

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



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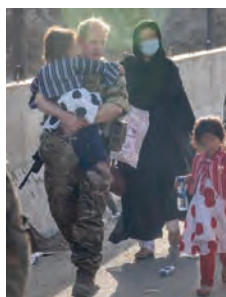
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“

I'm doing jobs I wouldn't normally. It's about being the first up and the last one to bed

”

Strength in numbers – page 36



We salute you



I THINK I speak for everyone on our team when I say that putting *Soldier* together for British troops each month leaves

us in an almost-constant state of humbleness. But this has never been more true than over recent weeks, as we collated your stories on the unthinkable scenes that unfolded at Kabul airport (page 26).

When I first joined the magazine a decade ago, pages of every issue were plastered with seemingly-endless lists of obituaries to the men and women who had fallen on Op Herrick.

It was a reality I was unprepared for. And one that is, thankfully, not the case today. But no doubt many of our readers are consumed with thoughts of those losses, as well as the Afghan civilians who died in the desperate scramble out of the country.

I hope this month's coverage can help personnel to recognise what a huge source of pride your courage is to our society, regardless of the political backdrop. Please do also read the article on moral injury on page 34 – an area of mental health we should probably all have on our radar in future.

As ever, let us know your thoughts on what you read.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

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

> Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

> Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk. Just click on the "read it here" tab.

> Purchase

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Defence Digital is committed to improving the services we provide. On the new Self-Service Portal you can provide customer feedback, which means we can continually improve your experience.



Pictures: Graeme Main; SAC Connor Tierney and Sgt Jimmy Wise, both RAF



The versatile Wildcat helicopter was one of the future-facing pieces of kit showcased at DSEI

An age of transformation

Digital revolution and new threats spell turning point in history

THE Army is facing an age of transformation as significant as the era when motor vehicles replaced horses a century ago, the Chief of the General Staff has said.

Speaking at the Defence, Security and Equipment International (DSEI) show in London, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith explained that the world was in an era similar to the interwar period, when new tech and ways of thinking were altering the nature of conflict.

In the same way, the digital revolution coupled with a diverse spectrum of threats now demanded different manners of working. And he stressed that the relationship between the military and civilian companies would be pivotal to future success.

"Our transformation from mechanisation to digitisation will not just accessorise the way we do business – it promises to change it," the senior officer said. "Soldiering has always been about evolution – successful armies have adapted to the changing context, threats and technology."

Gen Carleton-Smith was speaking as the British Army unveiled examples of its latest generation of hardware and future thinking at the Excel Centre in London's Docklands.

The Service's stand included a kit line-up featuring the latest incarnation of the Apache attack helicopter and its versatile Wildcat stablemate.

The Boxer armoured vehicle was also on display, while experts were on hand to talk about the Challenger main battle tank upgrade.

And examples of the current mechanical thinking were showcased in



the shape of new generation diesel-electric hybrid engines.

The top brass have stressed that this new powerplant – which is already undergoing testing (*Soldier*, August) – will work in tandem with a so-called electrification of the battlespace.

Part of the Future Soldier vision, the move will see the introduction of other tech, including efficient batteries, to meet the power needs of digital kit.

"This approach sets out how the Army intends to take advantage of the opportunities provided by sustainable technology," Assistant Head of Plans for Ground Manoeuvre Capability, Col Simon Ridgway, explained during the four-day exhibition.

"It will ensure the electrical infrastructure is ready to meet the demand required on the battlefield of the future – delivering effect needs the right power in the right place at the right time."

Elsewhere, personnel discussed their new ways of thinking and initiatives including the new Army operating model – a top-down restructuring of HQ functions (page 17). ■

“Soldiering has always been about evolution”

Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith



SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP



Picture: Graeme Main

1. USA LABOUR OF LOVE

AN OFFICER who tabbed barefoot from Land's End to Edinburgh to fund gene therapy for his daughter has embarked on another energy-sapping challenge stateside.

Maj Chris Brannigan (AGC (SPS)) is walking the east coast of America in a bid to raise £2.5 million for research into the rare disease that is affecting nine-year-old Hasti.

Cornelia de Lange syndrome causes a range of cognitive and developmental symptoms, as well as seizures.

While there is currently no cure, thanks to Maj Brannigan's efforts so far (*Soldier*, July 2020) a US lab has begun testing a potential therapy. But more money is needed for clinical trials.

As this issue went to press he was nearing the half way point of his 1,200-mile trek from Bar Harbor, Maine to Jacksonville, North Carolina, where he hopes to arrive on October 22.

Meanwhile back home, troops have staged a series of "solidarity relays" in support of the campaign.

To follow Maj Brannigan's journey on Facebook and Twitter search "Hope for Hasti"

2. BELIZE SANDHURST IN THE SUN

TROOPS from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's Marne Company have put 24 personnel from the Belize Defence Force, Police and Coastguard through their paces on an adapted version of the short commissioning course.

The five-week package, run with assistance from the British Army Training Support Unit Belize, culminated in a passing out parade the day before the 40th anniversary of the country's independence.

Marne Company's remit is to deliver Sandhurst-style officer training and defence engagement in countries around the world.



3. UK MASS MELODIES

THE historic battlements of Carrickfergus Castle formed the backdrop as the massed bands of the Army's four Irish regiments performed together in Northern Ireland for the first time in 35 years.

The evening featured displays from the bands of the Irish Guards and The Royal Irish Regiment, alongside the pipes and drums of The Royal Dragoon Guards, The Queen's Royal Hussars and the Irish Guards.

Around 250 musicians – including students from Campbell College Army Cadet Force – performed a wide selection of classic and contemporary pieces.

There were also special performances from a choir of Fijian soldiers who serve in Irish regiments.

4. KOSOVO SWITCHING FIRE

SOLDIERS deployed to the Balkans have been moving to assist Afghan nationals in the wake of the Kabul evacuation.

Some 140 troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles had been rehearsing a rapid reinforcement role in Kosovo when they were called away to help resettle ex-Nato contractors temporarily housed in the country.

Operation Allied Solace is processing 2,000 former employees and their families

being resettled in other countries – 150 of whom will be welcomed in the UK.

The Gurkhas are helping with tasks including vetting and other admin support as well as providing force protection to the operation. They are supported by colleagues from across the Armed Forces, all working with British Embassy officials.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace added: "Our commitment to those who worked alongside the UK and our Nato allies endures far beyond the end of Op Pitting."



Picture: SSgt Kristen Savage, USAF



3. UK

4. KOSOVO

5. ARMENIA

6. KENYA

7. BRUNEI

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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7. BRUNEI COVID COOPERATION

SOME 75 troops from British Forces Brunei are providing support to testing and vaccine programmes as the country confronts its second wave of Covid.

In Jerudong, soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles and their Bruneian counterparts have been swabbing around 700 members of the public daily.

Other personnel have been administering injections and providing planning advice to the host nation's health ministry.

Picture: LCpl Chiran Rajbashi, RGR

5. ARMENIA TRAINING RESUMES

WITH Covid travel restrictions relaxing and an end to hostilities in the region, the British Military Advisory Training Team (Czech Republic) have returned to Armenia to deliver a four-week junior command and leadership course to 23 members of the country's Peacekeeping Brigade.

Staged at Zar Training Centre, Yerevan, the package covered infantry patrolling and other practical exercises.

"There are many challenges conducting remote and arduous training tasks in the mountainous terrain close to Mount Ararat in extreme temperatures," explained CSgt Gary Carr (RRF).

"The course is both physically and mentally demanding, especially during the latter weeks where students spend most of the time in field conditions."

It was the sixth time the tri-Service outfit had worked with the Armenian military as part of routine engagement. The team run up to 24 courses a year, either from their base at Vyskov or in one of 45 partner countries in Eastern Europe and Asia.



6. KENYA KEEN PUPILS

BRITISH instructors staged a stabilisation operations course at the Kenyan School of Infantry in Isiolo.

The train-the-trainer package equipped 30 of the country's personnel to teach a range of skills – including route clearance, urban and rural patrolling, defensive operations and counter-IED procedures – to colleagues bound for the African Union Mission in Somalia.

The seven UK troops, from phase one training establishments, designed the course using only resources and teaching aides available locally to the students.

Team leader Capt Rupert Adams (PWRR) said he had been impressed by the Kenyans' infectious enthusiasm. "They have a commendable sense of humility and humour in the face

of adversity," he added.

The short term training team was arranged by the Nairobi-based British Peace Support Team (Africa), whose remit is to develop the capabilities of partner nations.

SEEDY BUSINESS

A SEED bombing campaign is being conducted at British Army Training Unit Kenya in a bid to increase plant life at the African proving ground.

Launched by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's overseas and training team, the process – also known as aerial reforestation – involves the scattering of "seedballs".

Charcoal dust is combined with nutritious bindings around the seeds to protect them from

damage and animals.

The team obtained 16 bags of native grasses and acacia trees, each weighing 25kg, in a bid to replant areas impacted by training.

"I'm optimistic that we'll start to see much more greenery on the estate as this project continues," said Sam Seaton, the outfit's business manager in Kenya.

"Understanding how our activities affect the local wildlife and growth is key to understanding the long-term impact of training in Kenya."



Picture: Cpl Jamie Hart, RLC



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Picture: DSTL

BIOLOGICAL BOTS

THE Army could soon be equipped with self-thinking robots that will be sent forward to detect and map chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) hazards, reducing risk to troops.

Around £1.5 million is being invested with industry to explore the potential of autonomous systems that could replace the current capability, which is based on specially adapted manned Fuchs vehicles.

A demonstrator is in development that will carry multiple sensors over large areas at speed while conducting autonomous surveys.

Ian Napier, the project lead at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), said recent advancements in unmanned kit offered up some exciting opportunities.

"There is an understandable desire to remove the need for people to enter into hazardous areas, even if they are inside a protected vehicle," he added. "But we need to fully understand the variety of potential CBR scenarios and the tasks that may need to be undertaken."

A Viking unmanned vehicle is now being adapted by DSTL (pictured), with technicians installing a suite of chemical and radiological sensors.

The platforms are capable of carrying a payload of up to 750kg and use advanced AI-based autonomy with GPS-denied navigation.

This means CBR sensors can inform the asset's electronic brain so it can adapt its route and detection systems as it encounters hazards.

“
We need
to fully
understand
the tasks
”



Picture: Drew Tommons

FREEDOM FOR THE MEDICS

■ PERSONNEL from Joint Hospital Group (South East) paraded through Camberley to mark their Freedom of the Borough award in recognition of their efforts in treating Covid-19 patients at Frimley Park Hospital during the pandemic.

The tri-Service unit, largely comprised of troops from the Army Medical Services, were granted the honour by Surrey Heath Council.

"We were truly humbled to share the day with our NHS colleagues and the senior nurses we worked closely alongside during the pandemic," said 2LT Paige Lewis (QARANC).



ADVENTURE AWAITS...

■ AN online guide to help adrenalin junkies kick off their next outdoor expedition has been released by the Adventurous Training Group.

Accessed via the QR code or on Defence Connect, it details the opportunities available in canoeing, kayaking, caving, freefall parachuting, gliding, mountaineering, mountain biking, offshore sailing, paragliding, skiing, and sub-aqua diving.



CAMBRIAN PATROL RETURNS



Picture: Cpl Tom Evans, RLC

■ IT WAS cancelled last year due to the pandemic, but Exercise Cambrian Patrol is back where it belongs in the challenging Black Mountains of Wales from October 8-17. Just half the usual number of foreign teams will attend this year. But there will be strong Regular, Reserve and University Officer Training Corps representation. Patrols of eight will complete tasks including dismounted close combat and casualty evacuation, counter-CBRN procedures and artillery target drills. They will cover 60km, with an average climb of more than 1,000m carrying 35kg Bergans. Read next month's issue for a report on the competition.



Army cyclists celebrate twin Forces titles in Devon

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MARCH OF THE MILE

MEMBERS of The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards marched down the Royal Mile from Edinburgh Castle to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Regular Cavalry Regiment, which is based in Leuchars and equipped with the Jackal and Coyote vehicles. The spectacle was one of a series of events planned to mark the special milestone. Picture: Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC

Giving troops the cyber edge

Escape rooms, a new college... the mission to upskill soldiers is on

THE MoD has taken a leaf out of TV show *The Cube*'s book to raise awareness of cyber threats.

Soldiers at five major defence sites around the UK (see below) are being invited to form teams of four-to-six personnel to tackle a so-called "escape room" in an accommodation unit equipped with different devices.

The zone will come under attack from a mock hacker called Script Kiddie, and players must fight back by finding clues and solving puzzles online.

"As Script Kiddie begins to exploit the network in various ways in an attempt to disturb the living environment and lock personnel in, players will need to solve up to seven puzzles in order to escape," explained Isobel Drever from Defence Digital.

"Throughout the game devices will be 'exploited' with players solving puzzles based on smart devices malfunctioning."

Teams will be timed to identify the 2021 champions, who will be announced later this year.

The initiative is part of defence's support to Cyber Awareness Month, an international campaign to help

improve online security.

For more information search for "Cyber Confident" on Defnet or Defence Connect.

MEANWHILE, a new college aimed at giving British personnel a technological edge has opened at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham.

Known as the Defence College for Military Capability Integration, the facility will offer 170 courses in subjects ranging from cyber operations to ordnance disposal, disruptive technologies and information advantage.

It will become the MoD's lead in cyber education.

"This is about training and educating specialists and leaders to meet the defence and security challenges of today, while anticipating those of tomorrow," said Maj Gen Andrew Roe, the academy's chief executive and commandant. "We teach our students how, not what, to think, equipping them with the intellectual edge for success."

To ensure its output keeps pace with the latest developments, the college will maintain strong links to academics, think-tanks, industry and a range of overseas partners.

For more details visit da.mod.uk

“We teach them how to think”



ESCAPE ROOMS:

Catterick Garrison, Oct 4-8 -- RAF Boulmer, Oct 11-15 -- HMNB Clyde, Oct 18-21 -- MoD Main Building, Oct 25-29 -- PJHQ Northwood, Nov 1-5

Picture: Freepik

BRAVERY MEMORIALISED

A STRIKING statue of a heroic Sikh soldier was unveiled in Wolverhampton to mark Saragarhi Day – the annual commemoration of one of the bravest last stands in military history.

Funded by £100,000 in donations from local Sikhs, the figure depicts Havildar Ishar Singh, who in 1897 led 21 comrades from the Army of British India as they defended a strategically important hilltop post against 10,000 Afghan troops.

Serving Sikhs and personnel from 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment were on parade at the ceremony, while members of 210 Battery, 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery gave a field gun salute.



OVERLOOKED SOLDIERS

A BOOK celebrating the service of African troops has been published.

The King's African Rifles and East African Forces in Both World Wars was commissioned by the formations' regimental association to commemorate the honours earned by personnel in conflict.

President David Williams said the contribution of the Askari – as the soldiers were also known – was significant, but is often overlooked.

For more information visit

kingsafricanriflesassociation.co.uk

LASER WEAPONS

SOLDIERS are set to get their hands on some highly accurate battlefield systems after the MoD awarded three directed-energy weapon demonstrator contracts worth more than £70 million.

Having been delivered to the Army, a high-power radio frequency demonstrator will be mounted to a Man SV truck to track land, air and sea assets.

A Wolfhound vehicle will also play host to a laser system for up to six months where trials will include neutralising UAVs and land-based targets (see illustration). Another laser will be mounted on a Royal Navy Type 23 frigate.

Trials are scheduled to begin in 2023 and end by 2025.

Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin said the weaponry was a key part of the Army's future equipment programme.

"We intend to become a world-leader in the research, manufacture and implementation of this next-generation technology," he added.

The systems are being developed by Thales and Raytheon UK.



Picture: Raytheon UK

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

Picture: Titch Tetley Photography



RLC battle it out

PERSONNEL from the Royal Logistic Corps took to the water at Abingdon-on-Thames for the inaugural inter-regiment dragon boat race. Seven units took part, with 17 Port and Maritime Regiment defeating 7 Regiment by the narrowest of margins in the competition final.

Amount raised:
£1,400
For: ABF
The Soldiers' Charity

Moving mountains

A COURAGEOUS former sapper celebrated completing the Three Peaks Challenge just nine months after becoming an amputee. Jon Hilton is counting the cash for those in need following an ascent of the highest summits of England, Wales and Scotland.



Amount raised:
£12,300
For: SSAFA, Blesma
& others

Great North Run boost

RESERVISTS from The Queen's Own Yeomanry turned out to support the delayed staging of the 40th Great North Run as well as cheering on their own WO2 David Ansell (pictured), who is walking a half marathon every day for a year in aid of Cancer Research after losing his father and one of his soldiers, LCpl Dean Ashworth, to the disease.



Shining a light



Troops urged to make their views known in latest attitude survey

SOLDIERS are being asked to make their opinions known on topics such as pay, accommodation and scoff to help the top brass identify areas for improvement.

Some 8,600 personnel were being emailed invitations to take part in the latest Armed Forces continuous attitude survey as this issue went to press.

The study results land directly on the desks of Army decision makers and the MoD officials responsible for drawing up future policy.

It can be completed online or via a paper copy sent to units, and the closing date is February 7.

Decisive action has been taken on past findings – including a £450 million cash injection to improve single living accommodation after feedback criticised this area of Service life.

The “delivering defence dining” initiative has also been set up to boost food quality and catering delivery.

The most recent study, which was conducted during the 2020 Covid pandemic, suggested flexible working opportunities were important to troops.

Army personnel boss Brig Nathan Sempala-Ntege told *Soldier* earlier this

year the issue was one of many on which action was being taken based on survey responses.

He said: “The pandemic has changed life – flexible working is a part of the labour market. We must offer these practices where possible to attract and retain people.”

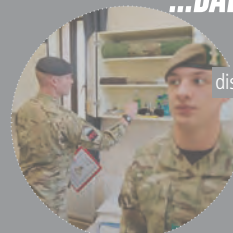
GOOD DRILLS...

81%

troops proud of the Army

74%

satisfied with line management



...BAD DRILLS

55%

dissatisfied with barracks

37%

unhappy with catering contractors

LAST YEAR'S AFCS

FIRE FLIGHT



PHOTOGRAPHER Ian Harris was on the lookout for wildlife near his Norfolk home when he captured this sunset shot of an Apache heading east towards Swanton Morley. “I thought the helicopter might fly across the sun creating a silhouette, but as it came closer suddenly the engine exhaust lit up like a flame to connect the two with a fiery umbilical chord,” he said. Got your own shot to share with readers? Email news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

"Prospective adopters chose this agency because they felt understood as military families, offered a non-judgemental approach and saw strengths which other agencies had considered as weaknesses."

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The importance of Professional Registration in the Armed Forces

By incoming IET President, Air Marshal Sir Julian Young
KBE CB FREng CEng FIET

Professional Registration is increasingly important in the Armed Forces and plays a significant part in creating a competent and skilled work force across the UK. Qualifications and associated Continued Professional Development should help bridge the gap between military and civilian trades. Although simply being registered doesn't guarantee ex-military engineers a job, it could level the playing field and get someone an interview.

After a 40-year career in the Royal Air Force (RAF), I've always supported people developing themselves further through additional qualifications. The route often is through distance learning, which is hard work in a busy job. However, when you're dipping into academia and then back into the workplace, the first time you answer a question or write an essay, you are better in your role because you are instantly applying that new knowledge and thinking.

I led the team with the MOD and HM Treasury that helped the roll out of the Defence Engineer Registration Scheme (DERS) across different branches within the Armed Forces; the scheme demonstrates clear value in people. The streamlined application process is excellent, and the Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) that step forward and take on the work to translate military skills and experience into qualifications will benefit greatly from doing so. I'm proud to be a member of the IET, because when I started campaigning on professionalisation within the RAF some 15 years ago, it was the first PEI to offer a streamlined route to Chartered Engineer (CEng). The IET for me was the RAF's PEI of choice. Anything that can help streamline both the route of people into a PEI and the payment of fees is a positive.

As well as the DERS agreements, the IET is working hard to implement Central Payment Schemes in the Armed Forces. Having been successful with the RAF, with over 1,000 members Professionally Registered, we should be looking to roll Central Payment Schemes out for the other Services as widely as we can, including more companies in industry that already have had a lot of success with it. The IET welcomes engineers and technicians from all backgrounds; if you care about engineering in any or multiple sectors, the IET can be your professional home and has a unique position to fill. We need to be engaging with seniors and Fellows in all engineering organisations to promote the value in their people being Professionally Registered.

I'm looking forward to my term as IET President (2021-2022) and follow in the successful steps of all past Presidents. My specific area of focus will be to champion technicians and seek to facilitate the continued growth in their membership. I believe the majority of the 'missing 3 million' mentioned in Professor Uff's 2017 review of our engineering profession are technicians. We need to understand better what technicians are, what it means to be a technician and then offer them more through membership of the IET.



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engineer, repeat**

Julian's President's Address will be broadcast
live on 14 October 2021 at 1pm BST

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Look who's back!

THE familiar sight of the Changing of the Guard returned to Buckingham Palace after an 18-month hiatus due to Covid-19. A crowd watched on as members of Number 3 Company, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards undertook the ceremonial duty, most of them for the first time. They were accompanied by the Band of the Coldstream Guards.

Picture: Graeme Main

Headquarters shake-up

New teams set up to enhance decision-making

CUTTING-EDGE kit will find its way into the hands of troops more efficiently in the wake of a top-down overhaul of military command structures.

Senior officers say the new Army operating model will help new equipment move more quickly from factory floor to front line.

In a reorganisation at the Service's headquarters in Andover, the move has seen a specialist hub set up to keep a handle on initiatives such as the Challenger battle tank upgrade.

"Bringing these types of programmes together sets the conditions for them to be more successful – and for our troops to perform better," said Col Justin Barry (right), one of the officers overseeing the application of the operating model.

"The reorganisation will take time to bed in but it is going to yield valuable results."

Planning for the new way of working – which aims to create a more agile HQ – started last year and initial capability was reached at the beginning of September.

Procurement is one of three new outfits established under the model, all focused on different business areas.



A futures team – responsible for horizon scanning – has also been created as well as a strategic centre.

This is dedicated to setting the broad direction of travel and ensuring the Army can meet challenges that have been identified down the line.

In tandem, staff in Andover have also been redeployed to serve within the new structures. Full operating capacity for the model is set to be achieved in spring next year.

Col Barry highlighted that the recent Integrated Review, plus new ways of working in the wake of the Covid crisis, were factors in the rethink.

The officer continued: "We needed improvement in a number of key areas and the new model addresses this."

"The aim is to help our HQ make decisions that will benefit soldiers on the front line."

“It is going to yield valuable results”

”



WIN
an Omega-3 health bundle

LAST month's spine line clues, inspired by our colourful Tigers front cover, would probably have stumped even the most enthusiastic of skydivers.

(Tony) Butler, (Angel) Fernandez, (Jeff) Montgomery and (Martin) Shuttleworth are all members of staff at British Skydiving HQ – the UK's national governing body for sport parachuting.

This month we have teamed up with ethical fish oil producer Wiley's Finest (wileysfinest.co.uk) – the only brand in the world to offer a range made from MSC-certified 100 per cent sustainable wild Alaskan fish.

We are offering three readers an omega-3 health bundle worth £82, including Peak EPA Liquid, vegan CatchFree omega-3 oil and Bold Heart plant sterols.

To be in with a chance of winning a pack, tell us what links the words on the spine of this issue. Answers, including daytime telephone number, to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by October 29.



LONG WALK HOME

A CENTENARIAN former prisoner-of-war who escaped German captivity has launched a charity appeal to mark his 102nd birthday.

Ex-Royal Engineer Norman Lewis is aiming to raise £10,000 – one pound for every mile he covered on his epic journey home in 1945.

The cash will go towards two charities that have assisted him in recent years – SSAFA and the Tri-Service and Veterans Support Centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Lewis (pictured below) endured five years of forced labour in Poland during the Second World War, before the Russian advance enabled him to get away and return to Britain via the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

To find out more about his campaign visit virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SapperNorman102

Read more about Norman Lewis's story in November's magazine.





Ground view

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

I HAVE been so proud to see what our troops achieved in Kabul during Op Pitting.

It was a huge team effort, not just by 16 Brigade and 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, but by our Explosive Ordnance Disposal troops, dog handlers, loggies and others.

For 18 days they were living out of their daysacks in horrendous conditions, with only a minimal amount of kit.

Now they are all safely home they need time and space to reflect, regroup and spend time with their families. But I look forward to paying them a visit to talk to them about their experiences very soon.

Lots of people have spoken to me about Afghanistan in the past few weeks and there has been a real mixture of responses.

I have had some in tears and others who said, "we did our job well and we can't dwell on it because this world just isn't a good place".

Those who have lost friends or seen colleagues suffer life-changing injuries, as well as personnel who had close relationships with interpreters and other locals, will have been hit worst by these events.

I'm determined that they get all the support they need.

Help is out there so please speak up – and let's all look out for each other.

You can find a list of mental health resources on page 50 of this magazine.

Let's also not forget that while Op Pitting grabbed the headlines, we still have troops on operations all around the globe doing great work in places like Estonia, Mali and Ukraine.

When our people step up they are absolutely amazing. An old boss of mine used to say every one of our soldiers has solid oak at the centre of them – it's just sometimes there is more veneer you need to strip away in order to see it.

Each of my counterparts from our Five Eyes partners said to me during the recent regimental sergeant majors' convention that one of the British Army's greatest strengths is the quality of its junior and senior NCOs.

I couldn't agree more. Our people are world class and I count myself lucky to serve alongside them.



“
I've had
some
people in
tears
”

UP CLOSE
AND
PERSONAL



Q What rank or role have you enjoyed most in your career so far and why?

A Squadron sergeant major. I knew all my soldiers and officers really well, and we went on exercise to Kenya and Jordan

Training talk



MY feet haven't touched the ground since arriving in post a little over two months ago.

I've spent quite a bit of time in our training environment – at Pirbright, Blandford and Larkhill – in an effort to understand, as we move towards the Future Soldier concept, how we can enable the transition from civilian to military in the best possible way.

Our training staff didn't slow down over Covid – if anything they were even busier organising their courses. And I thank everyone involved for their considerable efforts.

As well as meeting young recruits, at

the other end of the scale I attended the commanding officers' designate course.

I've also been engaging with our international partners and generally getting in among the wider Service to build on the good work of my predecessor.

At every meeting I go to, I go with two opinions – one is the Army sergeant major's and the other is the soldiers'. And they aren't necessarily the same thing.

But it's vital those at the top understand what our troops are thinking and why it is important to them. Rest assured that is something I will never shy away from.

Plea on attitude survey

■ The Armed Forces continuous attitude survey is out now. It has been sent to 8,600 personnel and the deadline for responding is February 7. From my experience, I know that the feedback gets used to shape our senior leaders' decisions. But the only way it becomes a powerful tool is if people engage with it. If you receive a copy, please take the time to share your thoughts on Service life – both good and bad. The more people take part, the more likely things are to change.



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Illustration: Soloma_Poppysyle



Are you a toxic leader?

You might be showing signs and not even realise it...

► **YOU** don't have to scream and shout at your subordinates to be a bad boss – there are plenty of less obvious ways you might be making life miserable for those around you.

And what's more, you're probably unaware you're doing it.

That's one of the reasons why rooting out poor management styles is so difficult – but the folks at the Centre for Army Leadership are on the case.

As part of its mission to promote best practice at all levels, the Sandhurst-based outfit wants to eradicate so-called toxic traits.

Although troops usually fall on a spectrum, at the extreme end you could be severely affecting the mental health of your soldiers.

According to the team's WO2 Sheridan Lucas (RLC), the answer lies in examining your own negative behaviours. With that in mind, we asked her to outline some signs of being a bad boss...

You take your personal problems to work

Everyone is entitled to a bad day – but you have to know how to manage it at work so your stress doesn't lead to a toxic environment. No one wants to be around an angry person. Consider how you come across to colleagues. They shouldn't be picking up on those emotions.

You don't like change

The Army has to move with the generations – if you aren't prepared to advance with everyone else you could become toxic. Some people might not be aware their attitudes are toxic towards new things – for example, females in combat roles. That's where training and education is really important.

You find it hard to sympathise

You don't have to have walked the same path as someone to understand what's going on, but you must be able to bring yourself down a level to identify the problem and know how to talk to them. If you're not doing this, you're probably not invested in your soldiers.

You surround yourself with 'yes men'

If you're not mature enough to listen when someone says "no", it's screaming out that you're toxic. You're not going to agree with other people all the time, but you do have to hear them out. Thankfully, the military is now getting better at listening to lower ranks – gone are the days of all private soldiers having poor grades at school. Today they are often highly qualified and have experience you should take on board.

You struggle with criticism

Some people say they want feedback, but don't really mean it. That's why reporting tools are so important – it's a completely

anonymous process and can show if you're starting to display bad traits. A good leader will turn a negative point into a positive by asking themselves how they can improve.

You never apologise

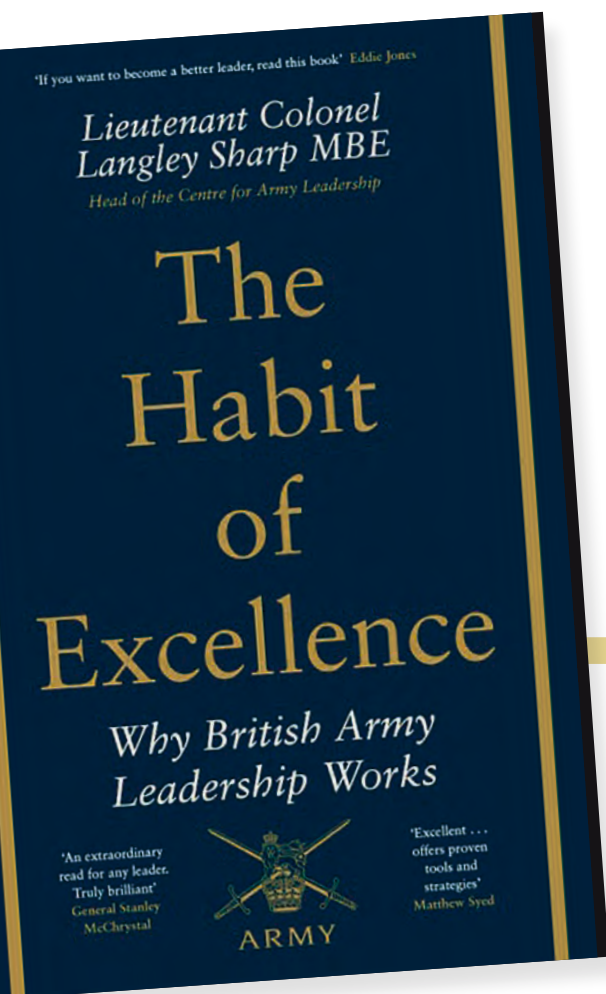
Children are taught to say sorry, but as an adult you almost never hear it. However, someone putting their hand up and saying they got it wrong will only have a good effect on the team. Rather than perceiving you as weak, they will think "fair play" and then when they have an issue they'll be more likely to come forward because they know it's an environment in which people can admit to failure.

You take credit for others' work

Everyone wants to do well and progress, but it shouldn't be at the expense of others. Multiple times I've seen leaders work their staff into the ground. They reap the benefits of their hard efforts and either don't give them the credit or claim they are just trying to develop them professionally. I experienced this as a young lance corporal and it is really detrimental to people's morale.

LEADER LESSONS

Army leadership doctrine defines toxic leadership as "a combination of selfish attitudes, motivations and behaviours that have adverse effects on both subordinates and the organisation". For more insights – good and bad – see the Centre for Army Leadership page on the Army website, or visit them on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.



Good drills

Head of the Centre for Army Leadership, Lt Col Langley Sharp (Para), gives the lowdown on his new book *The Habit of Excellence*

How did the book come about?

It was the brainchild of Prof Lloyd Clark, our director of research, who realised there was a gap in the market for an authoritative account of leadership from the British Army. While it's my name on the cover, it was a genuine team effort – lots of people contributed to it.

Who is it aimed at?

All levels of leaders across different sectors – from business to sports, academia and public service – as well as our own internal audience, for whom I hope it will encourage debate. One of its objectives is to change perceptions. The outside world thinks Army leadership is about hierarchy and shouting at people, and sometimes that is necessary, but most of the time it's about inspiring personnel and connecting with them through trust.

How does it differ from other titles in the genre?

There is no other book that we know of that looks at British Army leadership holistically. And by that I mean it takes us from the history of where our leadership has come from – from three centuries of hard-fought successes, as well as failures – to where it is now and what it could look like in the future.

What future challenges have you identified?

The future never turns out as you expect but one known is that teams and organisations need to adapt to change. However, people tend to be resistant to it. There is such a rich history of tradition at the heart of everything the Army does and we need to sustain that, while keeping pace with society as it evolves. For example, the rise of individualism is inevitably going to have an impact on the military. My fear is that some people demand and expect too much from others but are less willing to follow others for the collective good.

Which leaders from history do you admire?

Field Marshal Slim was formidable – a capable military commander, who also had that personal touch and was respected by everyone. Another is Regimental Sergeant Major John Lord, who was vintage Parachute Regiment and a phenomenal figure in Army history. But there are so many stories to be told about unnamed NCOs through the ages. I've learnt as much from soldier leaders as I have from senior officers.

What leadership trait would you stamp out?

Two spring to mind, but they're closely linked. One is arrogance – we could do with a lot more humility. And then there are those – across all ranks – who confuse position with leadership. They think their rank means people are following them willingly.

What would you like to see more of in leaders?

Good leaders have the self-awareness to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and work out how others around them can come together to mitigate that.



VO2 max

What is it and why does it matter?



► **WITH** the latest smartwatches offering predicted “VO2 max” scores among their raft of data, it begs the question – what does this mean?

Here, Army masters cross-country team manager Capt Joe Foreshew (RAPTC) offers some expert insight into this influential stat and why it is important...

VO2 max is a test of aerobic fitness – generally, the higher the number the fitter you are aerobically. Essentially, it is the amount of oxygen you can use during intense exercise. The calculation is made in relation to your body weight and is measured in millilitres of oxygen used in one minute, per kilo of body weight (ml/kg/min)

Elite athletes have recorded scores as high as 97. Use your watch to check your score and see how you shape up in the table below:

	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55
Excellent	56/60	52/56	45/51	40/45
Good	47-56/52-60	45-52/49-56	38-45/43-51	34-40/39-45
Average	38-41/42-46	35-38/40-42	31-33/35-38	28-30/32-35
Poor	28-32/30-36	26-30/30-34	22-26/26-30	20-24/25-28

+ **Women** Men

The quickest and easiest way to improve your score is to carry out high intensity interval training, as well as building a steady aerobic base. Following a 80/20 (80 per cent easy, 20 hard) rule will help keep injuries at bay. Reducing your bodyweight will also help increase your number because this is directly linked to the VO2 max equation.

High VO2 max does not guarantee you will be a great endurance athlete as there are many factors involved such as psychology, and other dynamics in endurance sports. However, it certainly helps. Also, remember that your smartwatch is a prediction based on clever algorithms – the only true way to find an accurate VO2 max is to get booked into a sports science lab.



Double Olympic LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds) pushes himself to the max in training for the GB bobsleigh team

Easy targets

► YOU'VE nailed the CV writing and secured the all-important first interview for civvy street – so far so good.

But selling yourself to an employer, whether in person or over Zoom, is a daunting prospect.

According to Darren Jaffrey, a general manager at HireVue, veterans can struggle to effectively communicate their skills and experience.

That's why the hiring platform recently partnered with ex-military recruitment site SaluteMyJob to help Service leavers navigate the civvy job market. Here, he highlights the questions you're likely to face at interview and what employers are really listening for in your answer...

“What are your strengths and weaknesses?”

Be self-reflective and communicate what you've excelled at during your time in the Forces.

You might lack direct work experience, but you'll likely have an abundance of soft skills to showcase, including a knack for negotiation, calmness under pressure, self-discipline and a mission-focused mentality. When discussing weaknesses avoid generic answers such as “I work too hard”. Instead, be as honest as possible about the tasks you find challenging and offer examples of how you've overcome these

3 *deceptively simple job interview questions... and how to answer them well*

“Tell me a little about yourself...”

When asking this question, the interviewer is keen to understand more about your professional background. This is a great opportunity to discuss your time in the military and outline the skills you've learnt and the experience you've gained. Try to avoid talking about your hobbies and interests, unless they feed into the role

“Why do you want to work here?”

Hiring teams typically ask this to identify candidates who are well prepared and who demonstrate genuine interest in the role. You don't need to detail your long-term career path, just whether you understand the job, the industry and their organisation.

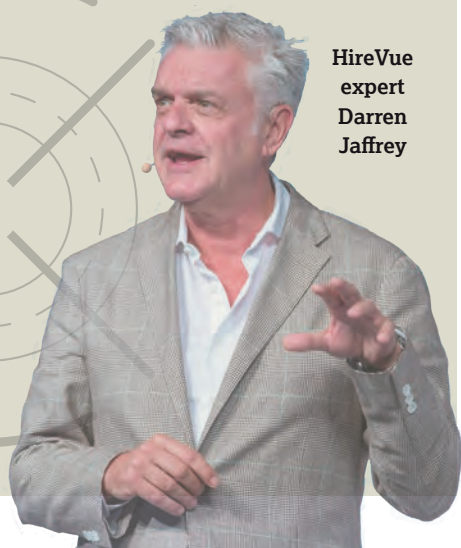
This type of prep should be second nature to ex-military applicants, so make sure you are well versed in what the company does, any key competitors, how they have performed recently and any major announcements or news



Star quality

When describing your professional experience remember the **Star** method – or **situation, task, activity, result**.

This allows you to be methodical in your approach to each question, describing the background to a challenge you encountered, how you tackled it and the direct result of your action



HireVue expert
Darren Jaffrey

Think AHEAD

Medic's top tips to troops planning their next tattoo



► **BODY art** has been part of military life for hundreds of years, but before you schedule your next tattoo, make sure there's enough time in your Army schedule to allow for the healing process.

That's the number one piece of advice Cpl Peter Day (RAMC) gives soldiers. "The worst time to get a tattoo is just prior to a lengthy exercise or operation," says the medic.

"You've paid a lot of money, so the last thing you want to do is risk anything that degrades the quality of the work."

Here, he explains four more things to bear in mind to give your skin time to recover...

1 Look at your unit's forecast of events. Fastballs are always going to come in, but major training serials are planned well in advance – avoid scheduling your appointment just before such a deployment, especially if the tattoo is going to be somewhere your webbing is likely to rub because that will be difficult to keep clean

2 Cling film and barrier creams protect the tattoo, but the body needs to heal too, so **you can't leave them on all the time.** If you don't think you're going to be able to air it

while you're on exercise, it's best to hold off

3 The same goes for sunlight – you have to keep new tattoos out of the sun for six weeks. If you're deploying to a hot country this might not be possible, especially if the design is somewhere exposed, like your hand, lower arm or neck

4 Field conditions raise the chances of getting dirt in the wound. An infection could lead to scarring and you might lose quality in the colouring or sharpness of the tattoo



CLOSING TIME

Troops show grace under pressure amid harrowing Afghanistan evacuation

COMMUNICATIONS specialist Sean Royle will never forget the scene that greeted him as he disembarked from his aircraft after landing in Kabul.

Arriving in theatre for the first time, the young lance corporal clocked the mountain ranges that towered above the runway. The astonishing landscape was in stark contrast to the mechanised parade of vehicles and cacophony of noise that accompanied the huge multinational evacuation effort.

"It was an extraordinary sight," the Royal Signals junior NCO says, recalling his first impressions of the place he would be calling home. "The scale of it all was amazing.

"Although we had been really well briefed before the deployment, I had never been to out to Afghanistan before nor seen so many people in one place."

LCpl Royle was three years old when the first British troops entered this city following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

Now, exactly two decades later and working in a tri-Service team from Joint Forces Headquarters, he was destined to be one of the last soldiers to leave.

The NCO's arrival in Kabul followed the launch of Op Pitting – an action to evacuate British and eligible Afghan nationals from the capital, that proved as complex as it was fluid.

While the Nato mission had long been drawing to a close after American politicians confirmed intentions to pull their troops out, the speed of the Taliban's advance sent shockwaves through the international community and changed the mission dynamic.

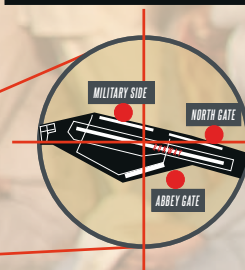
The alliance had always operated the deployment on a one-out, all-out basis and senior officers from each member state had been working on preparations to leave. But the task took on a new urgency as insurgent fighters paraded through the streets.

At Joint Forces Headquarters – which provides specialist capabilities to support UK government personnel serving in the most challenging areas of the world – staff rapidly moved plans from the drawing board to reality.

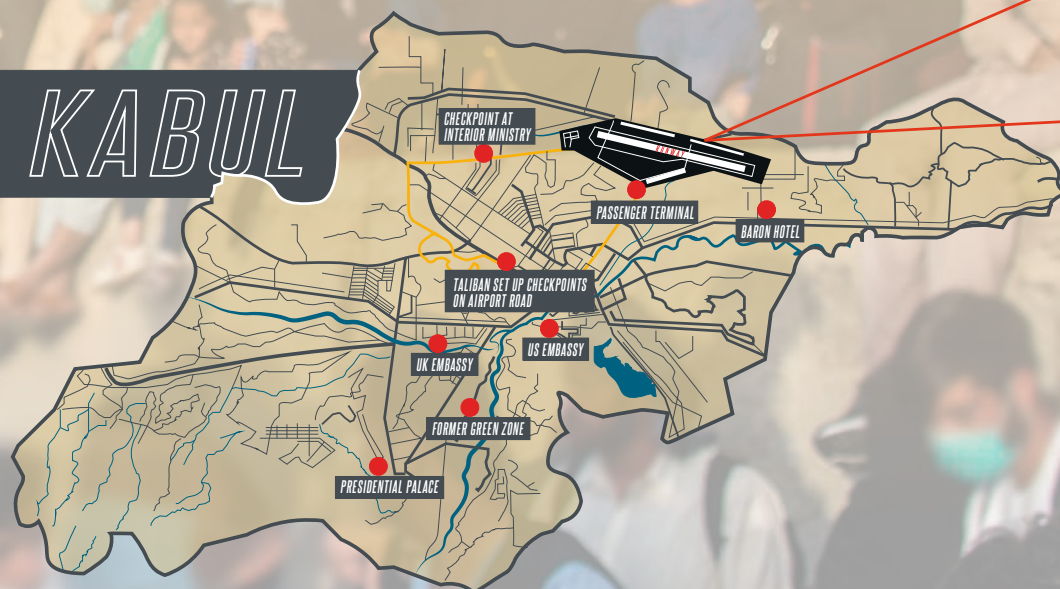
"It was clear from late last year that Op Tora would soon be coming to a close," points out Lt Col Mike Sharp (RA), who led the HQ's operational liaison and reconnaissance team coordinating the Kabul evacuation. "We had been working through the issues pretty much non-stop since then."

“
All of us faced tough decisions
”

KABUL INTL. AIRPORT



KABUL





» “But the speed of the Afghan government collapse and Taliban takeover meant the operating environment we faced was very different to that envisaged,” he adds. “As everyone saw, there were huge crowds of desperate people.”

Deploying to theatre, HQ staff set up a command and control centre behind the airport wire to coordinate the evacuation. Meanwhile, Lt Col Sharp led his small team to the British embassy for the withdrawal of diplomatic staff before setting up at the Baron Hotel – the nerve centre to process eligible Afghans wanting to exit.

Unlike LCpl Royle, whose skills had been put to immediate use in dealing with complex comms demands, Lt Col Sharp remembered an Afghanistan of times past.

Having been involved with battling the Taliban during Op Herrick, he now found himself negotiating with them to secure safe passage for evacuees.

“We were communicating largely on a tactical level with their local force and found they were content to work with us if we took them seriously,” he continues. “They were not gloating about their successes and allowed us to press on with the evacuation while they controlled crowds.”

Speed was now of the essence. With Nato forces unable to hold the airport beyond the rapidly approaching US withdrawal deadline, keeping the op on track was vital.

And as the hours passed, desperation was mounting among civilians outside who were willing to risk their lives for a way out. Crowds surged towards the airport, crushing some to death. Alarms rang out to warn of people on the runway.

Fears of a terrorist attack were confirmed when an Islamic State suicide bomber killed more than 60 Afghans and 13 US military personnel.

On the operation's front line, troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade found themselves on the receiving end of a humanitarian crisis. Amid harrowing scenes, there were acts of compassion as they gave out water and tended to the injured. Many declined to take a rest, putting the mission before themselves.

The conduct of the soldiers, the courage they showed in demanding circumstances and the difficult decisions they had to make in filtering people through the first stage of the system, drew wide praise from those coordinating the efforts.

“These troops – largely from the Paras and 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment – took on a huge amount of responsibility,”



says planner Maj Mark Ricketts (AAC), who was based at the Baron Hotel.

“Even the most junior soldiers quickly adapted and rose to a demanding situation, the type of which none of us had seen before.

“For our part, we refined the evacuee protocols as we went along, but all of us faced tough decisions – not least that some people who were eligible for evacuation arrived with family members who were not.

“Those coming in were searched before they were processed

“
Even the most junior
soldiers quickly adapted
”

and manifested, so there were initially long waits,” he adds. “We had rapid deployment teams from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with us, as well as Border Force staff, and with additional personnel we later brought through 100 people an hour.”

Together with the professionalism of soldiers at the sharp end, the extraordinary speed with which this operation was conducted saved many lives.

Around 15,000 people were safely evacuated from Kabul in the final days of the Nato deployments. This number included civilians such as interpreters who had served the alliance during a 20-year period in which a new Afghanistan had emerged.

The arguments about the mission are under way; the military and political events that led to the dreadful conclusion of Nato’s first expeditionary campaign are already being dissected.

The ramifications of all that has happened, and its effect on the wider world, are still yet to fully emerge.

But those who were there in the last days and hours – who saw the rawest edges of humanity and put the vulnerable first – can be proud. In humility, compassion and grace, they showed the very best of the British soldier. ■



Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: L'Phot Ben Shread, RN

EVACUATION STATIONS

Compassion defines the British soldier in final hours of Afghanistan mission

IT WAS a sound as unmistakable as it was horrifying – the detonation of an improvised explosive device reverberating across the crowd fighting to leave Kabul.

The British soldiers at the perimeter of Hamid Karzai Airport surveyed the masses – the shouting and unease in the sea of people telling its own story.

Many civilians battling for an exit had already died in recent days – crushed in a savage, relentless exodus.

Brig James Martin, commanding 16 Air Assault Brigade on Op Pitting, had several tours of Afghanistan under his belt and his years of experience instantly told him a terrorist attack was unfolding. Seconds later both he and the troops around him were enveloped in a cloud of CS gas. It was from the equipment carried by their American colleagues, which had vapourised as the bomb exploded.

As the chaos erupted, soldiers were soon embroiled in the aftermath of the strike. An Islamic State suicide attacker had unleashed a shower of shrapnel as he detonated his lethal payload. More than 60 civilians lay dead along with 13 US Marines and Navy personnel.

“It was carnage – with that level of explosive there can only be one outcome,” Brig Martin recalls of the attack.

“But the way our soldiers reacted was one of the finest things I’ve ever seen – they ran towards the explosion.”

The actions of the troops showed courage and decency in a city where one stomach-churning scene followed another. As bedlam ensued in a country now in Taliban hands, the withdrawal of Nato forces was far from the expected dignified exit.

Events had rapidly overtaken a long-planned drawdown. The advance of the Islamists and collapse of the Afghan ”

PITTING IN NUMBERS

15,000

British and eligible Afghan nationals evacuated

261,000

Air miles travelled by the RAF

1,000

Service personnel and civvies involved



» government had shocked the world. Now, as 16 Brigade deployed to assist with the evacuation of British nationals and eligible Afghan civilians, they faced a more testing task than anyone could have expected.

"We knew the security situation was changing and we were prepared," says Lt Col Dave Middleton, commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. "But it was more chaotic than we perhaps first thought.

"There were people breaching the airport security as well as **desperate civilians running towards aircraft** – these scenes set the tone for the operation."

Making for the Baron Hotel at the runway perimeter, from where evacuees were processed before leaving, personnel found themselves facing thousands of would-be refugees in an environment where emotions were running high.

Their area of operations included the airport's nearby Abbey Gate, through which those who had been allocated a place on flights travelled on buses. It soon became a flashpoint for attempted incursions.

"It was a charged scene," Lt Col Middleton continues. "There was desperation as well as uncertainty, with troops balancing restraint, control and compassion – they also had to make quick decisions about who was and wasn't eligible to leave.

"Soldiers from across the brigade, as well as different cap badges, came together to deliver the operation – including engineers, logisticians and medics."

As the situation continued to present a grinding test for 2 Para in theatre, their 3rd Battalion colleagues back in the UK were into their summer leave. It was not long, however, before senior officers called for reinforcements.

"We had been on 20 days' notice to move when we had a call," the outfit's CO, Lt Col Will Hunt, recalls. **"Within 13 hours we had 250 troops** from the three companies required ready to board flights – they had quickly returned from all over the country.

"It was not only those we needed who came back – others had also appeared to offer their services. It was really humbling to see such commitment."

Having flown out from RAF Brize Norton, the new arrivals were rapidly assimilated into the deployment.

"We'd really not seen anything like this type of operation before," Lt Col Hunt continues.

"Other evacuations had involved smaller numbers, and without potentially hostile actors such as the Taliban.

"But the operation also showed the adaptability of our soldiers, coming from a generation often maligned as snowflakes, who really proved themselves.

"The quality of their preparation was also validated – the Infantry Training Centre Catterick and the parachute course provide them with all the right attributes."

Capt Jack Maughan – the battalion's adjutant – echoes the sentiment, and highlighted that many of the most junior personnel had been outstanding.

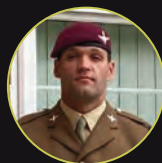


We asked personnel if any soldiering lessons can be learnt from Op Pitting...



"A combination of high-quality training and a positive mindset from the individuals involved allowed us to react quickly. But maintaining both of these attributes is fundamental to future success."

Lt Col Will Hunt, CO 3 Para



"Strong leadership from people you respect makes a difference – my section commander on Op Pitting had been an instructor when I was doing my training. I learnt a lot on the deployment."

Pte Shayne Wilkinson, Para



"I was an instructor at ITC Catterick in my last job and my thoughts were that we have the right training in place for soldiers. Op Pitting was well conducted and executed by privates, corporals and lance corporals."

Sgt Owen Crawford, Para



"We must continue to train soldiers to be warfighting experts – but they must also be able to demonstrate sound judgements in situations not normally faced by military personnel."

Lt Col Mike Sharp, RA

Working as a liaison officer between British and Turkish commanders, he found himself helping to control the access routes in and out of the airport. Glued to the feeds of security cameras, he had a clear view of troops at work.

"Their conduct throughout was extraordinary – particularly the huge compassion they showed," he adds.

"You could see the values and standards of the Army being maintained every day throughout the deployment.

"There were soldiers out there who had been serving for only a short time, yet they were completely ready – you could have sent them out on any operation."

Pte Shayne Wilkinson was a case in point. He had been at 3 Para for a matter of days before the call came through for him to immediately deploy on Pitting. And while admitting that the test of P Company had been gruelling, he quickly discovered its value in readying soldiers for ops.

"It is brutal but as much as anything else, the training gives you a level of confidence, particularly when conditions and the job take it out of you," he says.

"I found that going on operations for the first time gave me a new perspective on life – you realise how fortunate we are living here in the UK."

Unlike Pte Wilkinson, his colleague Sgt Owen Crawford remembers Op Herrick 10 – and close contacts with Taliban fighters in rural Helmand province. But he stresses that Pitting was a new experience with its own demands.

The NCO, who had been celebrating his 33rd birthday when he was recalled from leave, points out that the suffering of so many people was tough.

"For me it was **hard seeing women and children in that situation**," the father-of-two admits. "I had not seen anything like this before – Op Pitting was emotional, with the level of **civilian trauma** making it very different.

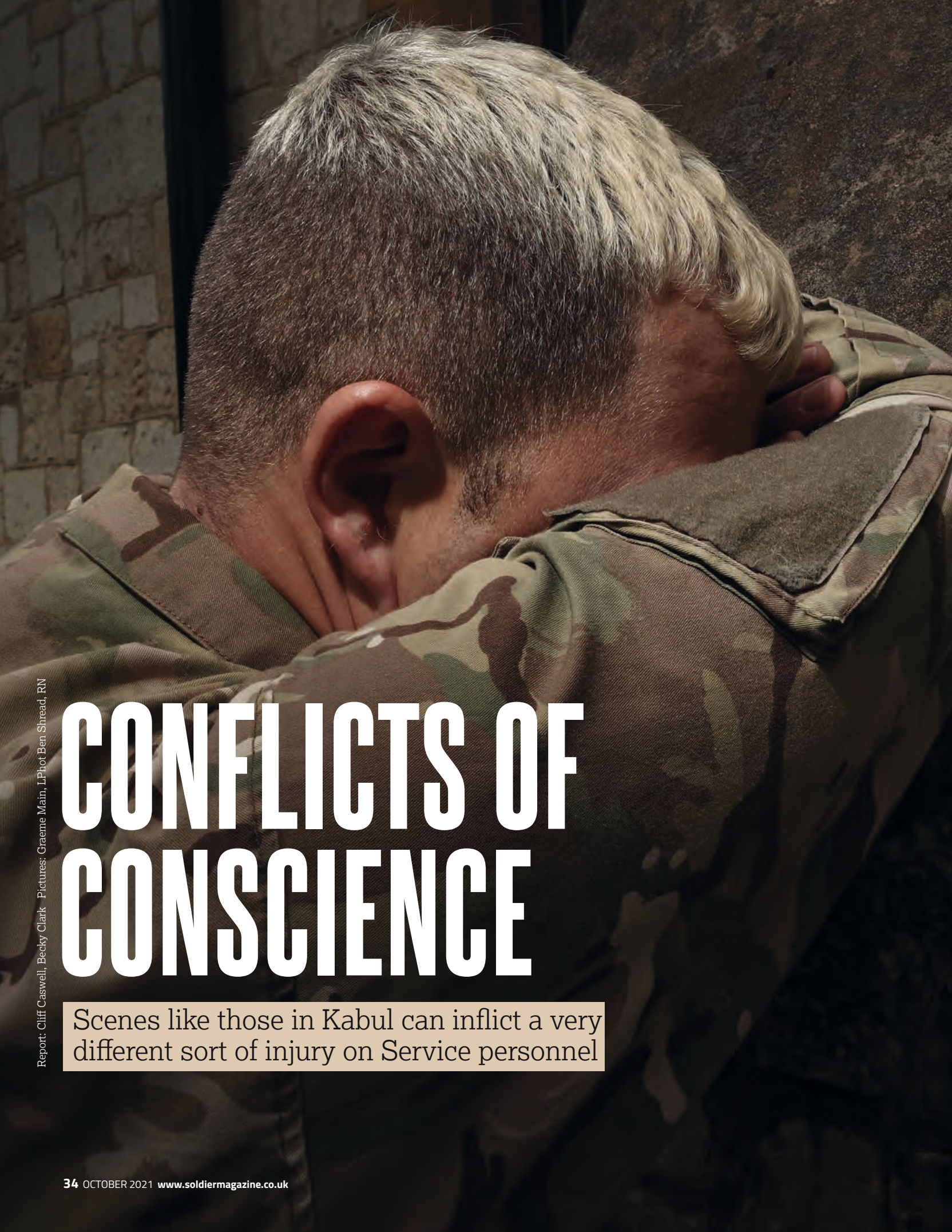
"But I take my hat off to my soldiers for all that they did during their time in Kabul. They went through the whole spectrum of emotions and dealt with everyone as an individual. This was a situation requiring empathy and they delivered."

This certainly resonates. The depth of experience British troops share, and the varied deployments on which they have served over the years, gives the Army a significant collective breadth of understanding. Their compassion has been demonstrated around the world, from the Balkans through to Iraq and Mali.

Afghanistan was once a regular tour and the analysis of the Nato operation's place in history has now begun. But while the end was chaotic, personnel can be proud of their conduct in the most demanding circumstances.

Within days of deploying they had helped evacuate 15,000 people, all as a city fell to an occupying force.

In the last few hours of a two-decade mission that is destined to be discussed for months and years to come, their final actions stand out for all the right reasons. ■



Report: Cliff Caswell, Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main, LPhoto Ben Shread, RN

CONFLICTS OF CONSCIENCE

Scenes like those in Kabul can inflict a very different sort of injury on Service personnel

A MILITARY career can mean working at the rawest edges of human experience. And soldiers who deployed on Operation Pitting are just the latest in a long line of British troops to have encountered unenviable decisions in difficult circumstances during the courses of their careers.

Such situations can feature in just about any sort of mission, and they can lead to something called moral injury.

According to Col Tim Boughton, the Army's strategic adviser on mental health, such a wound occurs when someone engages in, fails to prevent, or witnesses acts that conflict with their values and beliefs.

And he says the painful scenes from Kabul are a case in point.

"We are seeing this idea that individuals have failed in their duty to Afghanistan," he explains, recalling exchanges with distressed personnel.

"There's a feeling of betraying people who put their trust in us, of leaving them behind and not being there for those who have helped us.

"We call going against your values an act of commission, and pulling out when we have seen such a terrible loss of life among our troops – 457 dead – is really difficult to take."

Little wonder, then, that such mental injuries can ultimately cause long-term damage if left unresolved.

While the condition has been recognised since the days of the Vietnam War, it has received a limited airing here in the UK.

But now the Army has been examining how it can help those Servicemen and women who are facing – or have endured making – life-or-death decisions.

It is an area that will be well understood by Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, Brig James Martin, who said the following about the experiences of his soldiers on Op Pitting: "For a lot of young men and women, it was their first time in Afghanistan.

"They were exposed to traumatic and harrowing scenes and experiences. But they were doing it through the prism of a non-combatant evacuation, and that is very different.

"When you are in combat, whether one wants to admit it or not, there can be a sense of release in dealing with that trauma. The degree of agency one feels is very different.

"This is why we are placing such an emphasis on our soldiers, having come back, on a specific level of post-operational stress management – we recognise that there is a difference from combat operations."

Soldier asked Army padre, Rev Jason Clarke (RChD, pictured right), about the condition and how it can be tackled. He has been looking at moral injury as part of the OpSmart mental health initiative...

What experiences could cause a moral injury?

They can arise in all kinds of areas when somebody is involved in, fails to prevent or witnesses a situation that conflicts with their values. For example, where there is cruelty to women or children or a decision results in people dying or being injured. Soldiers obviously encounter these types of scenarios more than others in life.

What are the signs?

People can be consumed with feelings of distress, shame, anger and guilt and wrestle with their conscience over their part, or lack of it, in an event. They might feel they have let themselves or others down – personally or professionally.

Is it the same as PTSD?

No – exposure to trauma is a different issue and needs to be treated in its own way. However, a moral injury shares many of the same features – people can become depressed, as well as suffering addictions to the likes of alcohol and gambling. Mental and physical symptoms might not appear for some time, but it can have a lasting psychological, spiritual, behavioural or social impact.

How can soldiers avoid this?

As with anything, preparation is important. We have produced a document setting out a stepped approach which starts before soldiers deploy to a situation where there is a risk of moral injury. Understanding the demands likely to be faced is important in the first instance, as well as being ready for the feelings they may face.

What about during the op?

On the ground it is important that troops understand the constraints of any given deployment – realising that they can only work with the resources available at the time.

Any after-action advice?

It is important there is space to think, with an emphasis on self-reflection, as an individual starts to put some time between themselves and the tour.

Who should be contacted for help?

Welfare teams, chaplains or the chain of command would be good ports of call in the first instance.

PADRE JASON CLARKE

Years of service: 2006-present

Operational experience: Several tours of Afghanistan

Current role: OpSmart chaplain

Previous roles: Senior chaplain, 1 Armoured Infantry Brigade



Evacuees arrive at Brize Norton amid troubling scenes on Op Pitting

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Multinational package delivers top-to-bottom test

ROWS of monitors blink silently in a windowless room, watched very intently by dozens of serious faces.

The atmosphere is one of calm concentration. Only scenes of civil unrest beaming from a muted television hint that anything is amiss.

On large, wall-mounted screens swarms of colourful avatars crawl slowly across a map, revealing friend and foe, while a live feed refreshes sporadically, providing critical updates.

The enemy have been busy. In the last 24 hours alone they have shot down an unmanned aerial system and harried ground troops with indirect and small arms fire, as well as infiltrating a Nato position to gain access to classified maps.

More ominously, they have attempted – unsuccessfully so far – to deploy a chemical nerve agent.

Until now the allies have been on the defensive while they

manoeuvre their assets into place – however, the tide is about to turn.

Once they launch their attack phase, the opposition will be driven back and herded into the so-called kill zone to meet their fate.

At least, that's the plan for this (thankfully) fictional scenario during Exercise Saber Junction.

Staged annually on Bavaria's Hohenfels training area, the package is designed to prep Nato and partner nations for the types of complex missions they may very well face in future.

A total of 14 countries are taking part in the latest iteration, but this year, for the very first time, a British formation is at the helm.

Some 50 staff from 3rd (UK) Division are putting a 4,000-strong force based around the US 2nd Cavalry Regiment through its paces. »

“
We're stronger
together
than we are
separate
”





“

Out here we
have the
opportunity
to work with
and learn from
each other,
and smooth
out differences

”



The tasking, which came off the back of a successful showing at Exercise Warfighter in Fort Hood in April, is another milestone in Anglo-American efforts to become interoperable at brigade and divisional level by 2025.

But as Deputy Commander 3rd (UK) Division, Brig Gen Gene Meredith (US Army), is keen to explain, it also sends out an important message.

“The one thing our adversaries worry about is our ability to bring coalitions together,” he says.

“We’re stronger together than we are separate. They don’t have alliances and partners like we do, and exercising together shows we’re not just joined on paper, we actually train and do this stuff all the time.

“So out here we have the opportunity to work with and learn from each other, and smooth out differences in the way we execute operations.”

That concept is as true at the bottom of the chain of command as it is at the top. Away from the air-conditioned ops room, hidden somewhere in the 200km-square training area, British troops are at the sharp end of the scenario.

Embedded as light role infantry alongside the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, a platoon from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles is readying



Lt Joshua Serdet



Rfn Lewis Coburn

itself for the impending attack.

"We've essentially been given a load of anti-tank assets – Javelins, AT4s and Carl Gustavs, which are all weapons the Americans use to destroy armour – to stop the enemy threat," Lt Joshua Serdet (pictured above) tells *Soldier*.

"We've been setting up ambushes along some of the rat trails where conventional armour can't really get to."

However, even finding the enemy is a mission in itself. The Joint Multinational Readiness Centre in Hohenfels boasts a resident opposing force, whose sole purpose is to make life difficult for visiting units.

"They are well drilled and effective," adds Lt Serdet, the platoon's commander.

"They train here all the time and know all the ins and outs. That presents a serious challenge for us but makes the training well worthwhile.

"Having a freethinking enemy means it is a lot more effective in terms of testing our tactics, rather than the exercise running as if it was on rails."

For the unit's soldiers, the package has more than made up for the long trip from Edinburgh.

Due to Covid, it is the first opportunity for some of the newer

members to train abroad and at this scale.

Among them is Rfn Lewis Coburn (above), who despite only having been with the battalion for 11 months has stepped up to the role of section second-in-command.

"It means I'm doing jobs I wouldn't normally do," he explains. "I've been attending briefings, taking notes and passing on info to the other blokes.

"It's also about making sure they are good to go early in the morning and have done all their admin at night – being the first up and the last one to bed.

"I'm looking after the guys more than myself. It's a big step for me but I'm supposed to be going on the next promotion cadre so it's good practice, especially working with our American counterparts."

From the higher command to the individual on the ground, those deployed are clearly determined to squeeze every last ounce of training value out of this stint in Germany.

Policymakers may still be grappling with the fallout of the Afghanistan withdrawal, but UK troops and their Nato counterparts are quietly doing what they always do – making sure they are ready to meet future threats, wherever and whenever they arise. ■

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FIT AND THEY KNOW IT



Individuals become the focus at this year's Warrior Fitness competition

RAGING pandemics and hordes of athletes sweating out personal bests in a clammy gym aren't the happiest of bedmates. But at the start of this year the physical training instructors who run the British Army Warrior Fitness (BAWF) event came up with a perfect antidote to the uncertainties around the Covid-19 crisis.

They introduced a revised format for the competition, focusing on individuals instead of teams, and turned the qualification stage into a strictly online affair.

Entrants were asked to video weekly workouts given to them over the course of ten weeks – with no prior knowledge of their content. They then had to upload their recordings to the

Competition Corner app for official verification.

They could enter either the male or female open category, scaled class – a lower level, with lighter weights and lower reps – a masters group for those aged 38 and over, or a veterans contest for over-48s.

The top-ten male and female winners in the open segment then faced off in a Covid-safe finals day at Sir John Moore Barracks in Winchester last month, where the individual BAWF champions for 2021 were decided.

It was a departure from previous years, when unit teams battled it out face-to-face in regional qualifiers, with the top-performing outfits progressing to a national final. But the opportunity to try out the individual format was welcome, said WO2 Chris »

“
The more who take part,
the fitter and stronger
our soldiers will be out
on the ground
”



Armstrong (RAPTC), secretary of the BAWF and the chief organiser of this year's event.

"There had been an ambition to launch an individual Warrior Fitness competition for some time," he told *Soldier*. "The pandemic and the lockdowns actually gave us fresh impetus to make it happen.

"When the contest for individuals was conceived we were unable to partake in our standard team competitions, so we decided to conduct it online.

"But with the national restrictions then relaxing, we elected to conclude the whole thing by crowning the fittest male and female in the British Army at a live event."

He added: "This has proved so popular we are going to repeat it with exactly the same format next year, to sit alongside the established team contests."

The 34-year-old staff sergeants Alex Rees and Charlotte Spence (both RAPTC) from the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot won the male and female crowns – topping an impressive entry of 677 soldiers in total.

Not surprisingly, both are strong advocates of the Warrior

Fitness format and believe nearly all personnel would benefit from training and taking part in the competition now that role-specific fitness tests have been introduced.

"I'd encourage anyone to give it a go," said SSgt Rees. "It's only going to benefit you during a long career because you'll have fewer injuries, be more deployable and as you progress through the ranks training and recovery gets harder. By keeping fit and strong you're going to be a more effective soldier."

SSgt Spence added: "One benefit of the video stage for the preliminary round was that it's opened up the competition and made it more accessible to people around the UK and those stationed abroad.

"Everyone should think seriously about getting involved because it is so good for preparing yourself for the demands of the Army's physical fitness system."

The evolving nature of the competition certainly seems to suggest the Service is becoming generally fitter and stronger through its revised fitness standards. Long-term participants say they have witnessed a significant rise in the quality of the field since the event's early years.

BWAF rundown

Launched in 2014

534 MALE ENTRANTS
143 FEMALE ENTRANTS



"I've competed in the BAWF team events since 2016 and the standard has gone way up over that time," said LCpl Liam MacGregor (Scots), runner-up in the men's open event.

"The women are now lifting weights that only the men were tested with four or five years ago."

SSgt Rees, another BAWF veteran, agreed.

"I might have topped the men's standings, but it wasn't easy," he said. "I had to push myself harder than ever this year because the standard is so incredibly high."

"For example, the ground-to-overhead lift progression used to start at 40kg in the team events but now begins at 80kg for the men, which is incredible."

However, while the standards are high, this shouldn't deter personnel thinking of trying their hand next year, explained Capt Natalie Whitworth (RAMC), who entered despite only passing out of Sandhurst in June.

A pharmacist with the NHS in London, she fulfils a similar role with 256 Field Hospital and was the only Reservist to qualify for the open final.

Finishing tenth out of the ten females competing has not

diminished her feelings for the event.

"It's been a brilliant experience, a great mix of workouts, and all my fellow competitors have been really supportive," she added. "I'll definitely be entering again next year with the aim of bettering my finishing position."

"I'm new to the Army and I wanted to throw myself in at the deep end to meet new people. I'd done this type of training before and fancied giving it a go."

"Everyone has been so friendly, so newcomers shouldn't feel intimidated by the high standard of athlete in this competition. And you mustn't get trapped into comparing yourself to everyone else – we are all competing, yes, but everyone is operating on their own level."

"Also, there's a scaled category for those fairly new to this and who want an introduction, maybe with a view to moving into the tougher open category later."

"Ultimately, Warrior Fitness is about pushing yourself a bit harder or faster to get PBs. It's a great motivator for building your all-round fitness and preparing yourself for this event will only help you get even fitter for your Army role." »

“Newcomers shouldn't feel intimidated”



COMBAT READY

■ CORPORAL Craig Punton, who won the masters category and has been an all-arms PTI since 2007, got into Warrior Fitness-style training when he returned from his first tour of Afghanistan more than a decade ago.

The NCO (pictured) believes it prepared him for the rigours of combat better than anything else he has tried during his 16-year career with the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

"I was always into weight training and running but when I took this up I quickly became the fittest I had ever been and found I was able to do my

job better when I deployed to Afghanistan for the second time on Op Herrick 13," he told *Soldier*.

"From a personal point of view, I felt that I was able to handle the stresses and strains of that tour much more capably than before.

"Don't get me wrong, adrenalin will take you a long way in a combat situation. But this event prepares you well in terms of simulating the physical stresses you can be subjected to.

"Simply put, it gets you into a fatigued state but you still then have to carry on operating at a high level – which is what we experienced in places like Afghanistan.

"If you look at this year's final, the competitors had to run two kilometres with 20kg on their backs and then immediately go into a new set of challenges, dragging a weight similar to a casualty, doing leopard crawls and carrying jerrycans and medicine balls over a 20-metre course – and push themselves to do those three or four times over.

"In terms of physical and mental demands on you, that type of experience is very relevant to the rigours of the battlefield."

THE FINAL: WHAT WAS INVOLVED

1. 300m swim plus one-mile run
(times accumulated)

2. Up to five ground-to-overhead lifts with shuttle runs between

Male weights ladder 80/90/100/110/120kg,
Female 50/60/70/80/90kg

3. "Hero workout" (up to two rounds, progression measured through 14min; weights men/women)

12 burpee over bars
12 thrusters, 50/35kg
12 burpee over bars
12 power snatches, 50/35kg
12 burpee over bars
12 push jerks, 50/35kg
12 burpee over bars
12 hang squat cleans, 50/35kg
12 burpee over bars
12 OHS, 50/35kg

4. Modified role fitness test (20min time limit)
Two-kilometre loaded march carrying 20kg Bergen
Athletes then drop their load and make their way to an 80m lane in remaining time doing as many rounds as possible of...

20m casualty drag, 110/55kg
20m leopard crawl
20m jerrycan carry, 2 jerrycans
20m dead ball carry, 20kg





RESERVES ARE FUTURE FOCUS

■ SECRETARY of BAWF, WO2 Chris Armstrong (RAPTC), revealed that he wants to get more Reserves involved in the competition and is willing to consider staging a dedicated Reserves Warrior Fitness competition “if there is enough interest”.

Grantham, home of the Army Reserve, would be the natural location for it, he said.

“Reservists are less likely, in general, to have structured PT so this could help give them new motivation and direction,” WO2 Armstrong (shown) continued.

“The workouts we have on our demo videos would also give them a good insight into the Army physical training system.

“This year’s inaugural individual event went brilliantly but this was only for the ten fittest males and females in the British Army.

“The overall aim of Warrior Fitness is to be inclusive and it’s great that each of the individuals who made the final will go back to spread the word in their units and be talked about on social media or in the press.

“They will be seen as role models and others will be encouraged to participate.

“The more who take part, the fitter and stronger our soldiers will be out on the ground.

“We’re also examining the potential of an inter-Service competition and have had comms with other nations about an international Warrior Fitness contest.

“The US military has its own scene and the Netherlands have also expressed a strong interest in participating in such an event, so watch this space.” ■



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Medal-winning role?
A short-term training
team at work in
Kaduna

Nigeria deployments deserve better

I SAW that the topic of medals not being awarded for certain deployments in Nigeria has been raised yet again in these pages.

However, Col Jim Taylor's response in the August issue of *Soldier* proves he has not grasped the crux of the problem.

Everyone who deploys to the country understands the medal criteria and gets it that only those serving in a certain region are currently eligible for medallic recognition. We also comprehend that the current policy states you must serve in that area for at least 30 days.

The problem, however, is that those serving outside this particular area are not eligible for a medal.

The letter in the August edition makes it clear that those managing training near Kaduna, for example, which is outside of the qualifying area, do much to contribute to Op Turus.

In addition, this work is conducted in more austere conditions than those generally encountered by personnel in the medal-qualifying region.

Perhaps Col Taylor needs a better understanding of the challenges of working in the area where the letter writers were deployed.

Could we have a response that isn't just repeating the medallic criteria but explains the rationale of the situation to the disappointed and disenfranchised soldiers being blatantly chinned-off by the medals board?

British military advisory and training team (BMATT) assignments are absolutely ops, not defence engagement, and the medals board failing to understand this is a prime example of the Army (or Permanent Joint Headquarters) failing its people. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Leigh Drummond, Assistant Head, Personnel Services, Army Headquarters, replies: Thank you for your continued correspondence on this issue.

It clearly means a great deal to you and I am happy to follow on from my predecessor's responses.

Let me assure you, the issues surrounding medallic recognition are well understood by the Army's senior leadership.

This particular topic is a standing agenda item at the personnel campaign board, which is attended by some of the most senior officers in the Service.

Medallic recognition for Op Turus was initially authorised in September 2020, with further direction provided in March 2021, demonstrating the regular attention this important issue is given.

The Army has also submitted an operational impact statement for advisory and training team activity in Nigeria to the operations recognition board, which will be reviewed next month.

Please be aware that neither the Army nor defence are permitted to decide for themselves what activity qualifies for medallic recognition; other government departments have input on the final decision and, therefore, the process often takes longer than we would like.

If you have further questions regarding this issue I would invite you to engage with a member of my policy team, Maj James Boggs, who can be contacted via Modnet or Defence Connect.

“
Soldiers
are being
blatantly
chinned-off
”

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.

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LIVING IN THE PAST

● WHY is the Army still firmly in the Victorian era when it comes to its accommodation policy?

I accepted a new posting and am in the process of getting myself moved to my new site.

Because I'm not married, but registered as being in a long-term relationship on JPA, I must live in surplus housing. Also, my relationship status, combined with the fact that it was my choice to switch posts, means I can only reclaim a maximum of £240 in costs through allowances, despite facing a bill of around £1,500.

Being eligible only for surplus housing also means you are limited to where you can be posted, unless you are willing to live alone in the block, or rent privately.

It should have been easy to find all this out beforehand but you need to spend weeks reading through all the JSPs to glean the correct information.

If anyone is in a long-term relationship but not married, I would think twice about moving with your partner. – **LCpl Willem Fischer, MPGS**

Col Leigh Drummond, Assistant Head, Personnel Services, replies: In 2019 the future accommodation model (FAM) was launched and one of its aims is to produce a more modern and inclusive offer for all types of families.

While a pilot is looking at how the scheme will work as a whole, the decision was made to bring forward certain elements for those who meet established long-term relationship (LTR(E)) criteria.

The decision to restrict these personnel to surplus Service family accommodation was taken to ensure the pilot had time to establish how our workforce wishes to be housed in future and that all those entitled to SFA were accommodated.

For now, this means planning future moves is an uncertain process for LTR(E) personnel but, on balance, this uncertainty has allowed the Army to take an important step in recognising the changing needs of our people.

The current policy is highlighted in **2019DIN01-043**, and also includes frequently asked questions, one of which explains about cohabitation not attracting broader entitlement to allowances.

“I'd think twice about moving”



‘Car passes need new direction’

I AM baffled as to why there is no standard policy for the issue of car passes on Army barracks.

In my career so far I have received a small printed paper slip at Bulford, a large laminated sheet at Aldershot, and a small plastic card at Abingdon (and the card machine is broken at the time of writing).

The first two required signatures from a squadron sergeant major to action; the third could be obtained simply by presenting yourself at the guardroom.

Shouldn't there be a standardised policy for the issue of car passes, given that this constitutes a key part of barracks security? – **Capt Robert Abernethy, RLC**

The Army Principal Security Adviser (who cannot be named) replies: A standardised Army car pass has been

considered under our empowerment and transformation initiative and a military judgement panel, comprising stakeholders from across the Army, met to discuss its merits.

It is a complex issue and the proposal is currently paused within the Army as it is part of a security review being run within the MoD.

We'll have to wait for this to conclude to avoid the risk of wasting resources on a Service solution that could become obsolete.

Security remains the driver and it's important that any measure is viewed alongside the need for coherent and effective access control for every site.

It is always a primary requirement to ensure only authorised personnel are allowed into our establishments.

A BIG ‘THANK YOU’

● I AM writing to tell everyone in the Army about the tears I shed for the Afghan people when the international alliance pulled out.

Also, I really can't express how proud I am of the soldiers who were working out there.

The heartbreaking pictures of our troops rescuing children, and the love and nurturing care they carried out their duties with, was both difficult and heart-warming to watch. I cannot even begin to imagine the impact this is still having on personnel.

The soldiers are absolute gold and beyond brave, risking so much without a thought. I wish there was more we could have done to support our young men and women; the pain and emotional impact could be seen in their eyes.

Please can you publish this as a “thank you” to all those who deployed and tell them that they are truly loved, respected and appreciated for their bravery and heroic work. – **Bali Binning, Northampton**





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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 from areas such as business development and portfolio management. For more information about the initiative 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



COMPETITIONS

August Spinelines winner: Iain Macdonald-Lynam, Andover, Hants

HOAY winner: Karen Williams, Essex



DIARY

October 5: The Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum biennial conference hosted by the MoD. Contact anda@ssafa.org.uk for details.

October 7: On Track – The Tank Museum's well-being event for Armed Forces and emergency services personnel in support of World Mental Health Day. Join in person or online. For more details visit tankmuseum.org/events/on-track-day

October 17: Duxford Dash – a friendly, flat-course 5km/10km race challenge at the airfield of the Imperial War Museum Duxford, Cambridgeshire. Tickets £26 or £13 for the family mile challenge (aged 5 and over). Spectator tickets £10 (£5 for children). Find out more and sign up at iwmmuseum.org.uk/events/duxford-dash

Until October 31: West Indian Soldier – an exhibition at The National Army Museum, London,

showcasing the shared military heritage between the UK and Caribbean. For details visit nam.ac.uk/whats-on

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

November 24-25: Scarlet and Gold. The bands of the Household Division return to the stage for the renowned concert series over two nights at Cadogan Hall, London. Visit householddivision.org.uk or call 020 7730 4500 for tickets.

Until further notice: World War 2: War Stories – an exhibition at The Tank Museum telling the story of the Royal Armoured Corps. Visit tankmuseum.org for more information and opening times.



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

Big White Wall, now Togetherall:
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:
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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
forcespensiosociety.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:
0131 556 0091;
svronline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:
01748 833797;
spaces.org.uk

Speak Out – the Army's confidential bullying, harassment and discrimination helpline:
0306 7704656

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);
gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service

WVRS: 02920 232 668

REUNIONS

23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades' Association dinner event at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry, October 15-17. Email royhatchbem@gmail.com

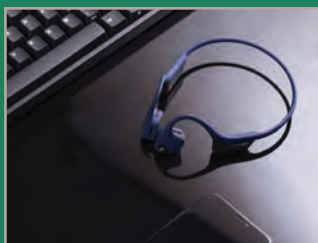
The Cheshire Yeomanry Association is planning a dinner in Chester on April 23, 2022 to mark the outfit's formation 225 years ago. Email kingsbr@gmail.com for info.

ROADSHOWS

The Forces Pension Society – an independent, not-for-profit membership funded organisation that acts as a pension watchdog – is staging a number of roadshows as well as financial aspects of resettlement briefings. See forcespensionsociety.org/news-events/events/ for dates.

The Army Engagement Team roadshows: enquires to rc-aeg-mailbox@mod.gov.uk

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WIN

TEN details have been changed in this picture of the Changing of the Guard ceremony at Buckingham Palace. The spectacle recently returned after its longest pause in delivery since the Second World War, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Number 3 Company from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards had the privilege of undertaking the first full ceremonial duty since March 2020.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 954, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than October 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

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

August's winner: Karen Williams, Essex.





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ICE 1

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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

The War Below

Title unearths Clay Kickers of the Great War

➤ AMONG the many grim facets of the First World War, the battle beneath the Western Front holds a particular sort of horror.

In 1915, amidst a stalemate above ground, the opposing sides began a secretive campaign of tunnelling and counter-tunnelling deep below no-man's-land.

For the British, the unenviable task fell to the so-called "Clay Kickers" of the Royal Engineers – civilian men with specific skills who were hastily recruited into the Army to dig under and blow up enemy positions.

Operating in cramped conditions on little to no sleep, listening out for their German counterparts burrowing towards them, and with the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning or a collapsed tunnel never far away, their work was fraught with danger.

All of this is faithfully brought to life in *The War Below*, a title based on the real-life stories of miner Spr William Hackett and Lt Col John Norton-Griffiths, who was convinced the capability would make a difference.

Played respectively by **Sam Hazeldine** (*Peaky Blinders*) and **Tom Goodman-Hill** (*The Imitation Game*), the film's protagonists face struggles both below ground and above.

Hellfire Jack – as the officer was also known – battles for the backing of sceptical superiors, while the tunnellers are shunned by regular troops for their unsoldierly ways.

In recreating their subterranean world, the film vividly captures



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GAMES

MOVIES



● *The War Below* is out now on at cinemas and on digital



the claustrophobia and tension they endured – and how this forged strong bonds between them.

The cast put in a strong shift as the tight-knit crew, let down occasionally by the odd hammy performance from members of the top brass.

Solid set design lends the offering an authentic feel, and attention has been paid to the little details that usually wind military viewers up – rank slides, flashes and so on.

However, having gone to some lengths to get the minutiae right, historians may raise an eyebrow at some seemingly unnecessary deviations from actual events.

While even the staunchest of pedants would recognise that factual accuracy must sometimes give way to storytelling, the director's decision to swap certain real-life events for less compelling fictional plotlines appears needless.

Furthermore, the intimate focus on the small group of initial recruits comes at the expense of a sense of the campaign's true scale.

Between 1915 and 1917 the tunnelling companies dug 22 shafts, losing some 7,000 men in the process. But viewers of this movie



could be forgiven for thinking only a handful of troops were involved.

That said, this is an often-gripping rendering of a relatively unsung chapter in British Army history – a definite must-see for the sapper community.

More than 100 years on, giant craters still pockmark the former Western Front – sombre monuments to the men who created them.

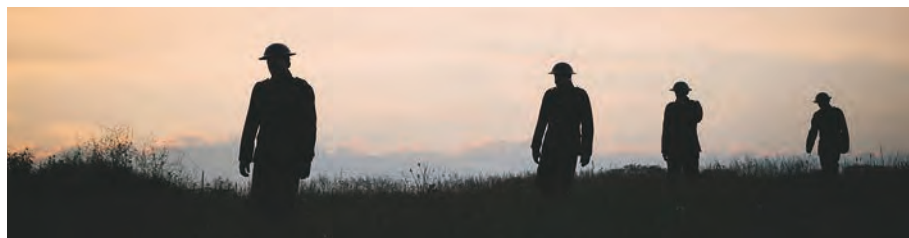
The War Below peels back the layers of earth, along with the years, to tell an important tale of courage and sacrifice. ■

VERDICT:

A grim episode convincingly retold – claustrophobics beware!

★★★★★

REVIEW: WO2 MIKE OWENS, RE



DVD/DIGITAL RELEASES



In Full Bloom

Out now

SET in a post-war Japan, where sport is dominated by the brutal Yakuza, this title depicts a battle of not only man against man, but between cultures as well. American fighter Clint

Sullivan must try to bury his demons and salvage his own honour by taking on Japanese champion Masahiro, who appears to have taken a *Rocky IV* approach to training by isolating himself in the woods, chopping down trees with his hands and catching fish by plucking them out of lakes. All this whilst trying to avoid the Yakuza's illicit threats. The fight scenes here are pretty decent but, unfortunately, the story lacks any real sense of character development. Not a bad effort, but this film is no more than a Saturday afternoon time-filler.

Sjt Scott Roberts, Rifles

PICK OF THE MONTH:



● *The Long War* is published by St Martin's Press and priced at £21.83

Loyn with former Afghan president Ashraf Ghani Picture: Andrew Quilty

The Long War

Ex-BBC journalist lays out lessons from Afghanistan

➤ DAVID Loyn remembers the first time the Taliban entered the Afghan capital Kabul – it was in the wake of a civil war that followed the long Soviet occupation.

Back in 1996, largely ignored by the West's media, the Islamist faction's fighters stormed the city and quickly set the tone for their brutal rule.

After killing former president Mohammad Najibullah and his brother Shahpur Ahmadzai the night they took power, the conquerors draped the castrated corpses over a traffic control point outside the Arg palace – the seat of government.

Loyn, who was then one of the few foreign journalists reporting in the country, recalls hundreds of fighters gazing at the grotesque scene as the sun rose. Now, three decades on, he has a grim sense of history repeating itself.

"The situation at Kabul airport was hard to take, particularly after all that had changed since the Taliban were ousted by Nato forces exactly 20 years ago," he adds. "Afghanistan had become a different place in that time.

"It is especially tough for the generation of people whose families had fled the country before the group took power last time – they had returned to raise children in their homeland and must now face what is happening."

Loyn, who is a visiting senior fellow in the Department of War Studies at King's College

London, was speaking shortly before the release of his new book, *The Long War*, focusing on the last two decades in Afghanistan.

In the study the ex-BBC journalist, who has reported extensively from the country over many years, examines the rise and ultimate decline of the Nato mission.

Charting the military and political manoeuvres around the deployment from its inception after the 9/11 atrocities, the work is largely based around interviews with eight commanding generals, each presenting their perspectives on the conflict. They include respected British officer Sir David – now Lord – Richards plus American counterparts Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus.

Having also served as a comms adviser to the now ousted government of president Ashraf Ghani, Loyn presents the views of senior Afghan players while using an impressive depth of knowledge to set out the historical context.

The picture painted in this well-argued analysis is of the military leaders grappling with a complex environment while political decisions from afar often impeded progress on the ground. With the campaign prosecuted against the backdrop of a factionalised society, he suggests that miscalculation and unfulfilled opportunities fuelled corruption as well as alienating communities.

Yet he also points out that lessons were learned along the way, with the deployment heralding huge changes in Afghanistan, creating opportunities and empowering women. Personnel – among them British troops on Op Herrick – were instrumental in securing the conditions for this new society.

"The country had become a different



BOOKS



Gen David Richards with then president Hamid Karzai and Gen Dan McNeil

Picture: Shah Marai/Getty Images

Q&A – David Loyn

This is your third book. What prompted you to write it?

I started out five years ago on a smaller project, wanting to interview the commanding Nato generals. But the work later broadened into a wider study of the mission – my research complete, I spent the duration of lockdown writing.

Is there anything that defines the senior leaders?

In both the British and US militaries you don't get to be a general without being exceptional. All of them are fascinating individuals.

Were any particularly notable?

David Richards' tenure was historically significant – he was Nato's first British commander, leading multinational troops in the alliance's first expeditionary campaign.

Why were the Taliban ultimately successful?

Several reasons – among them that morale in the Afghan security forces had hollowed out after the alliance's withdrawal was announced. Its fighters were better embedded in cities than many thought.

What can we learn from the Afghan mission?

We need to get everyone together to talk through the lessons of Afghanistan fully. It is inevitable that we will need to intervene in other countries at some stage in the future – and we are already involved in places such as Mali.





place by the end of the mission," he continues. "It hit home for me during the 2014 elections – when I was in the Now Zad district of Helmand province and saw children out playing cricket."

"This would have been a completely unthinkable prospect just five years previously – I was also travelling around the area in a soft-skinned vehicle."

However, Loyn also highlights that the Taliban had changed in the two decades of fighting. The group's fighters, who remain popular among some parts of Afghan society, had initially emerged from hardline theological schools – or madrassas – as a cohesive force following the Russian occupation.

Having pulled back to the borderlands of Pakistan – where they had their roots – after being decisively swept from power in 2001, they soon resurfaced and adapted.

"This dynamic of the current Taliban is different to that of the 1990s," he says. "Followers are drawn from a wider recruitment base – not only their traditional heartland – and unlike before are now funded by the drugs trade."

"They are also extremely adept at using the likes of social media, with feeds in five different languages – each of them subtly different with the messaging within."

Despite their military victory at Kabul, Loyn asserts that the new regime will face challenges in power. In addition to grappling with potential shortages of food and basic supplies, he predicts that rival jihadi groups, along with other emerging resistance movements, will likely pose a threat to them.

Closer to home, the author maintains that senior military personnel and their political counterparts must come together to learn the lessons from the Afghanistan deployment.

"This has been a defeat – purely and simply," he concludes. "We lost the war."

"When we next intervene we need to make sure that we have the right doctrine in place."

"We owe it to the men and women who lost their lives and were injured in Afghanistan to make sure that we never again go into a campaign so unprepared." ■

VERDICT:

An outstanding – if sobering – study

★★★★★

INTERVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

BOOK RELEASES

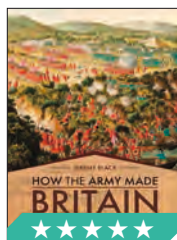


The Last Viking

by Don Hollway

KING Harald Hardrada has almost disappeared from history, but this title does a great job in bringing him back to life. He was defeated at Stamford Bridge by King Harold, a battle that was overshadowed by the clash at Hastings a week later. Born into Viking royalty, Harald had to fight for the crown, spending his early years travelling through Russia, via Constantinople to the Holy Land, before later invading Britain. This is a fascinating look at the life and times of the man who came close to being the King of Britain instead of William the Conqueror. Well worth a read.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



How the Army Made Britain a Global Power

by Jeremy Black

THIS is an all-encompassing sweep of the military campaigns that lifted this country to the front rank of imperial powers, despite defeats such as Buenos Aires and New Orleans. Much of the story has been told before, but not in such a comprehensive way. Readers will benefit from the author's many insights. He outlines the wide expertise gained by leaders in varied theatres of war and assesses how they ultimately improved the Army's operational strengths.

Rodney Atwood, military historian



Before, During and After My Falklands War

by Terence Victor Barnes

A BOOK that does what it says in the title, this account makes for a very good read and is different from the usual memoir. The author's recall of detail is excellent. He enlisted in the Royal Marines as a skinny young man and describes how he was built up during the challenging training. After joining his troop he was warned off for the Falklands conflict. The journey down on the Canberra and his time on the islands, including the assault on Sapper Hill, are well covered. Barnes takes the reader there and conveys what it was like to be "a mere marine" during the war. Tours of Northern Ireland on Op Banner and to Cyprus with the UN followed, before he left to become a teacher. A good story well told.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

GAMES



Panzer Corps II: Axis Operations

Barbarossa beckons for virtual commanders

▶ SIMULATING the basics of fire and manoeuvre as well as the impact of features such as terrain on a battle, a decent strategy title can be time well spent for a soldier.

In addition to providing hours of entertainment, playing can throw up useful learning experiences. Having to apply thought to tactical situations and the wider picture, armchair commanders can flex some real-world skills.

Serious wargaming is certainly finding a place in the military mainstream, with organisations such as UK Fight Club – which now routinely organises skirmishes between troops with a range of off-the-shelf PC titles – flourishing. Having taken off during lockdown, the organisation's membership growth has been matched by the range of scenarios now being played out.

And participants of all abilities would certainly do well to consider adding the newly refreshed *Panzer Corps II* to their portfolio. Continuing to build on an already large following, the package has been enhanced with a new European campaign while a Pacific outing is also in the pipeline.



Putting players in the heart of the Second World War's eastern theatre following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the latest *Axis Operations* add-on boasts a string of missions plus a comprehensive line-up of authentic German and Russian units.

Some 17 scenarios are included in all, with the campaign playing out differently depending on how players deal with the defining battle at the city of Stalingrad.

Soldier sampled the title and can confirm that it performs well on every front. Players can expect the usual depth of gameplay and attention to detail underpinned by a clear mouse-driven interface. Orders covering movement, attack and reinforcement are easily delivered during each turn.

A series of excellent tutorials are also available to help novice commanders step up to the challenge – with several shorter skirmishes acting as a means to box off the skills and drills needed. Moving on to the new campaign offers a range of encounters to test tactical and strategic skills.

Although release dates have yet to be confirmed, the Pacific campaign also looks promising. A number of refinements are pledged for the base game with the launch of this add-on – in addition to a new faction in the Imperial Japanese forces, there will also be a new rule set plus refreshed terrain graphics.

Panzer Corps II updates are certainly keeping the title well refreshed for PC wargamers. Already a respected name with a reputation for authenticity in the strategy field, developer Slitherine has once again delivered with this latest outing.

A combination of meticulous research, simplicity of control and a learning curve that allows beginners to quickly become immersed make the title a definite winner.

The promised content and future plans suggest that the game will continue to be well supported – and Army wargamers are set to remain in the ranks of its fan base. ■

VERDICT:
Serious wargaming at its finest
★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*

More war...

Like *Panzer Corps*? You might also enjoy...

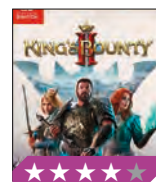


GAME RELEASES



Space Invaders: Invincible Collection For Switch

A DECATHLON of titles from the grandfather of modern video games, this compendium charts the history of the iconic alien sprites from the first release some 43 years ago. Offerings include the original and early sequels through the highly playable reinventions of the 1990s, 16-bit era and beyond. The package, while repetitive by its nature, is a highly enjoyable retro outing but the Nintendo store's £50-plus price tag is far too steep and warrants waiting for the compilation's appearance in the bargain basement.
Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



King's Bounty II For Xbox One, PS4, PC and Switch

A ROLE-PLAYING romp combining three-dimensional open world exploration a la *Witcher* matched with a *Warhammer*-like battle system, this outing should please mythical beast slayers. True to the usual fantasy form, players pick a character type and venture forth on a quest to battle dark forces – in this case across a frozen mythical land. The title combines strategy with adventure, with plenty of opportunity to build armies and fight opponents via turn-based combat. Fans of the genre are not going to be disappointed.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

XCom 2

ALIEN invaders – rather than human troops – are the quarry in this long-running, turn-based series. The second instalment puts players in the unenviable situation of having to muster a resistance force to deal with a successful extraterrestrial occupation. The emphasis is on both tactical gaming and effective science in seeking to battle a superior enemy. A recently released Switch version by 2K Games is well worth a look, with the title's full range of downloadable content included.

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SOLDIER SPORT



« BACK IN THE GAME

TWO years after their last court battle, the Service's basketball fraternity returned to action at the Inter-Corps Championships in Aldershot. The tournament proved a happy hunting ground for the Army Medical Services and Royal Signals. Read more on pages 62-63...



COURT SUMMONS: ANYONE INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED IN ARMY RESERVE BASKETBALL SHOULD EMAIL MARTIN.TONEY354@MOD.GOV.UK OR CALL 07884 431451



COURT STARS RETURN TO ACTION IN CORPS CLASH

HAVING missed out on almost two years of action due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Army's basketball stars made a long overdue court return at the Inter-Corps Championships in Aldershot.

The two-week tournament – split into week-long showdowns for women's and men's teams – proved to be a high-octane affair, with key matches going down to the wire as the players made up for lost time.

This was best exemplified in the semi-finals of the men's draw, where the Royal Signals held their nerve to defeat the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers by two points and reach the competition's showpiece fixture.

The drama then heightened in the second semi-final as Pte Samuel Toluwase sunk a three-point shot with just 1.6 seconds remaining to send the Army Medical Services' clash with their

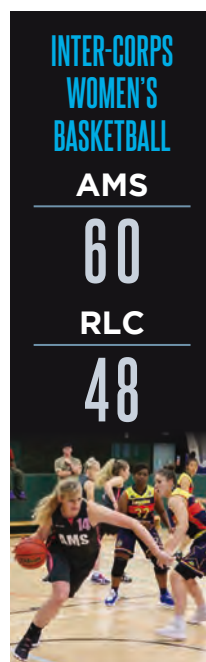
rivals from the Royal Logistic Corps into overtime.

However, the Reservist's efforts were ultimately in vain as the Loggies went on to secure an 81-78 victory, only to taste defeat at the hands of the Signallers in the final.

The excitement proved to be rich reward for the event's organisers, who faced an additional admin burden by having to stagger the contest over two weeks to comply with coronavirus restrictions.

"We would normally have divisions one and two of the men's competition, plus the women's tournament, all running at the same time," the Army Basketball Association's officials secretary, WO1 Craig Douglass (AAC), told *SoldierSport* during a break in play.

"But the new format has worked well. We've been able to cut the court time, which meant each corps was only playing one



game a day, and they have come with full squads.

"At the start of the week the players and officials were quite rusty but once they blew off the cobwebs, we were seeing a good standard of basketball."

The tournament also served to highlight the continuing growth in the women's game, with the REME and Royal Engineers both being able to field full teams for the first time.

But there was a familiar name on the winner's trophy as the AMS showed ruthless efficiency at the net to defeat the RLC 60-48 and retain their title from 2019.

"Everyone was extremely happy," skipper SSgt Jess Parkes (QARANC) said as she reflected on the outcome.

"We've got a new coach, who has been awesome, and we gelled together really well.

"It has been two years without any basketball, and we had a lot of new players, as well as a few

who were returning. We hadn't really trained as a group so we came in hoping we would win, and that's what happened.

"We are now looking to hold regular training sessions as a squad and need more people to come and play."

With the first major fixture ticked off, plans for next year's Inter-Services Championships – the first to be played since 2019 – are now taking shape.

One of those hoping to feature is OCdt Tambi Spicely (pictured left), a former soldier in the Household Cavalry who is in the process of joining the Royal Army Medical Corps as a pharmacist.

The 28-year-old has previously represented the Richmond Knights in division three of the national league and believes the Service set-up offers a high standard of competition for its growing player base.

"The Army has strong guys who will fight to the end," the player, who helped the AMS to the Inter-Corps semi-finals, added. "Playing here, it feels like you have to constantly work hard."

"In the national league you can chill a bit on the bench, and you do not get the physicality you get here, but I enjoy it."

"I can see the direction Army basketball is going in and I want to help them take things to the next level." ■



BASKETBALL IN NUMBERS

YEARS
SINCE THE
FORMATION
OF THE
ARMY
BASKETBALL
ASSOCIATION

77

DAYS OF
ACTION
AT THIS
SEASON'S
CORPS
CONTEST

9

POINTS
SCORED
BY THE R
SIGNALS
AS THEY
DEFEATED
THE RLC TO
WIN THE
MEN'S TITLE
FOR THE
FIRST TIME

60

FOLLOWERS
ON THE SET-
UP'S TWITTER
PAGE, WITH
A FURTHER
474 ON ITS
FACEBOOK
ACCOUNT

237



RESERVE TEMPO QUICKENS

THE return to action has also offered a welcome boost for the Army Reserve basketball scene.

Having recently appointed Col Martin Toney as secretary, the set-up is on a mission to further develop the sport at both playing and officiating levels and has big plans for the coming years.

"We want to get as many people from the Reserve on the court as possible and maximise participation," Toney told *SoldierSport*.

"There are already a few that we know of, and I think there are more out there. It will not be as easy as it is in sports like football and rugby, but we can do a lot better than we are at present."

The Reserve was represented by the likes of Pte Samuel Toluwase (AMS), Pte Helen Tang and Pte Luke Howes (both RLC) at the Inter-Corps Championships and Toney will look to attract more talent to the fold at a series of

training and skills sessions over the next 12 months.

He also hopes to organise inter-unit competitions in future, with the ultimate aim of having an Army Reserve team.

The plans have been welcomed by multi-sport star Tang (pictured above), who also plays for the Army rugby league team and is a corps triple jump champion.

As well as starring for the RLC on court, the 29-year-old is a level three referee and has officiated three under-20 international matches.

"I'm still trying to find my place in the Army," she explained. "I've only played basketball with my corps but with the Reserve set-up now growing I will definitely put my hand up."

"I would be happy to run some three-on-three matches. There are lots of opportunities and if they want to develop the sport in terms of coaching and officiating, I would be 100 per cent receptive." ■

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1020 - 1150: The future context of work

1250 - 1420: The realities for our people

1500 - 1645: Our People Plan

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MONTH IN SPORT

October's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services Rugby League
WHEN: October 2
WHERE: Warrington
NEED TO KNOW: With the Royal Navy not

competing in 2021, the Army face the Royal Air Force for the second time this season with the men's, women's and masters' teams looking for further wins



WHAT: Army Table Tennis Championships

WHEN: October 4 to 8

WHERE: Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: Players return to the fold at a two-day training camp with professional coaching ahead of the main event, which includes singles, doubles and mixed doubles competitions



WHAT: Army v Ireland netball
WHEN: October 30 to 31
WHERE: Worthy Down
NEED TO KNOW: Having gathered for a pre-season training camp in late

summer, the Army's players face a stern test as they make their long-awaited court return with a four-match series against international opposition

RALLY IN NUMBERS

MILITARY TEAMS TAKING PART IN THE EVENT INCLUDING FOUR FROM THE ARMY

8

STAGES RACED AT DST LECONFIELD ON THE DAY

5

POINTS SECURED BY THE WINNING ROYAL AIR FORCE TEAM - WITH THE SOLDIERS A CLOSE SECOND ON 43

45

SECONDS THAT SEPARATED THE THREE FASTEST CREWS IN THE EVENT'S FINAL STAGE - WON BY INDIVIDUAL CHAMPION SQN LDR PHIL BRUCE

10



CUP CAMPAIGN FALLS SHORT

THE Army's stage rally drivers saw their hopes of lifting the Inter-Service's Coningham Cup dashed by the narrowest of margins on a challenging day at DST Leconfield.

After five stages at the Yorkshire proving ground, the team saw their rivals from the Royal Air Force claim the overall honours by just two points as mechanical issues scuppered the soldiers' bid.

The Service looked set for success before SSgt Ben de Ronde (REME) suffered a gearbox problem that resulted in a time penalty.

"It was stuck in third gear," team member Maj Dave Barbara (R Signals) told *SoldierSport*. "The vehicle was trying to get up a hill but he could not get the power down without burning the clutch out. He did well to get to the end."

"We were pretty convinced we had it won, however, mechanical failures are a part

of rallying."

Reflecting on the event, Barbara said the crews were delighted just to be competing after Covid-19 resulted in around two thirds of fixtures being cancelled this year.

"It has had a massive impact," he added. "The amount of people it takes to get these events on is enormous."

"For some of us this is the only race we have been able to get to this year but, thankfully, 2022 is looking better."

"The support we have had from the Army Sport Control Board and British Army Motorsport Association has been superb, and we have to thank commanding officers for letting their soldiers get away."

"While the calendar for next year has not really been set yet, we will be pushing to get out as much as we can."

For more information on how to get involved visit the stage rallying page at armymotorsports.co.uk

SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Paul Snivell

Kehoe calls time

PARALYMPIC gold medallist Maj Jen Kehoe (RE) has announced her retirement from elite-level sport.

The officer, who acted as a guide to Menna Fitzpatrick in the visually impaired skiing, made the decision in order to focus on her Army career.

The duo formed a formidable partnership, winning gold at the 2018 Games in South Korea and becoming two-time world champions. They were hoping to continue into the new season but admitted there were “too many challenges” in the way.

“We would like to thank the British Army and all the individuals who have helped us for their longstanding and continued support,” they said in a joint statement. “We could not have done it without you all.”



Ice camp's rallying call

PERSONNEL wishing to challenge themselves in bobsleigh, luge or skeleton are being urged to apply for a place on Exercise Raging Ice.

The Army's annual ice sports camp, the event is aimed at introducing novice athletes to the disciplines and will be staged in Innsbruck, Austria on the weeks starting January 23 and January 30. Places cost £500 for UK soldiers and £400 for those based in Germany.

For more details visit awsa.org.uk or email luge@awsa.org.uk

RUNNERS BOOST FORCES BID



ARMV athletes will look to achieve some distance running dominance when they line up for the Inter-Services Ten-Kilometre Championships later this month.

Staged as part of the Leeds Abbey Dash on October 24, the event will also see the Service's leading lights striving for success as part of the UK Armed Forces team that has been going toe-to-toe with the country's top talent throughout the season.

Competing in the Inter-Area Road Race Championships, the military outfit finished fifth in the men's standings at the Cardiff 5K, a result that was matched by the women in their race.

And they faced a similarly stern test at the Inter-Area Two-Mile Road Relay, where they locked horns with teams from England, the North, the Midlands, and the combined universities.

Despite finishing fifth in a field that included Olympian Jess Judd, the five-strong women's squad clocked some impressive times – with Sgt Dani Hodgkinson (QARANC, pictured) third fastest in the race's opening stage.

The men also finished fifth, with sole Army representative Lt Max Walker (RLC) maintaining the fine form he's shown throughout his debut campaign.

“The North called upon an athlete who had just returned from the Tokyo Games,” manager SSgt Jock Castle (R Signals) told *SoldierSport*. “We are never going to win but that does not mean we cannot turn up and compete in a high-level field.” ■

**"WE ARE
NEVER
GOING
TO WIN
BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN WE
CAN'T
COMPETE"**



● **ARMY** star Sgt Matt Evans (RAPTC) completed the scoring in a 4-0 win for the UK Armed Forces over Loughborough University. The fixture was the team's first outing since December 2019 and served as early preparation for this season's Kentish Cup. First-half goals from Royal Air Force players Sgt Mike Campbell, SAC Jack Debnam and Cpl Jake Gosling effectively sealed the contest at the break before Evans added a fourth in the 77th minute. Fellow soldiers Capt Mo Sabo (RLC) and WO2 Keith Emmerson (RAPTC, pictured) impressed in defence.

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FOIL FOCUS AT THE FORE



WEATHER conditions proved far from ideal as the windsurfing fraternity descended on Thorney Island for the annual Army and Inter-Services Championships.

Low winds towards the back end of the week-long event led to the Forces showdown being postponed, but stronger gusts in the early stages allowed the soldiers to showcase their talents.

In a contest featuring athletes of varying experience levels, Lt Col Nick Jeffery (RAMC) topped the standings in the open fleet, with Cpl Hannah Jones (AGC (RMP)) taking the intermediate title and LCpl Callum Alison (RAMC) the novice equivalent.

Civvy Jon Metcalfe, the Army's windsurfing manager, said that while entry numbers were down this year the event played an important

role in the future development of the sport.

"We struggled to get going again after Covid and it was frustrating at times," he told *SoldierSport*. "But the big thing we can take away from this is the fact we were able to introduce wind foil racing to the programme for the first time.

"We are now following a national outline that means we can use a different approach in the way we run our races.

"We have a new wind range with ten knots as the minimum, and 17 the maximum, and with downwind courses it means we can use a range of equipment.

"In the past it was about big sails and big boards – this is a more exciting way to race as it opens up different categories."

The Inter-Services competition has been rearranged for April. ■

PARALYMPIC PRIDE

FORMER soldiers Jaco van Gass (ex-Para) and Micky Yule (ex-RE) celebrated an impressive medal haul at the 2020 Paralympics.

Track cyclist van Gass (pictured above), who suffered life-changing injuries during his second tour of Afghanistan in 2009, won gold in the men's pursuit and mixed 750-metre team sprint, as well as bronze in the men's 1,000-metre time trial.

"Reflecting on my Paralympic journey, I've realised the amazing achievements of not just myself, but every single one of my team members," he said. "Each of these medals mean a great deal to me."

Powerlifter Yule (below), a double amputee who was injured in an IED blast in Afghanistan in 2010, claimed bronze in the men's 72kg discipline – lifting 182kg in the final to secure his medal.

"I used sport as my rehab," he explained. "I was always a strong guy, and after watching teammate Ali Jawad lift at London 2012 I said, 'that's the sport for me'.

"We talked about this, we visualised it, going out there and lifting for a medal, and we did it."

The duo's efforts helped Team GB finish second in the medal table behind China.



● TIME trial star Lt Col Christina Murray (Int Corps) has set her sights on a new challenge at domestic level after smashing her individual record in winning the National 24-hour Championships.

The 44-year-old battled sweltering temperatures to cover 490.28 miles on the roads of Shropshire and Cheshire – an effort that was 12 miles longer than her 2019 best.

Murray was hoping to compete at the World Championships in the USA this month, but her bid was thwarted by the difficulties regarding travel to and from the country. As an alternative, she was considering an attempt at the Liverpool-to-Edinburgh record as this issue went to press.

Reflecting on her latest national title, Murray said: "The heat added to the challenge, so it was a huge relief to get through the 24 hours without having to call it a day."



ON THE ROAD TO GLORY

ARMY TEAM TOASTS DOUBLE VICTORY AS CYCLISTS ASSUME PRIME POSITION IN SERVICES SCENE

THE Army tasted double delight in Devon as their riders topped the men's and women's team standings at the Inter-Services Cycling Road Race Championships.

While the women secured their silverware with yet another dominant display, it proved to be far from straightforward for the men as they faced an anxious wait for the final points to be calculated before celebrating victory.

Sgt James Bevan (REME, pictured right) surged to the line in a dramatic sprint finish that saw him claim the individual honours, but with the remainder of the field appearing to be evenly split between all three Services the outcome went down to the wire.

"We went in with a game plan to make sure our sprinters were there at the end," Bevan, who also won the Army Road Race Championships earlier in the season, told *SoldierSport*.

"At the mid-point of the race the gap started to build, and I had to spend some time at the front of the peloton to try and close that, but our guys who went with the break did a great job at making sure they didn't go out too far.

"AirTpr Nick Jones (AAC) did a hero attack, which forced the others to chase, and I had to make sure that I was there to finish it off.

"I never have any selfish thoughts when it comes to this race – it's all about winning as a team. But to do that we have to put one of our riders over the line first. I'm over the moon to win as it gets harder every year – it is amazing."

It was the effort of Cpl Sean Dodsworth (Lancs), the Army's

fourth finisher, that proved decisive as his race for the line secured the points needed to lift the trophy.

Speaking afterwards, manager WO1 Mark Cain (RA) praised the focus of his entire team in what was a disrupted build-up and race day.

He lost three riders to injury and illness on the eve of the competition and then saw four withdrawals due to various mechanical issues once the action got under way.

"No plan survives first contact, and we were left with a team of six," he explained.

"We had to adapt things and there was a lot of support and communication from the side.

"In the end, it worked out exactly as we planned – but there were a few nerves.

"Nick Jones is an Army development rider but him stepping up the way he did was key to our success.

"We still have a long way to go but it shows the depth we now have – selecting a team for the 2022 season is going to be a massive headache.

"This was my last event as team manager and being there to watch the lads win was the perfect way to sign off."

Having seen their race delayed for more than an hour after a crash in the early exchanges, the Army women made short work of their rivals when the action resumed.

A second-lap attack laid the foundations for victory and with a wide gap established at the front of the field, the Reds crossed the finish line with five riders – including team captain Maj Ejay Harris (RAMC) and national 24-hour time trial champion Lt Col Chris Murray

INTER-SERVICES
ROAD RACE
CYCLING

MEN

ARMY

WOMEN

ARMY



(Int Corps) – in unison.

"This is probably the strongest team we have had for the Inter-Services and every girl was capable of winning," Harris told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"The aim was to get people down the road, increase the pace and shake the others off.

"Once we got the five riders at the front it almost became time trial practice.

"It is always nice to take our military rivals on. When we raced here four years ago we had seven riders crossing the line together and the aim for this race was to have eight. We have not achieved that, which is testament to the other teams.

"This race is getting stronger and stronger."

The convincing nature of the performance delighted Capt Rachel McKenzie (RAPTC), who will be taking over as team manager next season and has big plans for the coming years.

"I'm approaching the end of my cycling career, and this seems like the natural succession for me – it's an opportunity to give something back to the sport," the officer explained. "The team spirit and camaraderie is great and they all work really well together. Zwift has really helped with training over the winter and during Covid, and we can build on that out on the road.

"Our main aim now is to get our training camps back up and running so we can work more on our team tactics. We will then look to enter the Tour Series in 2023." ■

MATTHEWS MAINTAINS FORM



Picture: PTO

TRIATHLON ace Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC) capped a stunning year of achievement by finishing fourth at the Ironman 70.3 World Championships in the USA.

Having already won two full Ironman races in 2021 the officer had set her sights on the format's global showdown in Hawaii, but when the event was cancelled due to Covid she switched her attention to the shorter distance and recorded another notable result.

"It was a really strong field, and I went in feeling quite overwhelmed by the level of competition," she told *SoldierSport*.

"I was 16th two years ago and at the time I thought that was an incredible performance – so fourth is ridiculous.

"Heading into the race my training had gone well for the swim and bike, but my running had been limited due to injury.

"However, I finished just a couple of minutes behind second place, so I know that is within reach."

Matthews' performance came on the back of a strong showing at the Collins Cup (pictured), which saw Europe's finest athletes compete in a team event against rivals from the USA and rest of the world.

She claimed a convincing win in her individual match – a result that helped the Europeans to an emphatic victory.

"I was the only woman on the team who was not a world champion," Matthews said. "It was an absolute honour to be selected and the team element meant you could form friendships with people who may normally be quite stand-offish." ■



CENTENARY CLASH

IT PROVED to be a milestone occasion on the courts of Aldershot as the Army Tennis Championships celebrated its 100th staging.

After an intense week of competition, defending champion Maj Ben Rogers (RA, pictured below) retained his men's singles title, while Cpl Chloe Pike (Int Corps) defeated top seed Pte Amelia Davies (RLC, above) to triumph in the women's draw.

Elsewhere, Lt Jordan Head (REME) won the inaugural Mahvera Cup, the novice competition named in honour of the late WO2 John Mahvera, who made a significant contribution to the Service's grass roots game.

The event also recorded another notable first by allowing players to compete in coloured clothing, as opposed to the traditional white.

Lt Col (Retd) Ian Haigs, secretary of the Army Tennis Association, said the sport is going from strength to strength – a point illustrated by the Army recording the biggest win in Inter-Services history this season – and efforts are being made to build on the momentum.

"Over the next two years there will be a major push in developing grass roots and unit-level tennis," he added.



Picture: Alligin Photography

● THE new Army rugby union season kicked off in style at the annual Corps Festival in Aldershot.

In a revised format, the men's teams competed in a new three-league structure and there was no shortage of drama on the day, none more so than in the first-tier final where the Royal Logistic Corps claimed a 15-14 win over the Royal Artillery.

It proved to be more straightforward in the other showpiece fixtures, with Infantry A beating the Royal Armoured Corps 29-0 in the league two final, while the Intelligence Corps defeated the Adjutant General's Corps 14-0 in league three.

The five women's teams battled it out in a round robin format that resulted in the AGC facing the RA in the final, with the former triumphing 24-0.

The opening round of the main corps competition was being contested as this issue went to press.

SPORT SHORTS



Gunners power to victory

THE Royal Artillery finished the Army cricket season on a high with victory over the Royal Logistic Corps in the Power Cup final.

Success in the 40-over format completed a corps double for the Gunners, who also triumphed in the Twenty20 tournament in May.

Batting first, the champions-elect posted a score of 204 thanks to a half-century from Army star Bdr Graham Wiseman. The Loggies were never in the contest with the bat as the fall of regular wickets saw them slip to a dismal 41 all out, handing their rivals a 163-run win.



Blair becomes Army boss

INFANTRY football manager Capt Jimmy Blair (Coldm Gds) has been named as the new head coach of the Army men's team.

His appointment comes on the back of a successful campaign in 2020/21, when the Infantry won their first Massey Trophy Division One title in 17 years with a 100 per cent record.

Blair guided the team to 11 wins from 14 matches over the past two seasons and they were in prime position to claim the 2019/20 crown before the Covid outbreak interfered.

He succeeds Maj Sean Birchnall (RLC), who left the Army in the summer.



RESOLUTE REDS SEAL SERVICES DOUBLE



"WE
BOWLED
OUT OF
OUR
SKIN"

RUN rate again proved to be the deciding factor as the Army lifted the Inter-Services Twenty20 trophy to claim a Forces double for 2021.

Having secured the 50-over title in the same fashion, the Reds' bid for another crown took an early blow as they lost their first match to the Royal Air Force by 30 runs.

But with the airmen tasting defeat against the Royal Navy the soldiers' fate was to be decided in a must-win showdown with their Senior Service rivals.

After winning the toss and surprisingly electing to bat, their opponents fell short of a competitive total as they closed their innings on 109-8.

LCpl Connor Hodgson (LD) set the tone with ball as he claimed a wicket in his first over and skipper Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) posted figures of 3-15 as the Army took control.

In reply, the Reds needed to reach their target inside 12.2 overs to seal the title and opener Cpl Varun Bali (AGC (SPS)) laid the perfect

foundation as he blasted 42 from just 19 deliveries – a knock that included seven fours and a six.

When the heavy hitter perished, the partnership of LCpl Liam Fletcher (REME) and Sgt Denson Narayan (RLC) ensured the tempo did not drop and their rapid scoring saw the champions-elect cruise to victory in the tenth over.

"With the Navy batting first, we knew what we had to chase, and we bowled out of our skin to limit them to 109," Boynton told *SoldierSport*.

"Varun Bali has been phenomenal all season but the squad as a whole has been fantastic – I cannot fault them."

It proved to be a remarkable turnaround following a disappointing showing against the RAF, who batted first and posted 163-6.

Narayan was the pick of the bowlers with 3-27 but a flurry of early wickets saw the Army struggle in response. Bdr Graham Wiseman (RA) top scored with 57 but his departure ended their hopes as they finished on 133-7. ■



If I've had a bad day I maybe smoke around 20 cigarettes, but I actually don't like the smell on others, so I understand the ban. The downside is that recruits might skip lunch so they have more time to smoke, and I notice in lessons that some of them are just thinking about the next cigarette. I also think it makes a bad impression having the smoking shelters outside camp.

Sgt Kris Jewitt, RE



I've started vaping more because it's annoying to have to walk to the shelter. I was on a pack a day and now it's maybe half that. I've noticed the impact on my fitness – before it was like my body could keep going but my lungs couldn't.

Spr Isaac Phelps, RE



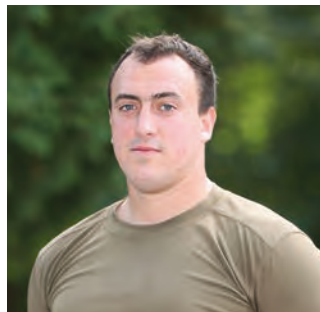
I quit smoking about three months ago – I'm weaning myself off by vaping as cold turkey didn't really work. I used to find excuses not to stop, but the new policy has given me an extra nudge.

Spr Cameron Young, RE



I had Covid quite badly for about a week and my fitness hasn't come back fully yet. I notice if I get ill my cough will be worse than my friends who don't smoke, so maybe I would have recovered more quickly if I didn't. I have cut down since being here, though – mainly in the mornings and at night when I can't be bothered to walk to the shelter.

Spr Joe Dodd, RE



In basic training I smoked like a chimney – 20-30 per day. But I've cut down since coming here because I don't have time. It was hard at first but it's okay once you get out of the habit. At the end of the day smoking kills you, and the new policy is an extra kick to stop. I'm much fitter now.

Spr Harry Peters, RE

I'm a stress smoker and the ban is really inconvenient. It takes me about 15 minutes to get to a shelter and back, so in the mornings I get up earlier to make time for it. It hasn't made me cut down – I just rush them out more.

Spr Robert Dunne, RE



Up in smoke

The Army's tobacco ban rolls out from this month, so we asked troops from 3 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment how its year-long trial at Gibraltar Barracks had gone down...

I'm a non-smoker, and while personally I think the ban is a good thing, I can see both sides of the argument. It seems pretty hard-line. However, people can still smoke if they want to – but by making it a little bit harder it will hopefully encourage them to vape or quit.

Capt Rob Hughes, RE





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