senior category at the second leg in Edinburgh, where Betts added another masters triumph to his name. ■

**"IT'S
ABOUT
GOING
FLAT
OUT"**



PEAK PERFORMERS

RUGBY union star Capt Alex Eddie (QARANC, pictured above) collected a Premier 15s winners medal after she was part of the Harlequins' matchday squad for their victory over Saracens.

Despite remaining on the bench during the showpiece fixture, the soldier joined her teammates on the pitch at full-time as they celebrated a 27-17 triumph.

The Army has made a telling contribution to the club's success, with Bdr Beth Dainton (RA), SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)) and Cpl Becky Wilson (RLC) also representing Quins during the 2020/21 campaign.

Dainton and Mullen (pictured below) were later named in the Wales squad for the Rugby Europe Championship Sevens event in Lisbon, Portugal.

However, the contest proved too good for the Welsh, who finished eighth following defeats to Poland, Belgium, Russia, Portugal and Germany.

But they did record a 42-0 win over Romania.

Elsewhere, SSgt Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) has called time on her playing career after more than 200 games for Wasps.



GOLDEN GUNNERS WIN AT THE DEATH



SKIPPER Bdr Owain Davies was the hero for 12 Regiment, Royal Artillery as he slotted a golden-time drop goal to seal a dramatic victory in the final of rugby league's Inter-Unit Nav Nines.

With the scores tied at 8-8 at the end of normal time, the gunners struck the decisive blow when Davies marshalled his players downfield to create the platform for a moment of magic that cruelly dashed the hopes of 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps.

The kick settled a contest that ebbed and flowed between the two sides, who shared four tries through some scintillating play.

LBdr Fex Naulivou struck the first blow for the gunners but their rivals responded when LCpl Raks Sausou crossed in the corner.

The loggies then took the lead as Pte Andrea Vasuitoga raced onto a kick through the lines to touch down. However, Sgt Sikeli Komainalawa replied at the death to send the contest into golden time, when 12 Regt came

to the fore.

Davies fired a warning with his boot as a drilled effort from the half-way line crashed against the cross bar and he made no mistake moments later as he converted from closer range to secure the silverware.

"The plan was to get into that pocket of space for the kick," Davies said at full-time.

"We had two chances at it. With the way the lads were reacting on the sidelines, I thought it was all over with the first attempt. But with the second one, I had my arms up straight away."

"It is always a huge match when we play 9 Regt, they are physical encounters and things definitely step up a notch."

Elsewhere, there were wins for The Light Dragoons in the bowl final, 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery in the shield final and 26 Engineer Regiment in the plate final.

The tournament represented the first contact sport to resume after lockdown and saw 29 unit teams taking part. ■

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Final Word



Serving is about mutual understanding and respect – but it is also important for soldiers to know there are good support groups out there, such as the Army Servicewomen's Network.

WO2 Sheridan Lucas, RLC



Men should call out inappropriate behaviour when they encounter it, even if the group they are in is dominated by men. That would create stronger bonds between the sexes.

Cpl Emma Williams, QARANC



I think in a predominantly male workplace, men could generally be a bit more supportive and respectful. Ask yourself how you would want them to be treated if this was your missus or relative.

Lt Phil Robinson, RE



In my troop I'm the only female and I sometimes have to remind the men that even though we have equal rights and pay, we don't have equal physical strength in every situation. They sometimes need to take that into account.

Pte Ortance Ngonga, RLC



It's about understanding the attitudes that can make it uncomfortable for women. Outright sexism – from my biased perspective – is fairly limited, but so-called banter can make women feel like they don't belong.

WO1 Kelly Caswell-Treen, RAMC



A big part is making sure their perspectives are heard and that we're listening. A lot of it is the low-level stuff that makes people feel like they're integrating – kit fitting well and knowing you are accounted for, rather than being there as an afterthought.

Capt Mike Lowein, RTR

Showing support

We asked troops what men can do to be good allies to women in the workplace

We need to have more open and honest conversations to understand the lived experience of Servicewomen at every stage of their careers, recognising there is more to do and that we are all part of improving the diversity and operational effectiveness of the British Army.

**WO1 Kelly Caswell-Treen, RAMC
Co-Chair, Army Servicewomen's Network**





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