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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



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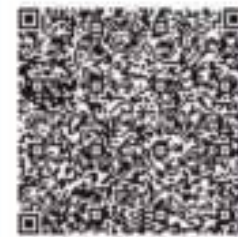
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“It's like a big game of Tetris”

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Soldiers help build a battle-winner – page 29





Rising to the challenge



I **BEGAN** my editorship at *Soldier* almost exactly a decade ago, and one standout memory from my first few

weeks shadowing British soldiers (other than the time I arrived onto Batus training area in a pair of white trainers) is the moment I got to climb inside a Challenger 2.

The size, noise and sheer power of these armoured beasts is pretty much impossible to convey to anyone who hasn't got up close.

But if the presence of this tank's hardware is enough to terrify, it is difficult to comprehend the punch that will be packed by having the platform fully digitised on future operations.

Talking to different parts of the battlefield, with a more powerful gun and an open architecture that allows emerging technologies to be plugged in, this asset is adapting to the future battlespace impressively.

Turn to page 29 for more details on the changes.

Let us know what you think and if you have any comments – or questions that cannot be answered by the chain of command – get in touch with us using the details overleaf.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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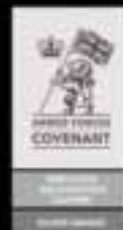
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A soldier tests a fusion sight that integrates information from different sensors

Battalion's new tech role

Infantry troops chosen to lead experimentation on cutting-edge kit

ARAFT of advanced kit is being shipped to the personnel of 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment as they take on an innovative new role in the Army's structure.

As the Service's first enhanced light force battalion (ELFB), the Cyprus-based soldiers will experiment with new weapons, sights, communications equipment, robotic platforms and unmanned aerial systems over the next 12-to-18 months before feeding the lessons they have learnt back to the defence community.

The plan forms part of a three-year Field Army programme that has the twin aim of generating the most capable and lethal light role unit, while proving a faster procurement and delivery process.

At the same time, 2 Yorks will continue its role as Episkopi's resident Infantry battalion and the regional standby battalion, on short notice to deploy if called upon.

They will use the new gear to build a light role capability throughout the unit, which will then be tested and validated at battlegroup level when the formation returns from Cyprus next year.

"Our job is to work out how all of this comes together to maximum effect and our feedback will determine how this equipment is developed and what

eventually becomes standard issue," said Maj Colin Lunn (pictured right), officer commanding Alma Company.

"It is undoubtedly an exciting time to be in 2 Yorks and there was a feeling of anticipation as the first deliveries of weapons and sights began to arrive.

"There is also a recognition that the battalion has been entrusted with a great responsibility, because the outcome of our experimentation will influence how British light forces fight in the years to come.

"It has been made clear that the most pertinent lessons are likely to be identified at the very lowest level, so the role of every individual in providing feedback has been emphasised."

With equipment now starting to arrive, training plans for the ELFB are already under way and some initial drills were being carried out as this issue went to press.

"We have a plan to conduct a total of 11 ELFB concentrations, which are essentially dedicated periods of training during which a nominated company will focus on this experimentation," Maj Lunn added.

"Built into the programme are periods of reflection, so the personnel can consolidate their lessons and tips and pass these to the next company to build on." ■



“We have been entrusted with a great responsibility”

SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP

1. CANADA RIFLES RESOLVE

SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, The Rifles joined 2,500 Canadian counterparts as well as personnel from the USA in Wainwright,

Alberta, for Exercise Maple Resolve.

The manoeuvres, which were canned last year because of the Covid crisis, usually run each spring – culminating in the host nation's troops being signed off for ops.

They were significantly scaled back this year, with half the number of personnel taking part and robust measures to mitigate coronavirus infection.

The Rifles contingent isolated in Suffield before being cleared to take part in the package, which ran until mid-May.



Pictures: Cpl Connie Vallin and S1 Camden Scott, RCAF

2. FALKLAND ISLANDS BAYONET CHARGE

TROOPS found themselves in a far-flung test of their mettle as they worked with Royal Navy and Royal Air Force colleagues in a demanding training package.

The soldiers, from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, worked through a ten-day schedule on Exercise Cape Bayonet after a seaborne landing from HMS Forth.

Backed up by members of the Falkland Islands Defence Force, they then rehearsed core skills – among them calling in air support from Typhoon fast jets.

The guards – on deployment as the Roulement Infantry Company – were flown between serials by helicopter and also had a mock resupply drop from the air.

Having concluded their tenure on the British overseas territory as this issue went to press, they are now looking ahead to Exercise Rattlesnake in the USA later this year.



Picture: Sgt Phil Major, RAF

VET TURNS A NEW PAGE

A FALKLANDS veteran whose self-published account of the Battle for Mount Longdon got a five-star review in *Soldier* six years ago has been given a mainstream book deal.

James O'Connell (ex-Para) decided to write *Three Days in June* after revisiting the site of the clash in 2007 and realising none of the existing titles rang true.

He set about interviewing his fellow ex-soldiers and painstakingly pieced together what our reviewer, Sgt Adam Jackson (Para), called "the definitive account of the campaign".

Now the story is set to gain a wider audience when it hits the shelves this month thanks to publishers Monoray.

O'Connell, who lost an eye when he was shot during the fighting, said working on the book had helped him and his comrades better understand the confusing battle.

"I hope it gives an insight into the bravery of my colleagues – every man a hero," he added.

● WIN: *Three Days in June* – page 61



2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

3. UK FOREST FUNDRAISER

SOLDIERS and civilians are being urged to don their walking boots for a new charity challenge in the National Forest.

Taking place in September, the trek will start at Beacon Hill, near the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre in Leicestershire and finish at the National Memorial Arboretum. Routes ranging from five kilometres to 75 miles will weave through the ancient and newly planted woodland, conceived 25 years ago to restore former industrial areas.

Participants can raise money for the three founding charities or their own good causes.

To find out more and register visit nationalforesttrek.co.uk



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EX DEFENDER EUROPE 21

6. GREECE

NATO is staging a vast pan-European interoperability package stretching from the Baltic states down to the Mediterranean.

Members of 104 Logistic Support Brigade based in Alexandroupoli are also deployed across Albania, Croatia and Slovenia as the theatre enabling group (TEG) for the US-led Exercise Defender Europe 21 – a test of the alliance's ability to open access into Southern Europe at short notice.

They have been overseeing the unloading of vehicles and equipment off ships, as well as providing reception, staging and onward movement of US assets.

Lt Col Joseph Brown (RLC), the lead for the TEG, said the training was about ever closer integration between allies.

"It is also the story of empowered squadron commanders dispersed across more than 1,000 miles of battlespace to deliver a complicated mission," he added.

7. ROMANIA

MEANWHILE Cincu training area near the Carpathian Mountains played host to Exercise Noble Jump, in which soldiers from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles linked up with Turkish, Italian and American colleagues.

Among the live-firing drills they conducted were transition shoots, moving from rifle to pistol in quick succession.

Exercise Swift
Response –
page 12



4. KOSOVO LANCERS LAUDED

PERSONNEL from The Royal Lancers have been congratulated on a job well done after completing a six-month tour of the Balkans.

Around 30 soldiers from the unit, supported by elements of the Intelligence Corps, deployed on the mission, which saw them supporting EU efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Nato's presence in Kosovo.

Speaking as their medals were awarded, Maj Andrew Horsfall, OC D Squadron, said: "Throughout the tour we had the challenge of Covid-19 and the restrictions that it posed. None of our people had any leave, which is pretty tough."

During their time in Kosovo, the personnel provided expertise in the fields of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.



Picture: Csgt Stu Coles, Yorks

5. MALI 'TRAINED, READY AND COMMITTED'

THE commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment has said his troops are prepared for the rigours of United Nations peacekeeping duties in Africa.

Lt Col Will Meddings – who is taking over from the UK task group in Mali currently led by The Light Dragoons – said soldiers were proud to be donning the iconic blue beret.

Personnel from the outfit's B Company formed part of the earlier 300-strong deployment, which recently smashed a Daesh arms cache (page 17). The task group has been providing the UN force with a long-range reconnaissance capability.

Now the rest of the battalion, with colleagues from 1st The Queen's Dragoon

Guards plus attached sappers and medics, will be looking to build on the success.

Speaking after his troops completed their mission rehearsal exercise (pictured), Lt Col Meddings stressed: "Mali is a dangerous country and the environment is tough but our soldiers are trained, ready and committed to the mission."



Picture: Cpl Paul Watson, RLC



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Climb the ranks in a click

New portal has detailed info on career opportunities

AN ONLINE tool is set to help personnel take better charge of their working lives.

The career management portal allows users to browse roles and opportunities across the whole Army, including those outside their current rank and cap badge, much like a civilian job search.

Accessible via personal devices, the software will enable troops to highlight preferred postings from the comfort of their room or quarter, meaning families can be involved too.

Having been used by staff at the Army Personnel Centre for the last year, it is now being rolled out to individual users over the next 12 months – the chain of command will tell soldiers when and how to log on.

The portal is part of Programme Castle – the Service's initiative to maximise talent – and the team's junior NCO, Bdr Adam Duncan (RHA), described it as "a big step forward".

He said: "People can search for jobs online and send them to their line managers with annotations about why they suit the role.

"It also lets you highlight posts for future consideration, even ones that are several ranks above you, so your superiors can see exactly what you're

gunning for.

"And you can view all the job specifications, so that you can work out which courses you need to do to achieve it.

"At the same time, career managers will have more information to provide timely advice, resulting in much better outcomes for both the individual and the organisation."

Sergeants from the Army Air Corps were the first cohort to use the tool, with their counterparts from the Royal Armoured Corps and Royal Signals due to get access as this issue went to press.



“It lets you highlight posts several ranks above”

Sneaking a PEAKE

ASTRONAUT and former military helicopter pilot Tim Peake has been meeting the next generation of aviators as honorary colonel of 9 Regiment, Army Air Corps.

The graduation parade reviewing officer presented new crews with their flying badges and certificates at Number 1 Flying Training



Picture: Cpl Nicholas Egan, RAF

School, RAF Shawbury. Peake, who served around the world with the Army Air Corps before retiring 12 years ago, also got a glimpse inside the establishment's combat tactics trainer.

He said: "The parade took me back to my wings parade: this is something they have worked towards for many years. They have great careers ahead."

Q&A



We asked Bdr Adam Duncan, Programme Castle junior NCO, about the new career portal...

What can you do on it?

Look for jobs and flag up ones you are interested in to your line manager, access annual reports and view your eligibility for promotion boards, and much more. It's a one-stop shop.

What's the feedback been like so far?

Very positive. People are seeing jobs they never even knew existed. For example, in the past if you wanted to move somewhere specific for family reasons, you might not have known about opportunities in that region of the UK, but now you can search by location. So rather than maybe leaving the Army, you can see where else you could be employed.

Do troops still have to fill in a posting preference proforma?

Once troops get access this will be their new triple P, but now you will be able to select up to 15 postings and drag and drop them into your order of preference. You'll also see a countdown to the promotion board, so you know how long you have got to submit it.

A WORTHY VISITOR...

THE Princess Royal heralded a new tri-Service training era as she formally opened the Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration.

The colonel-in-chief of the Royal Logistic Corps was shown around the site at Worthy Down, which has been the focus of a £300 million transformation project over recent years.

The state-of-the-art facility brings together functions previously run from the Princess Royal Barracks, HMS Raleigh and RAF Halton.

The VIP also declared the RLC museum, which has a new home as part of the college (page 14), ready for business during the visit.



97

troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade involved in the exercise

View from the
GROUND

We asked Maj Craig Shephard, OC of B Coy, 2 Para, about the challenges of Exercise Swift Response

Soldier: Tell us about the flight from Fort Bragg

Maj Shephard: The C-17 is a large aircraft, so we were quite comfortable. The troops spent the last four hours of the flight rigging equipment, sorting out kit and getting ready. We also had air-to-air refuelling over the Atlantic.

Soldier: How quickly were you on the ground?

Maj Shephard: We jumped in the early hours and the troops had to gather kit after landing. The fighting started after a 180-metre trench network was found.

Soldier: Did you enjoy working with the Americans?

Maj Shephard: It was great – around 600 of us jumped together. We trained with their equipment and our soldiers have earned their US jump wings. We have had some really warm praise from their battalion commanding officer.

Soldier: Has exercising in a pandemic been a challenge?

Maj Shephard: In short, yes. We all had to isolate before heading to the US and for a while after we arrived. The troops were regularly tested during the exercise.



Pictures: Cpl Alex Morris, RLC

PARAS

make swift move

AIRBORNE troops joined US allies as they jumped into Eastern Europe for a huge Nato training package – after a ten-hour flight from North Carolina.

The soldiers – from B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment – hit the ground running as they landed in Estonia, immediately taking the battle to a mock enemy.

Embedded with the American 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the rapid pace continued during a week-long schedule on Exercise Swift Response.

In all, some 600 personnel from the two countries boarded seven aircraft for the 4,600-mile haul from Fort Bragg before they exited at night over the Baltic state's Nurmsi area.

The air drop was part of Nato's wider Exercise Defender Europe 21, which concludes this month and has seen thousands of troops operating across 16 different countries.

Led by the US, it is designed to showcase the alliance's ability to assist members and allies.

Maj Craig Shephard – officer commanding 2 Para's B Company – said Swift Response had been a tough undertaking, with the descent in darkness following a journey on the C-17 Globemaster setting the tone.

"The training was demanding from start to finish but everyone has risen to the challenge – the troops loved it," he told *Soldier*. "This was the first jump at night for many of our personnel, but they took it well."

Having secured the area, they were met by seven Blackhawk and three Chinook helicopters to move to another location for further taskings.

Meanwhile, those at the sharp end of Swift Response confirmed the manoeuvres had provided an invaluable training opportunity.

Platoon commander Lt Rory Lorimer said troops had accrued huge experience during an intense few days.

"It was as close as we could get to a real situation," the officer pointed out. "Jumping into Estonia was incredible – we have all learned a great deal."



Taking aim



Picture: Graeme Main

■ **EAGLE-EYED** sharpshooters were put through a test of skill and stamina as they battled for supremacy on 1 Armoured Infantry Brigade's Sniper Strike competition. Run by the Scots Guards on the Salisbury Plain Training Area, the event saw 11 teams – made up of pairs – from across the parent formation taking part. A duo from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland claimed overall victory. As well as marksmanship involving targets up to 800 metres away, event host CSgt Matthew Callaghan (SG) said it had tested disciplines including armoured fighting vehicle recognition and navigation.

Wilderness walks set to resume

A HILL walking group aimed at helping current and former soldiers to connect with the military community is looking to get back on track this summer as Covid restrictions continue to ease.

Hills and Minds was launched by Cpl Craig Laughland and Cpl Henry Hanlin (both Scots) in March last year, when they tackled a trail at Tinto Hill in South Lanarkshire, but the duo saw their plans for 2020 hampered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Based in Scotland, the group encourages serving personnel, veterans and civilians to come together and enjoy the country's stunning scenery in a series of challenging, but ultimately achievable, walks.

"We were having a game of pool with a friend at the start of last year," Cpl Laughland told *Soldier*. "He served in our platoon and was a really popular guy in the battalion but said we were the only ones he'd heard from since leaving the unit."

"On the drive home, we thought 'if he's feeling like that, how many others are in the same position?'."

"There's been a real surge of people getting into hill walking and we



thought it would be the ideal activity. It's better than meeting up in the pub – fresh air and exercise are so beneficial."

Hills and Minds, which already has more than 600 members in its Facebook group, organised seven walks in between the various lockdowns and restrictions last year and Cpl Laughland said they are spoilt for choice in terms of future destinations.

"We try to vary the locations across the central belt of Scotland," he explained. "We have a running argument over where to go as there are so many brilliant places."

"The walks are quite comfortable and we don't want to break anyone, it is about enjoying it."

For more details search "Hills and Minds" on Facebook and Instagram.

“It's better than meeting up in the pub”

”



Reservist saluted

THE latest recipient of the York Medal made history by becoming the first Reservist to be presented with the coveted award.

Sgt Chris Clarke, of 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, received the honour for his contribution to the unit throughout 2019 and 2020 – during which he helped train allies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia and was part of the Army's Covid-19 response effort.

The medal is the regimental prize given for meritorious service.

Brig Andrew Jackson, the departing regimental colonel, praised the soldier's efforts in recent times, saying he had become a talisman for his troops.

He added: "Sgt Clarke has shown exemplary commitment to the Reserve this year, committing many working days – the vast majority of which have been in the field."

"He actively looks for opportunities for arduous challenges and shows high levels of commitment when it comes to executing them."

The last recipient of the award was the late Capt Sir Tom Moore.



Picture: CSgt Stu Coles, Yorks

SIGNALLERS ACE SUN TEST

■ **PERSONNEL** from across the Royal Signals tested their athletic prowess in the virtual realm during the annual Race the Sun challenge.

Normally staged among the backdrop of the North Yorkshire countryside, the contest followed a different format due to Covid-19 restrictions and saw various unit teams compete in events including a half-marathon, a 15-mile mountain bike race and a ten-kilometre row.

The major units prize was presented to 13 Signal Regiment, while AFC Harrogate and 15 Signal Regiment claimed the minor units and mixed (male and female) honours.



100 YEARS LATER

■ THE Royal British Legion marked a century of supporting the Armed Forces community in style with a series of events in the UK and around the world.

Underpinned by a special video message from the Prince of Wales and tributes from troops, the activities ranged from local to high profile acts of remembrance.

A national ceremony involving all three Services and the Merchant Navy at the Cenotaph in Whitehall set the tone for the occasion.

The poignant wreath-laying event – recreating the moment the Legion was formed 100 years ago – was led by the charity's president, Lt Gen (Retd) James Bashall.

Members at many of the organisation's 2,500 branches around the world followed the example, taking part in activities at memorials.

And at the FA Cup final between Leicester City and Chelsea at Wembley, a special limited edition 50p coin was used in the kick-off toss.

The Football Association has long been a supporter of the charity, steadfastly backing Remembrance Day and the annual Poppy Appeal.

RBL Director General Charles Byrne was delighted at the support shown, adding that "strong foundations" had been put in place for the coming decades of work.

"In this our centenary year, we are focused firmly on the future," the leader explained.

"We remain committed to our mission to ensure those who have given so much for their country get the fair treatment, support and recognition they deserve."

HEROES DATABASE

■ AN ONLINE database to find local troops killed in the First and Second World Wars was launched as this issue went to press.

History enthusiasts can enter a postcode into the Commonwealth War Graves Commission tool and see casualties from the conflict who lived in nearby streets.

Some 400,000 names are listed in the system, which went online as part of the organisation's first War Graves Week.

Find out more at cwgc.org/wargravesweek

“My family and I were deeply moved”



Picture: Sgt Chris Morgan, WG

Thanks for the memory

PRINCE Charles has thanked some of the troops who participated in the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral.

During a visit to the Welsh Guards at Combermere Barracks in Windsor, he took the time to address the personnel, saying: "I was so enormously proud of those of you who formed part of the complement during my father's funeral.

"If I may say so, what a wonderful credit not only to the Welsh Guards but also the Household Division and all those who were on parade.

"I know my family and I were deeply moved by the way you all performed your duties.

"People from other countries rang me up to say that they had never

seen anything quite so marvellous, so beautifully done and with such dignity and style.

"Of course, it is something with which you are all rightly famed, but I know my father would have been also enormously touched because he had dreamt up this particular way he wanted it done.

"So you did him proud."

Members of 1st Battalion lined Windsor Castle's quadrangle for Prince Philip's funeral procession.

They had been picked because the Duke of Edinburgh had a close association with the Welsh Guards, serving as their regimental colonel from 1953 until 1975, when Prince Charles succeeded him.



RLC MUSEUM OPENS DOORS

■ A NEW museum exploring how the Army has moved, equipped and supplied during its various campaigns has opened in Worthy Down.

Featuring a large collection of vehicles, uniforms, kit and artefacts, the Royal Logistic Corps Museum offers free admission and parking along with guided tours, a research room, library and interactive displays.

Among the exhibits is Field Marshal Montgomery's Rolls-Royce that he was driven around France in after D-Day, and Napoleon's field bakery, captured at the Battle of Waterloo.

The facility is open from 0930 to 1600 from Tuesday to Saturday – but you must pre-book your visit due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

For more details visit royallogisticcorps.co.uk/museum



Join us in saying **THANK YOU** to our Armed Forces



Over the last year we have seen how vital the Armed Forces are for our nation. With **more than 5,000** deployed on the largest resilience operation in peacetime. From building the Nightingale hospitals across the UK to managing pilot Covid-testing systems nationwide and going into hospitals to help deal with the influx of COVID patients. Whenever they are called upon, the Forces are there to ensure we, as a country, are looked after and kept safe, despite the risk it poses to these individuals.

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity is here to help support those in the Armed Forces community when they turn to us for help. After everything they do for us, it is only right we are there for them in their hour of need.

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WIN
A £100 Tesco shop



LAST month's spine line clues would have been recognised by anyone who scoured the latest operational honours and awards list. (LCpl Michael)

Cameron, (Maj Damien) Mead, (WO2 Paul) Nancollis and (LCpl John) Wardle were all recognised in the line-up of Service accolades.

This month we have teamed up with UK supermarket giant Tesco ([tesco.com](https://www.tesco.com)) to offer one lucky reader a £100 gift card to spend in store.

From fresh food to store-cupboard items, household cleaning products to clothes, there are any number of ways to spend this handy prize.

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

SPINE LINE COMPETITION

NEPAL RESCUE FLIGHT

■ A GROUP of Army personnel have been evacuated from Nepal due to a fresh wave of Covid-19 that has been sweeping the country.

The decision was made to bring back 17 non-critical staff working for British Gurkhas Nepal and 79 of their dependents, plus 40 family members of UK civilians working in the country, on a special flight to RAF Brize Norton.

They have been isolating at government-mandated hotels for ten days and will be released following a negative PCR test.

Those who require housing will be allocated Service family accommodation at Larkhill until further notice.

SAFETY FIRST

■ THE role of "Army safety champion" is being created across all formations and units.

Complementing existing safety-related posts, these individuals will provide independent oversight and challenge leaders.

Training is being provided for the position, which aims to help the Service continuously improve as well as to maintain its operational effectiveness.

Read [ABN 040/2021](#) for more details.



Twenty20 triumph

The Royal Artillery won the first silverware of the new Army cricket season as they triumphed in the Inter-Corps Twenty20 Championships. Read more on [page 69](#)



Robotics centre will pick up pace of new kit

RESEARCH into cutting-edge autonomous battlefield kit is set to take a big leap forward thanks to a new MoD-Army initiative.

The Expeditionary Robotics Centre of Expertise will pool know-how from the military, government and academia.

As well as being a focal point for current projects, it will probe emerging technologies too.

And by sitting alongside MoD procurement as part of the Defence Equipment and Support Future Capability Group, it will have the power to make these ideas a reality.

Army tech boss Lt Col Iain Lamont (RE) said the outfit would allow innovative kit to be brought to the battlespace in short order.

Initiatives on the current project list

include remote platoon vehicles (shown above), nano unmanned aerial systems and autonomous resupply.

Lt Col Lamont – who leads on autonomous systems for the Army – added: "The agile approach will ensure game changing technology enters service as early as possible."

"The future force development team are delighted to be entering into a fast-paced and exciting partnership with the centre of expertise."

The new facility will be based at Abbey Wood in Bristol as well as the Army's pioneering Battle Lab technology project in Dorset.

Although the centre will initially focus on Service projects, it is hoped it could become a resource for robotics across defence.



TECH-MINDED troops have been putting state-of-the-art VR kit through its paces.

Members of 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment donned headsets and sampled a full-on electronic environment while tabbing on an "omni-directional" treadmill, as well as firing virtual 81mm mortars.

All the while they were plugged into a PC evaluation package, which assessed their activity and plotted voice commands and eye movements.

The event at Dale Barracks in Chester was delivered by Qinetiq and formed part of the Army's virtual



reality in-land training pilot.

Troops who took part said they were impressed with the simulation.

Kgn Sebastian Grigg (Lancs) added: "They can change the scenarios depending on our reactions and that is interesting."

"The feedback could help save lives in operational situations."

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, the Royal Logistic Corps and 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards have also sampled the technology.

Data will be used to refine future digital simulation experiences.

Picture: Cpl Adam Wakefield, RLC

VIRTUAL TAB



Soldiers smash Daesh cell

A HAUL of weapons is now safely in the custody of United Nations peacekeepers after the tenacity of British soldiers helped smash a Daesh terrorist ring in Mali.

Troops from The Light Dragoons and 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment (above) unearthed the arms cache on the border near Niger. They made the find after leading a series of long-range patrols under Op Seka as part of the wider UN deployment in the West African country.

Working within the 300-strong UK task group, they have been providing a specialist reconnaissance capability in remote areas.

Their latest action – the first in a so-called cordon and search campaign – was launched after intel suggested extremists were intimidating civilians.

Despite being engulfed in a sandstorm and working through temperatures of 50 degrees centigrade, the troops soon choked off the enemy weapon supplies.

The cache (shown above and right) included AK-47 assault rifles, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, mobile phones and radio kit.

The items – and information gathered – were then passed on to the

UN authorities.

Lt Col Tom Robinson, commanding officer of The Light Dragoons, said the action showed that peacekeepers were making a difference.

“Using intelligence gathered on patrols, we focused on where terrorist groups were intimidating people and were able to find their supplies,” he explained. “We disrupted their harmful influence on local communities and gathered more information that will further help to interrupt extremist activity.”

Col Markus Hook, the Swedish officer commanding the UN mission’s mobile task force, was pleased with the success.

“This operation was a direct and timely response to intelligence and it serves as a telling example of how we are protecting civilians,” he concluded.



RECORD STRAIGHT ON WARRIOR

■ **CONTRARY** to widespread stories in the mainstream press, the British Army is not replacing Warrior with the Boxer vehicle – Head of Strategy, Brig John Clark, has told *Soldier*.

He said the Service is designing a different way of fighting wars and requires different hardware as a result.

A new strategy based on a combination of Apache attack helicopters, the Challenger 3 main battle tank (page 29), Ajax and Boxer is now being developed.

“Boxer should not be compared with Warrior, they are employed very differently as part of a complex integrated system of systems,” the senior officer added.

“Along with new Challenger 3 tanks and Ajax armoured fighting vehicles, Boxer will be at the core of our new heavy brigade combat teams.

“Together with upgraded Apache helicopters, a new mobile fires platform and other capabilities such as long-range precision fires, short- and medium-range air defence and electronic warfare systems, they will be used to fight in a different way on the battlefields of the future.”

In 2019 the MoD agreed to purchase around 500 Boxers from Artec – a consortium of Rheinmetall and Krauss-Maffei Wegmann.

The Army will use troop-carrying, command and specialist variants of the vehicle, with some equipped with the RS4 remote weapon station.

The decision to scrap the Warrior upgrade was part of the government’s recent review of its military capabilities, the Defence Command Paper. However, it will remain in service until the Boxer is introduced around the middle of the decade.

“It was a timely response to intel”



■ **THIS** image of a young corporal with a Tommy gun during the Second World War’s Italian campaign is one of 100 rarely seen colour photos to be published in a new book by the Imperial War Museum. *Britain at War in Colour*, priced at £25, features 100 pictures and has been released to help connect new generations with history. Museum expert John Delaney said: “We have grown so accustomed to black and white images from the Second World War that seeing the conflict in colour brings renewed immediacy to the events.” Order it at iwmsshop.org.uk



IN NUMBERS

275

Nominations received in this year’s Soldiering On Awards – a record figure for the ten-year-old event. Finalists will be announced this month at soldieringon.org



Ground view

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

TRIBES are really important in the Army. I'm a rifleman. That's my tribe. But I'm also a Cornishman.

I'm a white, heterosexual 42-year-old male – arguably that's also my tribe. However, knowing your own kind isn't enough – you have to make an effort to know other tribes, too.

The recent Bame Network conference is a case in point. We had 1,000 people attend virtually, which was brilliant, and I learnt a lot. Together with retired captain Ibrar Ali (ex-Yorks) I took part in a panel discussion about allyship, where we reflected on navigating and celebrating race in the workplace.

I came away with pages and pages of notes and the three key words I'd like everyone to think about are: act, change and believe.

Because simply not being racist isn't good enough – we all need to get after this.

Things have

moved on since I joined the Army, but unacceptable behaviour hasn't gone away completely – there are still instances of micro-aggression and casual racism.

That's where the challenge culture is hugely important.

People need to be comfortable correcting others and having those difficult conversations.

I realise that's easy for me to say as the senior soldier and that for our junior personnel, especially, it is tiring to fight that constant battle and leave yourself open to criticism – but it's for all of us to share that considerable burden.

Race isn't just about colour – it's about nationality and ethnicity too. They are all inter-linked and we need to not be tone deaf to people's histories and heritage.

We are all part of the living, moving tapestry that is today's Army and we each have a role in creating an environment where everyone can bring their whole self to work.

“It's for all of us to share that burden”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q What operations have you missed out on during your career that you wish you'd deployed on?

A I'd love to be in Mali – I'm envious of troops out there. Also Jackal in Sangin on Herrick 11 holds a special place in my heart



Picture: Cpl Dan Wiepen, RLC

Cotton helps teamwork talk

IHAVE a group of mentors – soldiers of different ranks from across the various networks – whose advice I really value because it helps make sure I don't have any blind spots.

Together with actor Antony Cotton, we have made a podcast called *Army Teamwork*, which is available on all the Service channels.

We had an open, frank discussion about what it means to be part of this team, how things have changed over the years and the tangible impact the networks are having.

All of their stories left a

trace – as every meeting I have with individual soldiers does – and I was blown away by how honest they were.

Talking of teamwork – the Help SVG appeal in response to the volcanic eruption in St Vincent and the Grenadines was a great example. I spoke to a soldier from the islands and was moved by how he talked of home.

We all wear the same uniform, even if we come from other sides of the world, so it was amazing to see how people rallied round to support their teammates and their loved ones.

Failure is an important learning tool

■ SOMEHOW I've managed to scramble my way to the top of the tree, but I've failed hand over fist along the way. When I was a young rifleman I got into trouble and the company sergeant major gave me one of the best debriefs I've ever had – I felt awful.

At the end he asked me how many extra duties I wanted. I answered, “well, none, sir”. He looked at me and said, “no really, how many?” Again, I replied, “none”. So he said, “fair one, off you go”.

All the other soldiers asked for four or five extras, and couldn't believe it when I told them what happened to me.

It's great that our organisation is now embracing failure as something to learn from. The trick isn't to never fail – it's to not be afraid of it, and use it to get better.



Picture: Cpl Rob Kane, RLC

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Golden rules for pain-free phys from an Army physiotherapist

► **MUSCULOSKELETAL** issues are the number one reason for medical discharges in the military, with backs, knees and ankles among the joints most commonly affected.

But as Maj Matt Perkins (RAMC) explains, such problems rarely occur in isolation – they are usually a sign that something else is amiss.

This is his advice for staying in top form...

Build a solid foundation

Non-trauma injuries mostly happen because of deconditioning. Someone might have a bad knee, but the cause could be poor glute strength, tight hamstrings or a general lack of flexibility. In younger soldiers this might be because they aren't fit enough, but as Service personnel age they tend to spend more time in front of the computer. Then they go tabbing on a Friday and hurt themselves

Keep an eye on your mileage

Some units don't monitor their phys enough. Maybe they'll do a tab, plus a squadron run, as well as troops running in their own time, and it ends up being too much mileage, potentially leading to some lower limb injuries

...and your weight

Carrying extra timber puts more load on your joints and repetitive overload causes injury. Around 60 per cent of those who get injured are in the overweight-to-obese category. This has a profound effect on strength, power, stability and stamina, as well as on recovery time

Spend time on flexibility

If you're not stretching for five-to-ten minutes after doing phys, you're doing yourself a disservice. When you're young you might get away with it, but as you age you must make time – 20 minutes per day is ideal. Yoga and

pilates are great for flexibility and are becoming more mainstream in the military

Don't neglect your ankles

We walk, run and tab on them, but very rarely do you see anyone doing ankle exercises. To build strength in the joint, use a resistance band and slowly move your foot up, down and side to side

...or your feet

It's easy to hurt yourself by letting your feet degrade while tabbing. When you get a sore spot, it changes the way you walk, which changes the load and makes it more likely that you'll suffer an injury

Work to a sensible plan

If you have a goal in mind, for example a marathon, put it in your diary and work backwards to determine your training plan. You need to give your body adequate time to adjust. Similarly, if you've had two weeks off, don't assume you can come back and squat 140kg straight away, like you were doing before

Don't avoid exercise because you are injured

If you're in loads of pain you don't want to move, but if you're guided through it by a physio you will feel so much better and more empowered. Early intervention, safely, is a good thing

Be realistic about your recovery

Acute injuries take a couple of weeks to get better. Anything over three months is known as a chronic injury – and the recovery time is usually measured in months. Whatever treatment you are offered, accept that it will be hard work. There is no shame in being downgraded – it is a tool to help you get better

Ask your PTI for advice

Troops are often unwilling to go into the gym and ask the fit bloke for help – especially if they are overweight – but these individuals are there to help Service personnel. The lone soldier PT programme is also a good place to begin when starting or returning to phys

PTI-approved tips

on how to tell if you have workout burnout

► **JO PRICE (ex-WG)**, a civilian physical training instructor at Gibraltar Barracks in Minley, describes four signs you could be overdoing it in the gym... and what to do about it.

1 You lack motivation

If you usually enjoy phys and treat it as your downtime but you're finding that you really don't want to go, it could be a sign that your body's self defence mechanism is kicking in, wanting you to slow down

2 You're training ineffectively

Despite not being up for a workout, you start anyway, but you end up just messing around with a couple of machines, all the while knowing you're not actually achieving anything

3 Your muscles are sore

People assume if you're not hurting you're not working, but that's nonsense – if you're well-conditioned you shouldn't ache, even after a heavy session. If you trained legs on Monday and a week later you're still in clip that's a clear sign you're doing too much

4 You're moody

Irritability could just be down to inadequate nutrition or low blood sugar, but it can also be a sign the body is unable to shift enough cortisol. This is the hormone that builds up during emotional or physical stress, including exercise. A little bit can be productive, but too much of this is damaging



How to avoid burnout

Track the other phys you are doing

If you have been running up and down a mountain with your Bergen all day, that still counts as arduous training even if you're not smashing out burpees and push-ups. **A unit's PT programme will be carefully structured to make sure people aren't overdoing it**, but if you do your own sessions on top of that you could run into trouble

Rest Aim to never train more than three days in a row.

I normally do three days on, one day off; then do two days on, one day off and so on. But rest is a loose term. On one of my days off I rest completely, but on the other one I'll train at around 60 per cent intensity – maybe focusing on mobility, flexibility or going for a gentle run

Listen to your body

It can be hard to interpret the signals the body is sending when you're in your own head, however, with practice you will be able to tell the difference between genuinely needing a break and the feeling of 'I just can't be bothered'. **Eat well, get enough sleep and train intelligently** – that way you will optimise your fitness potential

Rest and recuperation – why the body needs a break

Essentially, on a day off the whole body is being given time to heal itself. I compare it to trying to run a bath – by resting you are effectively putting the plug in and allowing the bath to fill up again. Muscles are resynthesised, cortisol decreases and your ligaments, tendons, nerves and brain get a chance to relax, all in preparation for the next session



POSTED OVERSEAS?



Make sure you're not out of pocket with this advice from the Army Families Federation

► WHILE disturbance allowance covers part of the cost of moving abroad, there are some additional pitfalls you can avoid if you are clued up.

Claire Hallam, money and allowances specialist at the AFF, shares four quick wins...



Broadband and media

Servicemen and women no longer have to pay cancellation fees for their broadband and media packages when posted overseas, or to another part of the UK not covered by their provider.

To see the score with your supplier scan here:



Insurance and no-claims bonus

Some motor insurers have agreed to ensure that troops serving overseas will keep their no claims bonus for up to three years. They may also waive the fees normally associated with cancelling a policy at short notice.

To check what the situation is with your insurance company scan here:



National insurance credits

Don't forget, if you are married or in a civil partnership your partner could also claim national insurance credits if they are accompanying you overseas. This is to prevent a gap that can affect the amount of state pension they receive in retirement.

Scan here to find out more:



Mobile phones

Many Forces personnel are unaware that they can freeze their mobile phone contracts if moving or deployed abroad. By asking your provider you can save yourself forking out for a number you don't use or having the hassle of cancelling and restarting a contract.

GET SUPPORT

If you feel your family has been financially disadvantaged by an overseas deployment the AFF wants to know about it. Email money@aff.org.uk with your feedback or concerns

► **THERE** are often times when our pride takes a hit. From failing in a promotion bid to being knocked back from a sports team, success is never a given.

Our sense of self-worth can be affected as we take stock, think about how the task might have been tackled differently and reflect on whether our preparations could have been better. It is all part of the self-improvement process.

But when perceptions of worthlessness take a long-term hold, they can cause problems with every aspect of a soldier's life – from personal relationships to professional performance.

Discrimination, bullying, a change in life circumstances and health dramas can all colour the way we see ourselves.

Left unaddressed, these can spiral into the likes of anxiety and depression.

However, anyone with self-worth issues should be reassured they are not alone. Around 45 per cent of those turning to online mental health service Togetherall had experienced low personal esteem.

Here, the organisation's clinical director, Dr Tim Rogers, provides some guidance on maintaining a healthy outlook.

Know yourself

Having a sense of duty, loyalty and respect are values that soldiers hold dear. But it is important to remember that **all of us have several different identities – as a parent, spouse, son or daughter, to name a few.**

Being aware of a sense of belonging across all of them can help grow self-worth. Knowing what matters to you, your ethos and understanding how you want to treat yourself as well as others are also good principles



Motivation matters

Setting goals helps to make things happen. They can bolster self-belief, keep our confidence up and help us fight our fears – so establish some personal objectives that matter to your values and identities, whether career-related or focused on relationships. Break big targets into small tasks and reward yourself for each little achievement – this will motivate you in a deeper way



Live with integrity

Adhering to moral principles is important – these discourage you from speaking in a way that deceives others as well as fostering trust from people. Making choices based on integrity positively influences your relationships with family and friends, while also helping with self-acceptance



Use the write stuff

Keep a journal about negative beliefs and ideas – jotting down these thoughts can help you put some distance between you and them. Ask yourself when you first started to think in this way and consider how you might say things differently. Try the Togetherall journal tool if you don't want to put pen to paper



Keep a reminder

Aim to have at least five positive things about yourself in the journal and add to it regularly – try one a day for starters. Put down the good points other people have mentioned about you too. You will benefit from looking at the list regularly



Stay positive

Remember that life can change – you might have low confidence now because of past experiences but we can develop new ways of seeing ourselves at any age



Help is a click away

Togetherall, formerly Big White Wall, is an online mental health support community available to all Regulars and Reservists, their families and veterans. Those signing up remain anonymous. The charity has supported more than 250,000 people to date. Visit **togetherall.com** for more info



You're worth it

Don't let low self-esteem hold you back



'They knew I was in

Soldier who lost his mum to Covid-19 takes on epic mission in her memory... with humbling support from the Army family along the way

► **CORPORAL James Kirby** (Lancs), an instructor at Infantry Training Centre Catterick, lost his mum Denise to coronavirus in March. A double-amputee, she had suffered from diabetes throughout her life, and he decided to channel his grief into a seemingly impossible task – a 154-mile trek, in 48 hours, complete with Bergen and webbing, in aid of Blesma, The Limbless Veterans.

The feat pushed him to his limits, but as the 33-year-old explained to *Soldier*, he is no stranger to adversity...

“The tab was my way of comforting myself after mum died because I hadn't really allowed myself time to grieve properly.

I chose to go from Preston to Catterick and back because that's the route I drove to see her in hospital, and I set the goal of 48 hours because that's how long I sat by her bed and watched her die.

I managed to speak to her a couple of days before and she seemed alright, just a bit poorly, so it came as a massive shock when they rang me up and said there was nothing more they could do apart from make her comfortable.

That's why I couldn't grieve – I didn't want to be all panicky and for her to be scared. I wanted her to feel safe.

We had to leave the hospital for a few hours so they could do some cleaning and

were going to come back at 0300 but she passed away at 0135.

I went straight back and held her hand, gave her a kiss, told her I loved her. I cut a lock of her hair off to keep.

Then I had to arrange the funeral, so again I didn't have time to mourn.

The Army is very good at teaching you mental resilience in kinetic environments but when someone you love dies it's a completely different feeling.

My heart was still bleeding for her on the tab, but I needed that ball of energy inside me to keep me going.

I was awake for 50 hours and didn't stop, other than quick breaks to admin my feet – I had blisters after the first 20 miles.

The route crossed the North Yorkshire Pennines and it was freezing – I was glad it was dark in parts so I couldn't see the hills.

I don't consider myself the fittest guy in the world, but I know from my own story that mentally, nothing can break me.

Mum and I were close, although growing up as a lad on a rough council estate I'm sure I caused her a few worries.

She struggled with diabetes all her life, as well as with her mental health – I found her when she tried to hang herself once. She would neglect herself and not eat properly.

I originally joined the Army in 2007 but I had to leave after a few years when she had her legs amputated and my dad committed suicide. Mum also had a stroke. I would support her in hospital, but I was homeless, so

when visiting hours finished I would go and find somewhere to sleep on a park bench or in a bus station, and that was kind of my routine.

Eventually she was given a one-bedroom flat and I moved in with her. She needed help with everything – I had to wipe and change her, brush her hair and inject her insulin.

It was degrading for her and I was struggling with the situation too – I started to neglect myself.

It was the least I could do, though. I'm confident that she's looking down and knows I did it because I wanted to, not because it was a chore.

That's why I did the tab for Blesma, because they give people and their families welfare support, and help them lead a normal life.

Mum always used to say: 'I've lost my legs, not my mind.'

By 2015 she was doing better and I was able to rejoin the military. But I didn't want to come back and just mark time – I appreciated the Army more and the opportunities it offered. I could see the bigger picture.

I have two stripes now and I'm doing well – and I have two children, so I want to set a good example to them.

It's the same for the recruits I teach and what made me really proud was that my first ever section who I trained when I started at ITC drove up and joined me for an eight-mile stretch about 50 miles from the end of the tab.

That was special to me personally



clip'



because when they were in training it was me egging them on, and this was turning the tables – they were supporting me because they knew I was in clip.

Lots of other colleagues and veterans also took it in turns to keep me company along the way and that really helped my morale.

On the last push the hail was stinging my face, but I ran up the hill to the cenotaph, banged up a salute to the fallen and all those who need some support, took a knee and shed a tear.

My body was shutting down and I was shaking – I left everything I had on that tab.

There was no way I wasn't going to finish, though – I would have failed myself and everyone who supported me.

Things have been hard, and I've tried committing suicide in the past, but I hope people who are struggling see my journey and realise that anyone can do anything if they set their mind to it.

Like in a cartoon, with the little angel and the devil on your shoulder, tell that devil to clear off and crack on.



In numbers

154

distance in miles of Cpl Kirby's tab

48

time in hours to complete the route

59

weight in kilograms of his Bergen

£8,000

amount raised for Blesma as this issue went to press

● To donate visit [justgiving.com/fundraising/james-kirby9](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/james-kirby9)

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THE PUZZLE OF CHALLY 3

It's official – Challenger 3 is coming.
Soldier learns more about the work that lies ahead to piece together Nato's most lethal tank for the British Army

WHEN Tpr Connor Hill-McKenzie was playing with his toy Chieftain in his grandmother's living room as a little boy, he could never have guessed that one day he would be helping to bring into service its successor – the West's most deadly armoured vehicle yet – Challenger 3 (CR3).

But that is the situation facing the 27-year-old crewman.

A gunner in the Royal Tank Regiment's Cyclops Squadron, not only is he likely to be involved in trialling this new platform at some stage, but he could easily find himself commanding it once it enters service with the British Army in 2027.

After five years in uniform, the Serviceman has accompanied the current Challenger 2 main battle tank on just one major overseas training exercise. »



“
It's like a big
game of Tetris
”

» So the moment he can finally get his hands on its third generation cannot come soon enough.

“Genuinely, I love tanks,” he tells *Soldier*. “Ever since I played with that toy at my nan’s house.

“But I also hate them.

“They are fantastic bits of kit when everything works, but when there is a problem and you are up all night trying to fix them – let’s just say it can be frustrating.”

He continues: “Exercise Saif Sareea 3 in Oman was the last big thing I did with the platform.

“That was amazing, and I really hope we get to take CR3 out like that and trial it in different conditions.

“Going away forces you to bond more with your crew, so you get to understand how the people operate as well as the kit. You are a little family in a big metal box.”

As a weapons man, there is one element of the upgrade in particular that interests Tpr Hill-McKenzie – the new 120mm L55A1 smooth-bore gun, capable of firing higher velocity ammo than his current rifled barrel, with an increased range to boot.

Its new projectiles will be Nato-standard, making Challenger 3 more versatile when operating alongside allies. And they will be programmed digitally from a new high-tech turret that will be fitted to upgraded Challenger 2 hulls.

“It is certainly going to be quicker to load the CR3 gun,” Tpr Hill-McKenzie adds. “I just want to be given one so I can play around with it – I’m going to be like a kid in a candy shop.”

Other sweet features of the upgraded platform include world-leading modular armour, a laser warning system, an active protection system, new sights with improved day and night targeting and upgraded suspension to boost firing accuracy on the move.

It will also include an automatic target tracking and detection system, thermal long-range cameras, an upgraded engine with improved cooling and a digital open architecture that will allow the Challenger to share data with other assets and attach new technologies as they emerge.

An £800m contract with Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) will see 148 of the cutting-edge CR3s delivered to the Army, with an out-of-service date of 2040.

Built at the manufacturer’s factory in Telford, they will transform the UK’s armoured capability.

But for soldiers like WO2 Stew Baird (KRH), the warrant officer overseeing CR3 testing at the Armoured Trials and Development Unit, there is much work to do before any celebrations can begin.

“As a former user of Challenger 2 I am hugely enthusiastic about the smooth-bore gun,” he explains.

“And all this new technology is going to take the Army’s main battle tank to the next level; it’s hugely exciting.”

But with crews set to make their first visits to Telford very soon to get collaborating on how everything will work in the heat of battle, a dose of reality is going to be necessary at every stage of this complex project.

“Anyone who owns a car probably has one or two things about that vehicle that annoy them,” WO2 Baird explains.

“Our job is to find those things with CR3 – to give the user view – and make sure troops get the best experience they can.”

Soldier spoke to others with a keen interest in the CR3 project to get their take on this battle-winning piece of kit as it is prepared for trials in 2024...



Challenger 3

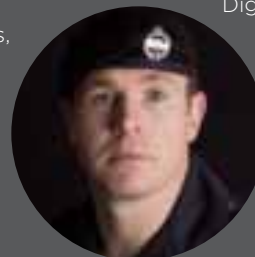
– new features at a glance

- Fully digitised turret
- 120mm smooth-bore gun
- Enhanced armour
- Laser warning system
- Active protection system
- New sights
- Upgraded suspension
- Automatic target tracking and detection system
- Thermal long-range cameras
- Upgraded engine with better cooling



The Boss

“For me as a tankie this investment in armour is exciting. Nothing else can deliver the effect that a tank can at the moment. And the fact that many other nations, adversaries and allies, are investing in their fleets says something. A good way to describe a tank is like a dinner jacket – you don’t always need one but when you do, nothing else will do. It is the most lethal asset in the British Army. And if you look at Challenger 2, except for minor tweaks made during Iraq, we have not really made any improvements over



20 years. Technology nowadays is more software defined than anything else, though. An iPhone doesn’t change much, but its operating system does. Digitisation means that we can integrate new technology into the CR3 more effectively as it evolves over time. We are tailoring our approach to address future threats. We will be a lot quicker prosecuting our targets with this new platform. The guys should be really excited about that fact.”

Maj Andy Pilsworth,
OC Cyclops Squadron,

The Crew

“Currently, we have to search manually to find a target, but with the new sights the kit can do that itself and pick up a thermal signature. That will mean pressure off the crew, freeing us up a little bit, instead of having to constantly keep scanning. I think that’s a decent feature. Obviously, younger people coming into the regiment today are used to technology



more, so they will be able to get to grips with this new system easily – they will be quick to learn. I would like to become a tank commander before I leave. And with investment like this the Royal Tank Regiment seems to have a bright future ahead – it is good for morale. If the new Challenger is more reliable, without any electrical faults, then I will be very happy indeed.”

Tpr Matthew Lynn (RTR)
Challenger 2 gunner

“From what I know the upgrade is going to be well worth it. The new smooth-bore gun, long-range camera, thermals, all this will help me do my job. And the tank being able to ID something and assist me is going to be lifesaving. I am sceptical about its 60mph top speed compared with 40mph, though. It just doesn’t seem possible that it could do it – but it will be interesting to

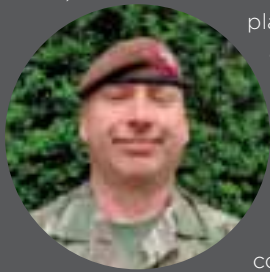


see. Tanks will always have a place on the battlefield. They are the front line, regardless of drones and airstrikes – tanks go in first. They clear a way for the infantry, and the likelihood of coming up against another military with armour is too high in this age. Regardless of what other nations create to destroy them, these platforms will always have a place.”

Tpr Connor Hill-McKenzie (RTR)
Challenger 2 gunner

The Tester

“The Armoured Trials and Development Unit (ATDU) will take on a significant part of the trialling of CR3. When we get the first platforms the manufacturer will do initial training, then mixed crews, before moving to live crew clearance trials. This is an incredibly busy time for ATDU as we are heavily involved in Ajax too. But getting that soldier view is absolutely vital on these projects. We are looking a lot at what we call human integration factors. CR3 is a human-centric design – it puts the crew at the centre of things. So there is an enormous amount of work going on to make sure we, as the users, can understand all

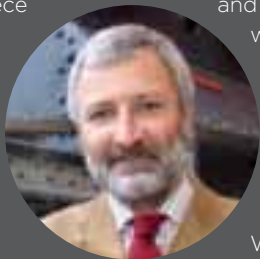


the technology. What works in a German tank might work slightly differently for us, for example. And although the new Challenger won't be ready for trials for a while, that will be the completed platform. There is a huge amount of work going on before this to ensure the manufacturer gets views from the Service user community – design feedback, for example, or looking at pre-prototype production vehicles or simulators. We will be dropping in to Telford at every opportunity.”

**WO2 Stew Baird (KRH),
Overseeing integration and
trials of CR3 at ATDU**

The Historian

“It is certainly positive that the Army is retaining this capability – what's better than a tank to show your military means business? And CR3 looks like it is going to be an impressive piece of kit. Whatever the situation, armour appears to have a role on the battlefield. And, historically, every country that has ever got rid of its heavy armour has always ended up bringing it back – the Dutch and Canadians, to name two. That is not to say newer capabilities should not be embraced, but unless you have hard firepower to act on all the data from emerging



technologies, what's the use of that information? A heavy tank provides what for many is the ultimate land-based firepower. Despite forces wanting to be light and agile and 'not there', times will occur when you need to take and hold ground – a tank really helps in doing this. Maybe one day our tanks will be autonomous. We are getting close, and this sort of thing is certainly being trialled in some parts of the world. But for now, Challenger remains one of the best tanks in the entire world.”

**David Willey
Curator, The Tank Museum**



The Manufacturer

“The technologies and improvements this project will bring should re-establish Challenger as the supreme tank in the Western world. Features like the automated target tracking make CR3 a complete game-changer. Going from two-piece to single-piece ammunition is a massive shift, too. But the new gun is only part of the equation – new electrical architecture will improve the likelihood of a hit and a kill. We have worked really closely with Abbey Wood over the last four years. However, until you build your first trial vehicles a lot of that is technically still theory. All the constituent parts have been tested, they are really mature, so the real work now is to make sure they can talk to each other and perfectly,

every single time. We want to ensure that when the crew ask the tank to do something, they don't have to worry. We need to make sure the interfaces are seamless. It's like a big game of Tetris. This is definitely the largest project I have worked on – it's a huge responsibility. Challenger is a much-loved platform and this will be the UK's future main battle tank. Many of the engineers who worked on Challenger 2 described it as a career highlight, and telling staff here that they are on the team that has to build the best tank in Nato certainly gets them fired up.”

**Nick Long,
CR3 project director,
RBSL**



IN NUMBERS

6

years until the Challenger 3
enters service

53,000+

tanks thought to be in operation
across the planet



SENNYBRIDGE SCREENING

GUNNERS GET EXPERIMENTING WITH EMERGING TECH

HARNESSING the power of technology is vital in enabling the Army to punch above its weight and the Royal Artillery has been working hard to find out just how much extra clout it can provide.

At Sennybridge Training Area personnel from 8 (Alma) Battery, 29 Commando Regiment – along with supporting elements – spent three weeks experimenting with a range of established and emerging technologies to see how much added lethality and survivability could be on the table.

The main focus of their effort was a series of joint fires and manoeuvres that were, for the first time, orchestrated through a single digital hub – a prototype system supplied by a commercial manufacturer.

Teams out in the field accessed it through handheld devices while senior decision-makers in the command post and at headquarters used laptops and desktop machines. They were all able to view to a common operating picture – a 3D, multifunctional graphic of the battlespace able to display icons for every single known asset, friend and foe, located in a defined area.

Data from acoustic and radar sensors and even video and infrared images from unmanned aerial systems (UAS) could be incorporated into the screen display.

The experimental network also provided digital communications thanks to the devices being equipped with an encrypted messaging system.

The aim of the experiment was to test the effectiveness, user-friendliness and outright potential of the kit – the first of several versions to be assessed before any procurement might take place. And the omens look good.

“This is proving to be a game-changer for us in speeding up our response to threats because everyone here can see ”





» the same picture and information, including the command and control team, which means we can make quicker decisions,” Capt Paul Threadgill (RA), a regimental training officer with 29 Cdo Regt, told *Soldier*.

The “everyone” at Sennybridge consisted of a tactical group from 8 Bty – observers, joint fires cell, a gun group and logistics – in addition to personnel from the Royal Artillery’s 32 Regiment, flying UAS, and 5th Regiment, who were operating the lightweight counter-mortar radar (LCMR) and advanced sound ranging programme (ASP) sensors that locate enemy positions.

A mortar troop from 40 Commando, Royal Marines was also on hand, thanks to 29 Cdo being under the operational control of 3 Commando Brigade, to which it provides artillery support and gunnery observation.

“The challenge has been to route and effectively use all the data, video and comms from these different elements through our joint fires cell using a single digital system,” explained Capt Adam Naismith (RA).

“Potentially, it allows us to optimise and speed up the passage of information from sensors, such as drones, ASP, LCMR and

“
The troops coming in now are a lot
more IT-savvy than they used to be
”





our recce teams, to our crews manning guns, mortars, Exactor, Apaches or even F-35s.”

With a single screen able to host multiple streams of information, including video, the picture has the potential to become very cluttered, but it can be made less so by filtering out specific categories of data at the touch of a button.

“It’s ground-breaking stuff,” added Capt Simon Oliver (RA), a Reservist from 221 (Wessex) Battery and a communications technology specialist in his civilian career.

“Normally, the video downlink person in the command post has a computer in his hand to see what the UAS is looking at,” he explained. “The observer out in the field, who is trying to distinguish between the good and bad guys, doesn’t know where the aircraft is and has to talk to the command post to see what the feed is showing.

“But with this system, everyone can see where the UAS is, the downlink person can send the video footage to the digital hub

so it can be shared across the network and personnel can then access that when they need to without any need to refer back.

“Joint fires cell commanders, for example, can view what the UAS is seeing through the camera, visually identify a target, tap the screen to insert an icon identifying it as such, and then send a digital message to the crew of the weapon system that has been selected to eliminate it.”

These capabilities, together with the communications function, mean operators require a degree of dexterity and confidence with the technology to operate it effectively. But SSgt Ray Ternent (RA), the joint fires cell commander for 8 Bty, believes it’s set up perfectly for young soldiers.

“The troops coming in now are a lot more IT-savvy than they used to be; they are familiar with the concept of local area networks, IP addresses, connecting to Wi-Fi and using tablets with touchscreens. It’s all second nature to them,” he added.

The senior NCO believes the system also has inherent advantages in addition to improved situational awareness.

“The fact the devices create a network is really interesting,” he said. “It only works on line-of-sight but you can plant the handheld devices out in the terrain, say on a hill, to act as a relay point, so our teams can communicate even when they cannot see each other.

“It’s all digital and cuts out comms by voice, so enemy forces can’t listen in. The information is sent in one quick, coded burst and, while it should be secure, if it’s ever compromised you can easily change the crypto within it.”

Another important aspect is that using this technology can reduce the physical signature of the battlegroup headquarters, presenting less of a target to the enemy and making the command chain less vulnerable to a direct strike.

“It allows us to work remotely in dispersed locations,” said SSgt Ternent. “The CO, for instance, isn’t anywhere near here but normally he’d be in the tent with us, so it’s definitely increasing our survivability.”

Force protection was, in fact, an important aspect of the package and something that troops from 21 Air Assault Battery, 32 Regiment were actively involved with.

Mandated to use Desert Hawk operationally, they took the opportunity to assess the potential of the Wasp and Puma UAS in this role (see panel).

“Using these platforms is good for covering dead ground to increase our situational awareness,” said SSgt Rob Nicholson (RA). “So far, we’ve also managed to get video feed into the joint fires cell and had our UAS’s positions loaded on to the system with everybody else’s location on it.

“The route recce we’ve done have improved safety, mitigating risk to personnel as they move around the battlespace.”

With so many advantages literally at their fingertips, it’s perhaps not surprising the verdicts of those trialling this technology have been largely positive.

Other systems offering similar capabilities have yet to be evaluated so it’s not known how long it will take for kit of this type to be delivered into the hands of units in the field.

But following the Integrated Review and the aspirations laid out so explicitly in the Future Soldier plan, who would bet against technology very much like this being procured in the not-too-distant future? »



Drone killer

Service personnel involved in the digital system trials at Sennybridge had a chance to see some anti-UAS kit in action.

They practised neutralising a commercially-manufactured drone using a piece of equipment that is roughly rifle-sized thanks to being powered by a low-energy system that runs off a small battery.

It is currently in service with Italian special forces and can be used against unmanned platforms either in the air, on the sea or on land.

“This kit would give us the ability to ‘shoot down’ the enemy’s remotely piloted air systems, which would be pretty handy for us,” said Capt Naismith (RA). “It’s also good for our guys to see what sort of technology they might come up against.”

Aerial support

Troops from 21 Battery, Royal Artillery provide air defence capability to 16 Air Assault Brigade and support 3 Commando Brigade so it’s perhaps not surprising that this busy unit has been supplying feedback for the next generation of UAS for the British Army – tentatively pencilled in for delivery in 2023.

At Sennybridge they took a further opportunity to explore the capabilities of the Wasp and Puma unmanned aerial systems, which have provided some of the benchmarks for their recommendations for the new platform.

“We have been experimenting with these assets since 2018, assessing what could be better, what we need from

the soldier’s point of view, then drawing up a wishlist of features and capabilities we would have ideally,” explained SSgt Rob Nicholson (RA).

“For us, something small like the Wasp, that fits into a pack for when we jump in, would be one desirable option.

“Most people would like to see more flexible payloads and aircraft that have greater endurance – one soldier suggested they should come with solar panels on their wings to enhance range.

“We’re mandated to use DH3 so it’s great to have a chance to test these assets when we can, usually on exercises if they’re available, and when we’re given permission by the chain of command.” ■



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CLEAR FOR TAKE-OFF



16 Air Assault
Brigade opens
new landing zone
as training estate
ramps up

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Graeme Main

“
The one thing all soldiers
want is to be in control of
their own training destiny
”



manoeuvre partner, the RAF.

To prove the point a C-130J Hercules swoops over the surrounding treeline before lining itself up above the runway and gradually descending to the tarmac.

It is among the first aircraft to land on the surface in more than three years and Brig Martin hopes this will become a common sight in future.

“This is an excellent opportunity and will give us a comprehensive training area,” he continues.

“It is an environment that is not currently available. There may be tactical sites elsewhere where planes can land, but we cannot get out and do the things we can do here.

“Up until now our training has been very disaggregated. More often than not the focus has been on Brize Norton, where we get on an aircraft and the serials are delivered somewhere else.

“The only time we’ve previously been able to do end-to-end joint entry training is when we’ve been abroad.

“16 Air Assault Brigade is the Army’s very high readiness brigade, and we can deploy at speed around the world. But without air manoeuvre we would not be able to maintain that mission state.

“We want to encourage the RAF to see this as an opportunity where we can work together to deliver that air manoeuvre element.”

Initial outlay on the site has been relatively minimal and the biggest undertaking so far has been ensuring the runway meets the exacting standards required for planes to touch down safely.

Fortunately, the brigade had the perfect asset for the task in the shape of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, who are conveniently located at Woodbridge’s Rock Barracks.

Developing the facility will benefit the formation as it evolves to become the Army’s Air Manoeuvre Brigade Combat Team and a key component of the Global Response Force under the Future Soldier model.

The runway will also be able to accommodate the new A400M aircraft that will replace the C-130J from 2023, and from which airborne personnel will conduct future airdrop and air land operations.

Soldier was offered a glimpse of the training area’s potential as, just prior to the Hercules’ arrival, personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and 23 Para Engr Regt combined to conduct building clearance drills on one of the site’s compounds.

Once the plane touched down, elements of 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps came to the fore in their role as airfield departure and arrival specialists.

With taxi manoeuvres complete, soldiers on quad bikes moved into position to guide their disembarking counterparts, along with an RWMK Land Rover, to a safe point off the runway’s edge.

“This is one of seven different capabilities we have been able to demonstrate today,” Maj Dan Morgans (RLC), officer commanding the unit’s 63 Squadron, explains.

“We like having specialist roles and with this only being an hour away it means it will be easy to pop down and train – that keeps people motivated. ”

“IF WE start firing blanks and digging up the runway at Brize Norton we will be in trouble,” Brig James Martin tells *Soldier* as he discusses future opportunities at the Army’s latest training asset.

As commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, he has just overseen the opening of a tactical landing zone that will allow his personnel to conduct full joint theatre entry drills just an hour

away from their Colchester headquarters.

A former Royal Air Force station, Woodbridge aerodrome boasts 170 hectares of prime real estate that can be tailored to host brigade-level serials down to specific packages for its individual units and companies.

But, crucially, it will allow the soldiers to strengthen the relationship with their key air



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» “We can tell them what the job is about and why we are at high readiness, but it is not until they are on the side of the runway, seeing planes land and then getting on and off the aircraft that they really live and feel it.

“Previously, on Exercise Wessex Storm, we have used Keevil airfield but there are far more limitations there in terms of what you can do.

“The brigade will be deploying on Exercise Falcon Amarante in November and I’m sure we will be using this in the build-up. If you can get planes in, this is the ideal place to do it.

“It seems like a logical move to us.

“Colchester is the home of the Air Assault Brigade, but it has no runways.

“We have shown that as soon as a good opportunity presents itself the different brigade units will jump all over it.”

With Woodbridge now established as the formation’s air manoeuvre centre of excellence, the next step is to build steadily on the initial momentum.

“I want to see units on here every month and what they do will be down to the imagination of the commanding officers and company commanders,” Brig Martin concludes.

“The one thing all soldiers want is to be in control of their own training destiny. The fact we have that here has been enthusiastically received – they cannot wait to get down.” ■



IN NUMBERS

1943



year RAF Woodbridge opened. It was designed to allow stricken aircraft to land unannounced on their return from raids over Europe

4,200

aircraft that had made emergency landings at the site by the end of the Second World War



40

years of usage by the US Air Force, which first arrived at the site in 1952. The F84, F101 and A10 Tankbuster all flew from the station during the height of the Cold War

3

Royal Air Force planes capable of moving people and equipment around the world that can land at the base – the C-130J, C-17 and A400M (pictured)



THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW

How the Royal Army Dental Corps mobilised to prevent tooth trouble during Covid

"But if you deploy dentally unfit troops, there will be a lot more cases. Toothaches and abscesses mean people doing dangerous tasks will not be concentrating on their job as much – they may even have to be sent home.

"And replacing someone isn't easy, as we found on Op Herrick and other conflicts over the years."

But while it is vital that troops remain fit to fight, Covid presents a particular problem for dentistry.

Spray produced during common procedures means the scope for germs to spread among staff and patients is high.

Surgeries must therefore be thoroughly ventilated in between appointments to prevent transmission – a measure known as the fallow period.

"Any treatment involving a hand piece – or drill – creates an aerosol," continued Col Davies.

"The next patient doesn't want to be walking into a cloud of Covid, so depending on the infrastructure, you have a set time for the air in the room to be changed.

"In a well-ventilated facility this could be as little as ten minutes, but where there is no window or mechanical extraction system, the fallow period is half an hour.

"Of course, this significantly reduces the number of people you can treat."

The corps' solution to the problem, in conjunction with Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC), was to create so-called dental readiness preparedness teams (DRPTs) – fully-equipped mobile units that could be dispatched

IN THE early days of the pandemic, as scientists grappled to understand the novel coronavirus, it was not yet clear how profound or long-lasting the disruption would be.

But as normal life ground to a halt and the Army mobilised to assist the national response, a new threat to the Service's operational effectiveness emerged – in the shape of an old enemy.

Poor oral health has undermined troops' ability to soldier for centuries, although these days careful monitoring and modern treatments keep tooth dramas on deployments in check.

However, with a national lockdown in place and routine appointments largely suspended, personnel from the Royal Army Dental Corps recognised urgent action was needed to avert a crisis.

Col Tim Davies, the Service's chief dental officer (pictured right), explained why.

"Statistics show that even with a well-prepared force you will get a number of dental casualties on any operation," he said.





swiftly to provide extra capacity where required, for example, at regiments about to deploy or those based in isolated areas.

Crucially, the surgeries are housed in tents, meaning that treatment areas can be easily and quickly ventilated.

Following a successful trial in Chester, the scheme was rolled out to Tern Hill in Shropshire and Fort George, near Inverness, where 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland were preparing for a stint on Op Toral.

The next location to benefit was the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and as this issue went to press the latest DRPT was preparing to move to Weeton Barracks in Lancashire, home of 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment.

With all treatments logged on the DPHC software system, just as they would be at a normal surgery, patients' records can be immediately updated and the initiative is helping to counteract the 30 per cent drop in dental fitness seen at the start of the pandemic.

"A lot of it is down to our personnel being robust," added Col Davies.

"Doing dentistry outside in Scotland in the first week of January isn't the most pleasant of experiences and for those involved over the summer it could be really warm.

"But for us it's a win-win. By the autumn a quarter of our dentists and nurses will in some way or another have worked at a DRPT and therefore had hands-on experience with the field kit, something you normally only get if you deploy overseas."

And despite the continued vaccine rollout and easing of nationwide restrictions, Col Davies believes the capability will remain a useful tool in a post-pandemic future.

"The risks associated with dental work won't be changing so this will continue to be a weapon in our armoury," he concluded.

With 2021 marking 100 years since the RADC was formed in response to rampant dental disease during the First World War, it is apt that the corps is once again in the spotlight, playing a vital role in keeping soldiers fit and well in the midst of a global health crisis. »

In numbers

SIX

personnel on each DRPT – two dental officers and four dental nurses

25

minimum number of dental inspections the team aims to perform daily

11.5

total number of clinical weeks completed by the DRPT until now

740

number of patients treated so far, including 291 dental inspections, 420 restorations and 27 root canals

Mobile mission

Capt Katy Trinick and LCpl Jermaine Smith were part of a DRPT deployed to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst last month while the camp's own dental surgery was being refurbished. This is what they made of the tasking...

Capt Katy Trinick, RADC

Role: DRPT senior dental officer

Parent unit: 5 Medical Regiment

Age: 26

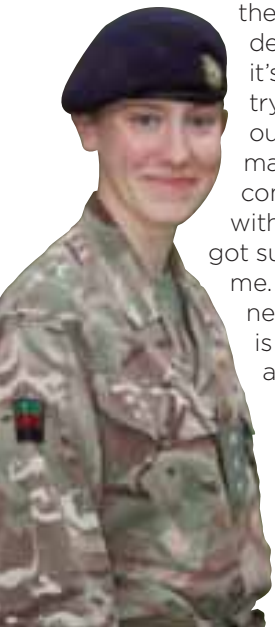
“The set-up consists of two clinical surgeries in a tent, with a central sterile area where all the instruments are kept. It's limited on space, so we need to be more organised.

You do find that leaves and dust come in from outside but the dental nurses keep on top of everything and make sure standards are kept high.

We do everything we would do in a dental centre including fillings, scales, root canals and extractions.

I'll soon be going to Kenya for six months to provide real life support to exercising troops,

where I'll be using the deployed dental kit. So, it's great to try everything out here and make sure I'm comfortable with it while I've got support around me. In Kenya the nearest dentist is three hours away. ”



LCpl Jermaine Smith, RADC

Role: Dental nurse

Parent unit: 3 Medical Regiment

Age: 26

“The most challenging thing is getting used to the different kit. It does exactly the same thing, but the set-up is a bit different – for example, we have to dispose of dental waste manually, whereas in a surgery, patients spit into a sink next to the chair.

Cleanliness is the same as indoors – we have wipeable floors and in between patients we open the sides of the tent so the air can flow through.

It's been a really good learning experience to work in a field-based environment, which in turn, is good practice for potential future operations. ”



Like pulling TEETH



The slow – and often painful – history of military dentistry

FEW people can say they really enjoy a visit to the dentist but spare a thought for the poor souls who had to seek the services of a “tooth drawer”, as their olden day counterparts were known.

Here, colonel commandant of the Royal Army Dental Corps, Col (Retd) Quentin Anderson (pictured above), offers up some grim facts and figures...



BACK TO THE BEGINNING

In 1661 – the start of the Army as we know it – any dental issues were looked after by the regimental surgeon or, if he had a bad reputation, perhaps the farrier. Treatments included mouthwashes and bloodletting but, realistically, the only remedy was having the tooth removed. Fortunately, dental decay was not so common then because sugar was too expensive for the rank and file to afford.

WATERLOO TEETH

Wellington's famous 1815 victory over Napoleon gave rise to this phrase, referring to dentures made from teeth

A case of dental instruments used to remove two teeth from Napoleon while he was in exile on St Helena

pulled from the mouths of the war dead. Sugar consumption was on the rise – especially among the rich – and with it the demand for false teeth.

ONE LUMP OR TWO?

The average annual consumption of sugar increased from 20lbs per person in 1820 to 90lbs by the end of the century, with the repeal of the sugar tax in the early 1850s making it widely available to all. Military records start to mention recruits being rejected for poor teeth – at that time soldiers still needed to be able to bite open paper cartridges.

PRESERVATION ORDER

Following the end of the Crimean War in 1856 the director general of the Army Medical Department ordered that attempts should be made to preserve teeth, rather than simply extracting them. Additional instruments were issued – including a hand-operated drill – but these were scarce and so inadequate that medical officers, who received no training in their operation, would not use them.

MASS CASUALTY SITUATION



There were a total of 6,942 hospitalisations for dental problems during the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 and 2,451 patients were invalided back to Britain. Gastrointestinal issues were also common due to troops being unable to chew properly. Dental surgeon F Newland-Pedley – a civilian volunteer – found himself the sole dentist in an Army of 200,000 men.

HAIG GETS A TOOTHACHE

The British Expeditionary Force deployed to France in 1914 without any dentists, but at the Battle of the Aisne in September Gen Douglas Haig got a toothache and a dentist had to be summoned from Paris to treat him. By the end of the year there were 20 dentists commissioned into the Army. At the Armistice in 1918, some 850 were serving.



ARMY DENTAL CORPS IS BORN

In 1921 the corps was formally established, but funding was limited. Among the first surgeries to be set up was one in the upstairs rooms of a condemned married quarter at Wellington Barracks, London.

STARK STATISTICS

The poor state of the nation's dental health was laid bare in Army figures from 1926 when 100 per cent of new recruits were deemed dentally unfit. On average



Want to know more?

A display spanning the 100 years of the RADC's history is on show at the Museum of Military Medicine – in Keogh Barracks, near Aldershot – which reopens to visitors this month. For more information go to museumofmilitarymedicine.org.uk



Above: A mobile dental unit in operation at the Mareth Line, Tunisia, in 1943. **Top left:** A First World War dental surgery, circa 1917

they needed two extractions and four fillings each to meet the minimum standard. In 1927 the standards were lowered following a recruitment shortfall, keeping military dentists even busier.

BIG DATA

During the Second World War there were 20,353,073 attendances in the Army for dental treatment at home and overseas, including 8,654,309 extractions. The ranks of the Army Dental Corps swelled from 372 to 6,126.

ROYAL HONOURS

In 1946 the corps was renamed. King George VI granted it the prefix "Royal" in recognition of past services.



New era



Deputy
Commander
Field Army,
Maj Gen Celia
Harvey, is one
of only two

Reservist two-star generals
in the Service. She talks to
Soldier about the future...

Q: The recent Reserve Forces Review 2030 (RF30) contains lots of hopes and aspirations but not much in the way of concrete plans, so how seriously should personnel take it?

Maj Gen Harvey:

Very seriously because it marks the start of a new era for the Reserve. It's a document that has to be seen as part of other work going on at the moment, such as the Integrated Review, the Army Command Paper and the People Transformation in Defence project. They all slot together so taking any one of them on their own is not seeing the whole picture. It will take a while to see some of the results of the review because feasibility work must be done on the recommendations but I expect to see a step-

change in the level and range of work undertaken by the Reserve.

Q: The report mentions more flexible terms for Reservists, which many will have high hopes for. How close to reality is this idea?

Maj Gen Harvey:

The Reserve has always been a flexible employer but there is still too much rigidity in the system. What we need to do is formalise the flexibility so someone who is, say, a seasonal employee, working only in the summer, can see clearly what's on offer and how it's possible to serve with the Reserve in the winter and on what terms. It's all part of our overarching goal to attract the best and most diverse talent we can. The Programme Castle team are working

on the details as we speak so I'm not yet in a position to say when this will be delivered.

Q: The Reserves Support Organisation mooted in the report, which among other things would help Reservists prepare to mobilise, sounds great but would depend on their skills being visible. How feasible is this without a skills database?

Maj Gen Harvey:

We do have one actually, at least in part. I started it when I was at Force Troops Command for those in specialist units only. However, I'm now pushing this out to all 30,000 Army Reservists and want to have a complete skills database by the autumn. These troops should access the *Skil* app via Defence Gateway and I'm instructing the chain of command to get all personnel to log all their experience on there, even if some seems irrelevant. We can never tell what skill sets we might need on operations. Who would have thought a year ago the Army would have a use for virologists? It's not just about listing hard

qualifications but soft skills too, like cultural understanding – someone brought up in a foreign culture and environment will understand how people think and feel in that country or region and that could well prove to be a vital attribute for us.

Q: That's especially relevant if something else that came out of RF30 – that Reservists will support the Regular Army more – comes to pass.

Maj Gen Harvey:

Absolutely, and I'm incredibly proud that so many Reservists – more than 3,000 – have been mobilised over the past 12 months, sometimes at incredibly short notice. We had people out of the door, literally in hours, transporting PPE across the country on Op Rescript as well as deploying specialist planners to support the government and NHS. We've also had training teams in Africa, back-to-back tours on Op Tosca in Cyprus and a squadron of Royal Yeomanry on Op Cabrit in Poland. The IR and RF30 mean significantly more responsibility for





the Reserve on homeland resilience operations across a full range of tasks, from pandemics to natural disasters. We must also be ready to support ops and training overseas and, as always, fight alongside the Regular Army in times of war. The Service is going to be committed globally more than ever and the Reserve must be ready and deployable to support that new posture.

Q: Are there any other plans in the pipeline?

Maj Gen Harvey:

Yes, we need to modernise the Army Reserve estate and this is happening already. We have hundreds of centres across the UK but they follow a 20th century blueprint. They are probably spread too thin and not necessarily in the right places now. To get

the best instructors and training you need a critical mass of people so there must be a rationalisation of the infrastructure. We will invest in the busy centres to build on their success, reconstructing some or making major improvements. We have done an audit of the estate but details of what changes are to be made will be finalised in the next few months.

Q: How do you feel about the future now this review is out?

Maj Gen Harvey:

These are bold proposals for change. Much is happening now and much more will follow across key areas as the Reserve becomes more capable and more productive as a professional and valued part of the Army. ■

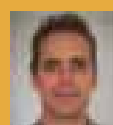
RESERVING JUDGEMENT...

Personnel serving with The Royal Yeomanry put their questions to DCFA



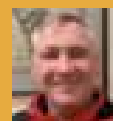
WO1 Ben Roder How will we be able to predict operations for the Reserve with enough lead time to get them trained properly?

Maj Gen Harvey: We know about most of our deployments well before they are scheduled to take place, so there is no reason why we shouldn't be warning off Reserve units 18 months in advance. Any longer than that and an individual's circumstances can change so much it becomes irrelevant, but 18 months out is enough for the soldiers, their employers and their families to get all their ducks in a row. Reservists have very different pressures from their Regular counterparts so we need a readiness cycle that helps units to plan ahead, for training and deployment. This will be an important element of the implementation work.



Maj Dom Ruck Keene Will the Reserve get more resources such as light aid detachments, to continue mounted close combat training?

Maj Gen Harvey: This ties into the readiness cycle I've mentioned. Any unit warned off for operations will be given the training and resources they require in that period to ensure they are ready to go on an operation. Other units will continue to do routine training and receive the right level of support for that. Not everybody needs access to all types of training all the time.



Capt Jason Davies When will the Reservists get their own Virtus body armour issued?

Maj Gen Harvey: Virtus will always be issued to personnel when it's required, as it's needed for operations. Again, it's about directing the right equipment, training and support at the right time, according to need.

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Separated by allowance denial

I COMMISSIONED from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) in December 2020 and for the first five weeks of the junior term I was paid longer separation allowance (LSA).

This is because we were gated and unable to return home and, having prior service as a soldier, I was classed as involuntarily separated.

When Covid-19 hit, the entire academy was gated for the remaining two terms and that continued into 2021.

So, should not all the soldiers on the commissioning course have been entitled to LSA for the period that we were gated, as we were all involuntarily separated?

This allowance is supposed to compensate for not being able to meet up with your family.

Also, get-you-home travel allowance (GYH) was cancelled and I was under the impression that you received one payment or the other if you had an eligible property address.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed as there are many soldiers commissioning from the ranks being denied allowances they are entitled to according to **JSP 752 – 2Lt Dominic Ryan-Gilbank (AGC (ETS))**

Lt Col Jonny Hooper, Army Remuneration Team, Army Headquarters, replies: Officer cadets commissioning from the ranks receive LSA when gated during the initial training because this is a long-established exception to the policy.

After this period, GYH is used to reduce separation between those serving and their families.

Unfortunately, it is removed if they are not able to undertake the journeys for which it is paid. This has been the case for many during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The aim of LSA is to support and improve retention by compensating those personnel experiencing separation over and above that accounted for by the X-Factor element within basic pay.

It is a tri-Service allowance and eligibility during the pandemic was reviewed by the Armed Forces allowance steering group.

The decision to override the separation from the duty station requirement in LSA policy was not given for operationally self-isolating units on Op Rescript.

After this decision was made it was difficult to justify why those in training should be allowed to receive the allowance.

A suite of measures was enacted to support Service personnel during this period (search "Covid directed letter" on Defnet for details) but LSA amendments were not agreed.

There were a variety of operational, training and deployment scenarios where LSA was considered and RMAS has submitted a formal review request.

While exceptional circumstances are acknowledged to exist, this judgement is equally applied across all Services and the restrictions that we are all under. I thank you for raising it and am grateful for your forbearance on this issue.

“
This needs
to be
addressed
”

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SINGULARLY UNFAIR

● THE Army’s over-37 policy states that once a Service person reaches the age of 37 or over they are entitled to free accommodation, should they choose to serve unaccompanied and live in single living accommodation whilst at their duty station.

Amongst the eligibility criteria is that the soldier must be personal status categories one or two – so you are married or in a civil partnership.

Why is it that personnel are being penalised for not being married? I am 37, have a house with a mortgage and am in a long-term relationship.

The fact that I have chosen not to get married doesn’t mean that I’m not in the same domestic situation as someone who has.

It’s 2021, not 1921. civil partnerships have been recognised, so why am I still treated as second rate?

– Sjt Johnathan Cassell, Rifles

Col Louise Green, Army Pay Colonel, Army Headquarters, responds: Thank you for your letter; your understanding of current policy is correct.

When it was introduced, the over-37 package was designed to support soldiers wishing to settle their families in their own homes when approaching retirement after 22 years of service.

It provides financial assistance with relocation and accommodation costs.

Hence, only those in the two categories you have mentioned are entitled. It’s acknowledged that there are groups of personnel with circumstances like yours that are not currently covered.

The future accommodation model and the review of the Army living strategy are both examining the options and costs of changing eligibility to reflect the ways people are choosing to live.

I recognise this does not offer a solution to you in the short term, but I hope it reassures you that this is under active consideration.

GOT A GRIPE?

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Is this an Americanism too far?

I HAVE been reading *Soldier* since 1960, when I was a cadet with Wiltshire ACF, and through all those years I believe this is the first time I’ve thought that someone in the British Army has watched too many American war films.

I’m referring, of course, to the proposal to introduce Rangers – not the regiments that already have this name in their title but the new battalions that are being formed this year.

I’m not in a position to question their purpose, but why name them after the American units formed in the Second World War, which were themselves modelled on the British commandos?

– David Piper, Isle of Wight

Maj Alistair Smith, Strategic Directorate, Army Headquarters, replies: The Rangers draw their name from an elite British Army unit that

fought using irregular tactics in 18th century North America.

We share this heritage with US Special Operations Forces, whose 75th Ranger Regiment traces its lineage back to the same group.

In addition, our Ranger regiment draws on the proud tradition of units and formations honed for unconventional operations such as the Special Service Brigades and the Raiding Support Regiment.

Four other British regiments had “ranger” in their titles – Central London Rangers, The Connaught Rangers, The Royal Irish Rangers and The Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry.

And the term is still used to describe a soldier of The Royal Irish Regiment but its use does not mean they have a specialist ranger role, or that they use unconventional tactics.

“They were modelled on British commandos”

LEAVE POLICY INCONSISTENCY CORRECTED

● I AM moving from non-regular permanent staff (NRPS) to a full-time Reserve service (FTRS) contract and the current regulations say I am not eligible for the ten days’ terminal leave I’ve built up over the past 18 years.

Meanwhile, the regimental sub-unit support officer recently ended one FTRS contract and came back on a new one and received ten days of terminal leave after one year of service. Neither of us can carry forward leave from one contract to another. Why are there these inconsistencies? – Name and address supplied

Col Simon Smith, Personnel Policy, Army Headquarters, replies: Thank you for your letter highlighting this discrepancy. Having looked into the issue a policy inconsistency has been discovered and we intend to rectify this by amending Army policy (*Reserve Land Forces Regulations*, amendment 5, paragraph 01.06.117) to reflect joint policy (*JSP 760 – 14.7*), and therefore ensure that personnel in your position can take accrued terminal leave. In the meantime, please apply to Maj Paul Lamont in Army Personnel Policy for authority to take the time off you’ve amassed.

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

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

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

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



DIARY

June 6: D-Day 77 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire in partnership with The Royal British Legion and the Normandy Memorial Trust. The event will include a live broadcast of the opening of the British Normandy memorial, coverage of the annual service of remembrance at the Bayeux War Cemetery and a two-minute silence at 1100. Access to pre-booked guests only with priority for Normandy veterans and relatives. A live stream will be available. To attend visit britishlegion.org.uk

June 26: Armed Forces Day. SSAFA will host London's only event, the 13 Bridges Challenge, which is encouraging people to walk ten miles through the capital and raise money for the military charity. To sign up visit ssafa.org.uk/13bridges and for more information log on to armedforcesday.org.uk

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

log on to eventbrite.co.uk/e/smspouses-live-harrogate-tickets-151790123345

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

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

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

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



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soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
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afbs-uk.org

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

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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:
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Army Ornithological Society:
armybirding.org.uk

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

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togetherall.com

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

Blind Veterans UK:
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020 7723 5021;
blindveterans.org.uk

Care After Combat:
careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

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:
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Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
erskine.org.uk

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

Forcesline:
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Germany – 0800 1827 395;
Cyprus – 080 91065;
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Forces Pension Society:
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Help for Heroes:
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01980 846 459;
helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
heroeswelcome.co.uk

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

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
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Medal Office:
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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:
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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

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spaces.org.uk

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975;
ssafa.org.uk

Stoll:
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stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400;

nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
poppyfactory.org

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

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

Troop Aid:

0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;
troopaid@icloud.com;
troopaid.info

uk4u Thanks!:

01798 812081;
uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:

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



SEARCHLINE

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

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REVIEWS

MUSIC

TYPHOONS

Rock duo dazzle with disco diversion

➤ WITH two UK number one albums and more than two million sales to their name, fans thought they knew what to expect from rock powerhouses **Royal Blood**.

But such notions were shattered with the release of *Trouble's Coming* last summer, a track that forged the duo's trademark riffs with more danceable beats.

The reaction was positive in the extreme – a point emphasised by the fact the song has been streamed more than 20 million times – and this success has paved the way for their eagerly anticipated third album, *Typhoons*.



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BOOKS



Reflecting on what they wanted to achieve with their latest record, members **Mike Kerr** and **Ben**

Thatcher said they made an effort to return to their roots when they made music influenced by the likes of **Daft Punk** and **Justice**.

They also strived for the back-to-basics approach that made their self-titled debut offering so thrilling.

"We sort of stumbled on this sound, and it was immediately fun to play," Kerr explained. "That's what sparked the creativity on the new album, the chasing of that feeling."

"It's weird, though – if you think back to *Figure it Out*, it kind of contains the embryo of this record."

"We realised that we didn't have to completely destroy what we'd created so far; we just had to shift it, change it."

"On paper, it's a small reinvention. But when you hear it, it sounds so fresh."

The world of disco rock is hardly awash with bands, but Royal Blood's latest effort makes them a pleasant cut above the rest.

Think **White Stripes** meets Daft Punk and you're about right with electro-synth keyboards and guitars on offerings such as *Mad Visions* and *Million and One*.

However, it is the likes of the aforementioned

Trouble's Coming where the true pouty, bombastic attitudes really come to the fore, and the ability certainly meets the delivery.

The glowing beacon of greatness on the album is without doubt *Hold On*, which combines the best bits of everything else into a shoulder-shaker and hip-snaker.

Not since the late noughties have I heard anything similar to this and I was pleasantly impressed throughout. ■



VERDICT:

Disco rock never sounded so good

★★★★★

REVIEW: CPL SCOTT ROBERTS, RIFLES



PICK OF THE MONTH:

GURKHA BROTHERHOOD

Sequel shines a spotlight on Nepalese service

➤ LIKE many before him, Capt Kailash Limbu (RGR) simply wanted a better life for himself and his family when he applied to join the British Army's elite Brigade of Gurkhas in 1999.

At the time he never imagined that 16 years later he would become the de facto face of the formation – having been selected to tell his story during its 200th anniversary celebrations in 2015.

His book *Gurkha* – the first to lift the lid on life as a Nepalese Serviceman – recounted the fierce combat he and his comrades saw in Afghanistan, becoming a *Sunday Times* bestseller in the process.

But he felt there was more to say and, six years on, has published a sequel – *Gurkha Brotherhood* – which delves deeper into his childhood in the remote mountains of Nepal and celebrates his country's heritage of courage and service.

"I got lots of nice feedback from the first book and that inspired me to write the second part of the journey," he tells *Soldier*.

"This is more from the inside, about what I felt when I was fighting and leading young men into battle, when I was only a young man myself."

"And it's about our brotherhood, how we fought together – and my family story."

The insights into his upbringing reveal how Limbu was no stranger to peril even before joining the Army, with landslides and freak weather a constant threat to life.

It also lays bare the wrench of leaving village



● *Gurkha Brotherhood*, by Capt Kailash Limbu (RGR), is out now, published by Michael O'Mara Books and priced £20

and family far behind to enlist, as well as the considerable culture shock recruits experience upon arrival in the UK.

Having come full circle – he currently serves at Catterick's Infantry Training Centre and has overseen the selection course in Pokhara – he now finds himself helping the young soldiers following in his footsteps.

"It's such an honour to pass on my knowledge to the next generation," he beams.

"To see how they are feeling reminds me that 21 years ago I was exactly the same as them.

"I can see their excitement and also their sense of homesickness – I was homesick leaving my parents for such a long time, and didn't know what to expect.

"So I try to guide them and tell them not to worry about things and that we will be like their parents for them."

While Capt Limbu says not much has changed

about the recruitment process since he joined, he is hopeful that he will witness a significant milestone during his time at Catterick – the first intake of Nepalese Servicewomen.

"I think it's a great opportunity for females and they will make fantastic soldiers if the government allow," he adds.

"I'm excited to see how it develops – I'd love to train the first female recruits."

One day soon a sisterhood may well take its place alongside the "Gurkha Brotherhood" in the annals of British Army history.

But in the meantime, this book is a humbling and often moving reminder of just what these youngsters go through to join its ranks – and what they sacrifice once they are in to continue the proud tradition of their forefathers. ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER

BOOK RELEASES

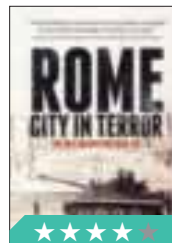


Losing the Battle, Winning the War by Ben Parkinson

WHAT Ben Parkinson (ex-Para) has achieved since he was seriously injured in a mine strike in 2006 is formidable.

The physical and mental challenges he has overcome – while working to help other veterans and disabled people – are truly awe-inspiring. However, the really exceptional thing is his mindset and attitude, as shown in this book. His story is well known, but the thoughts he shares here really make this a must read. I couldn't recommend it any higher, not just as a military memoir, but as a lesson in positivity and overcoming adversity.

Sgt Adam Jackson, Para



Rome: City in Terror by Victor Failmezger

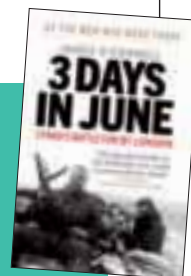
OUT this month in paperback, this book provides an extensive look at the nine months the Nazis occupied Rome in 1943-44 after Italy's surrender. During this

dangerous period thousands of Italians were either deported if they were Jewish, taken for slave labour or murdered, while the Vatican had to balance helping people with appeasing the Germans. Among all this was a large group of escaped Allied POWs, living in the city under the noses of their enemy. I highly recommend this fascinating account of a very difficult wartime period.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

WIN... A Falklands War book

WE'VE teamed up with Monoray – part of Octopus Publishing Group – to give away two copies of *Three Days in June*, former paratrooper James O'Connell's vivid oral history of the Battle for Mount Longdon. Shot in the face during the assault, O'Connell had years of reconstructive surgery and left the Army in 1985 as a result of his injuries. He later pieced together his own experiences and those of his comrades to tell the story of the battle from multiple angles. To be in with a chance of winning a copy, tell us what year the Falklands War took place. Answers to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk or the usual postal address by June 30.



PODCASTS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

OVERCOMING

New series marks the ten-year anniversary of Walking With the Wounded

► PODCASTING seems to fall into two broad categories of disaster.

The first – and by far the most painful – is defined by the fame-drunk TV personality. Desperate to have their take on life heard by any means possible, they arm themselves up to the teeth with a stack of professional recording equipment that allows them to ramble on for hours, unhindered by anyone or anything.

If, like my colleagues at *Soldier*, you have ever questioned the existence of editors as a species, please tune in to one of these horror shows and prepare to eat your words.

Programme ideas that, with a bit of professional direction, could have created 20 minutes of compelling content instead become rambling epics that catapult you into an existential crisis far beyond the realms of the spoken word.

However, podcasters can also slip up at the other end of the production spectrum, with offerings that feel amateurish, unpredictable and – as a result – uncomfortable.

It is a pity that so many in this category never get the audience they deserve, as it seems this is often where you find the subject matter gold – characters whose life experience makes them far more worthy of a platform than someone who stumbled upon stardom.

On the face of it, Walking With the Wounded's new monthly podcast *Overcoming* falls into the second of these two groupings.

Focusing on those who have been through extraordinary things, its first two programmes have a rather shaky, unpolished feel that leaves you slightly unsure as to whether you have invested your time wisely.

However, the topic soon takes over and guest host Duncan Slater (ex-RAF) – the first double leg amputee to complete the Marathon des Sables – becomes compelling as he chats through the sorts of issues that will have preoccupied many Servicemen and women at some point in their military careers.

From promotion and operations to resettlement and recovery, Slater's frank and insightful



conversations take on the feel of a brew-time chat – the sort everyone has been craving in recent times.

In episode one, he details a “bit of a bad day” when he was caught in an explosion on operations in Afghanistan.

“I thought the whole platoon had been taken out and I was the last person alive,” he reveals, before recalling the fateful moment of his life-changing injury.

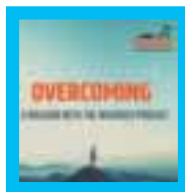
The laidback tone of this podcast is not exactly unique in the world of audio programming, but the individuals it profiles are.

Fergus Williams, CEO of Walking With the Wounded, hopes *Overcoming* will reveal the sorts of people that shape his charity's work staging expeds and supporting veterans.

“The new podcast is a chance for us to share some of the incredible stories from people across the whole organisation,” he commented.

Relaxed and without a sniff of self-indulgence, the first two episodes in this compelling series come recommended.

People who are genuinely more interested in each other than themselves, it turns out, require minimal editing. ■



VERDICT:

A decent podcast offering – stick it on with a brew
★★★★★

REVIEW: SARAH GOLDTHORPE, *SOLDIER*

If you liked *Overcoming*, try one of these recently released audio offerings...

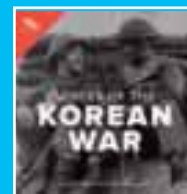


Tea and Medals

Out now

PRODUCED by media organisation and Forces' charity

BFBS, *Tea and Medals* follows former soldier Darren Coventry (ex-AGC (RMP)) as he talks to men and women who've received the UK's highest military honours. They describe the stories behind their acts of courage, bravery and valour and the series also incorporates witness accounts of the incidents that prompted such accolades. Episode one, which was released as this issue went to press, tells the story of Cpl Chris Balmforth (QRH) who was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery in Iraq. He describes how he fought off up to ten heavily armed terrorists and saved the lives of four of his comrades when his Land Rover was ambushed by rebels in Basra.



Voices of the Korean War

Out now

RECOLLECTIONS of the Battle of the Imjin River

during the Korean War form the basis for the latest podcast from ABF The Soldiers' Charity. Following on from episodes covering VE Day, VJ Day and the Gulf War, this offering features interviews from veterans who fought on the front line, along with input from famed military historian **Max Hastings**, as they mark the campaign's 70th anniversary. It proved to be the bloodiest battle endured by the British Army since the Second World War. Heavily outnumbered by Chinese forces, troops of 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment valiantly held their position for three days before they were forced to retreat amid heavy casualties, with 527 men taken as prisoners of war.



GAMES

GAMES RELEASES

PICK OF THE MONTH:

MotoGP 21

Bike bonanza powers into top gear

▶ THE past 12 months have been unprecedented for sport – with Covid restrictions seeing events held behind closed doors, postponed or even canned altogether.

Nothing has been spared, from the local to the global, in a year that has, by all accounts, been a hugely disappointing period for a legion of sporting fans in exile.

Thankfully, however, the console motor racing calendar has been unaffected.

With everything from the World Rally Championship to the iconic Isle of Man TT played out in the virtual realm, there has been plenty to please petrolheads.

Now the acclaimed *Moto GP* series is back for another fix of motorcycle mayhem – and riders already twitching their thumb-stick throttles will not be disappointed.

Italian developer Milestone has once again delivered a polished offering, although it is squarely aimed at fans rather than casual racers, who are likely to find themselves dismounted and flying before the first bend.

But the committed will find rich rewards, with the opportunity to take a lead role both as rider and the squad boss responsible for those critical off-track decisions.

Aspiring managers will find official teams aplenty – or one can be built completely from scratch – to compete within the series. Success in part depends on picking the most capable staff, from chief engineers to data analysts.

Those saddling up for a spell on the grid, on the other hand, can expect to be tested to their limits

as they take part in a series of races with terrifying levels of speed.

Control loss is inevitable for the uninitiated and has a tendency to send rider and machinery hurtling in opposite directions, meaning an on-foot dash to remount is required.

Among the options, riders will find a testing career mode allowing them to fight through the ranks. Success breeds cash through the likes of sponsorship, which helps too.

Soldier sampled the Xbox incarnation of the game and was suitably impressed with the near-seamless blend of high-octane action and strategy.

A polished offering in every respect, *MotoGP 21* is an essential purchase for fans of two-wheeled motorsport. The graphics are outstanding, with the overall presentation providing a similar feel to full television coverage, while bike dynamics are fiercely well simulated.

Despite the savage race pace, controls are relatively straightforward and easy to master. Assists are turned on automatically and a useful rewind feature allows players to backtrack after mistiming moves and refine their racing lines. We found this particularly useful given our persistent late braking errors.

While working through a race series is certainly the most satisfying way to play, there are less time consuming modes, including one-off grand prix events and time trials. There are also opportunities to venture online for a multiplayer showdown.

It all adds up to a solid offering with a depth of gameplay that promises longevity in abundance. Persistence certainly pays off in a title providing both style and substance. ■

VERDICT:

A virtual bike racer's dream

★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*
and SGT BEN MAHER, *RLC*

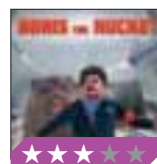


Total War: Rome Remastered For PC

ORIGINALLY released when the real-time strategy genre was still a novel concept, this offering gave armchair commanders the chance to

direct the armies of antiquity. Now – in a makeover for the 2020s – *Total War: Rome* has been re-issued with overhauled graphics plus gameplay improvements. There are also 16 new factions to play as well as all existing downloadable content included. *Total War: Rome* was credible on release 17 years ago, with a mixture of solid research, gameplay depth and simple control interface. This reworked incarnation holds the same integrity, from single battles to full-on campaigns.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Boris the Rocket For Switch

PLACED in the boots of a hapless scientist forced to work on a missile defence

project, this bizarre first-person outing sees players handed the onerous task of protecting Mother Russia from the threat of nuclear apocalypse. Averting Armageddon in *Boris the Rocket* revolves around identifying incoming ordnance and configuring Patriot-type projectiles to destroy it in flight. In practical terms, this means a charge between a series of stations in a depressing Cold War base and flicking the right combination of switches. Ultimately, it all boils down to a series of against-the-clock logic problems – ending with your bunker disappearing under a mushroom cloud if you fail. It's an acquired taste, but this will certainly appeal to problem solvers and the leftfield humour made me smile. If you enjoy it, then check out *Papers Please* – a similarly bonkers offering that gives players the role of an officious communist passport controller.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

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SOLDIER SPORT



BACK IN THE GAME >>

ARMY sport resumed last month, with the Inter-Corps Twenty20 Cricket Championships among the first events played. It proved to be a memorable final for the Royal Artillery, who survived an early scare with the bat to seal the title. See page 69 for the full report...



ARTINGSTALL PRIMED FOR FRESH QUALIFYING QUEST

HAVING seen her initial Olympic qualifying bid dramatically halted on the eve of stepping into the ring, boxer Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) returns to the spotlight this month on a mission to complete her objective.

The Team GB fighter was weighed-in and ready for action at the European qualifiers in London last March only for the competition to be suddenly scrapped as the UK's Covid crisis worsened and lockdown measures were introduced.

Few could have predicted the impact the move would have on the soldier's sporting career as she would ultimately wait more than 18 months for her next competitive bout, while dealing with a number of setbacks along the way.

"At the start people quite enjoyed it," the 26-year-old told *SoldierSport* as she reflected on her lockdown experience.

"It gave us the chance for some downtime and allowed us to reset and regroup.

"But as the months ticked by it got more and more frustrating and eventually became a rollercoaster of emotions.

"I've laughed, I've cried – I've been through everything.

"We've been trying to get out to different tournaments.

"You get in shape, make the weight and prepare yourself mentally for getting in the ring.

"Then, a couple of days before flying out, you get the call to say the competition has been cancelled. Everything has been up in the air but all you can do is keep your head down and continue training."

Artingstall, who in 2019 won bronze at the World Championships and silver at the European Championships, made her long awaited comeback at last month's Grand Prix event in the Czech Republic and a swift



**"I KNOW
I CAN
BEAT
ANYONE
AT
57KG"**

return to form soon followed.

The 57kg fighter won all three of her bouts to qualify for the final but withdrew from the contest's gold-medal match to nurse a minor injury.

"It was all about shaking off any ring rust," she explained. "But at the same time, you want to win the fights. Nobody goes in the ring to lose, and I treat every bout like a final.

"It also gave me the chance to go through the emotions that surround a tournament and manage my nerves as I walk to the ring.

"I was not as bad as I thought I was going to be.

"When I was young I suffered terribly with nerves; on this occasion I had some but I dealt with them quite well.

"I won three out of three fights, so it could not have gone any better. To be honest, it was a bit of a blur and I haven't had chance to watch them back, but I

obviously did well enough to get the victories.

"There were a lot of good European teams there, so it was a beneficial experience for me moving forward."

With her comeback complete, Artingstall is now focused on the rearranged Olympic qualifying tournament, which gets under way on June 4 in Paris.

She will guarantee her Games place with victories over Belarus in the preliminary round and possibly Bulgaria in the first-round proper, but further progress is in sight as it will help improve her seeding at the main event in Tokyo.

"I've boxed Belarus and Bulgaria before and have beaten them both," the soldier added. "Obviously, anything can happen, but I've put the graft in and I know I am capable of beating anyone at 57kg.

"The prospect of qualifying for the Olympics is something I cannot put into words – it is the absolute pinnacle of the sport.

"But for now, it is about stepping stones and I just have to focus on qualifying. Once I've got that out of the way I can think about trying to win a medal.

"There are a handful of good girls in my division – it is the same in every weight category – and it all comes down to who turns up on the day." ■



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FOLLOWERS ON THE ASCB'S TWITTER PAGE. JOIN UP FOR THE LATEST NEWS AND DETAILS OF UPCOMING FIXTURES AND EVENTS

6k



WAITING GAME REWARDED

THE Army Sport Control Board's (ASCB) chief of staff has spoken of his delight at seeing representative fixtures resume following the latest easing of national coronavirus restrictions.

When the government confirmed the go-ahead of step three in its roadmap out of lockdown last month the Service was in a position to start sanctioning events – with the Inter-Corps Twenty20 Cricket Championships (see page 69) and Edwards Cup women's football among the first to proceed.

"It is great news," Lt Col (Retd) Paul Leighton told *SoldierSport*. "We have all been waiting for this.

"It has been an intensive period for all Army sports, and they have done a great job.

"Not only have they had to follow government policy, but they've had guidance from national governing bodies on top of that.

"Every representative fixture

and training session has to be signed off by the ASCB. It is a labour-intensive process and we are hoping that once we get to step four the restrictions will be relaxed.

"But it has been worth it, and it is fantastic to see people out playing again."

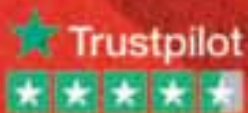
Tug of war, rugby union and league, open water swimming, netball and athletics were among the latest disciplines to be signed off, meaning more than half of the Army's recognised sports now have the green light to resume.

However, overseas tours and visits remain suspended until June 30 at the earliest and Leighton said the ASCB is committed to seeing these return as soon as it is safe.

"They have been suspended since March last year," he added. "The different sports have been making and amending plans throughout the various lockdowns and we have the aspiration to get them up and running again." ■

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GUNNERS DUO DELIVER IN PERFECTLY PACED CHASE

AN EXPERTLY judged 138-run partnership between Lt Oliver Cross and LBdr Craig Ross guided the Royal Artillery to victory in the final of the Inter-Corps Twenty20 Cricket Championships in Aldershot.

Set a target of 138 to beat the Adjutant General's Corps, the Gunners made the worst possible start as they slipped to 2/3 in the third over as the opposition attack wreaked havoc early on.

But after steadying the ship the fourth-wicket pairing eased through the gears to keep the run rate in check, before reaching the total with two deliveries to spare.

However, the challenge could have been greater had the AGC fully capitalised on their initial momentum with the bat.

Openers Cpl Varun Bali and Pte Shoiab Alam raced to 25 inside three overs as they made the most of the early fielding restrictions but paceman LBdr Nick Schofield held his nerve to

remove both batsmen.

Cpl MD Latafat and Cpl Liam Farrell posted a 30-run stand as the AGC looked to regain control but when three wickets fell for just seven runs – one to a stunning catch by Ross – they again found themselves with work to do.

Some big hitting by Cpl Sumith Surendran and SSgt Reagan McLean provided some late-innings impetus and a total of 137-7 looked competitive in challenging conditions.

It was a score that assumed even greater significance when the AGC made a dramatic start in the field.

Gunners' opener LBdr Harrison Clark was bowled by Surendran from the fourth ball of the innings and the pressure continued to build as skipper Capt Alex Park suffered the same fate in a wicket maiden from SSgt Sean Solomon.

And when Army ace Bdr Graham Wiseman became

INTER-CORPS
T20 CRICKET

AGC

137/7

RA

140/3



Surendran's second scalp the champions-elect were in trouble.

But they found calm heads in the shape of Cross (pictured above) and Ross and the duo set about repairing the damage with a steady accumulation of runs.

With a partnership formed, the boundaries started to follow and Cross assumed the role of aggressor as he finished with an unbeaten 78 from 61 deliveries that included nine fours and a six. Ross was 47 not out.

"With new players coming into the squad this is a great result and sets us up for the season to come," Park told *SoldierSport*.

"I was confident at the halfway point and 138 felt like an achievable target on this pitch. I was rattled when we slipped to 2/3 but had confidence in the guys and the depth of our team.

"The partnership between Cross and Ross showed that you can have a slight tumble and still be okay in this format." ■

SPORT SHORTS



Ring return moves nearer

THE Service's boxers are hoping to return to the gym later this month, subject to confirmation of conditions by England Boxing, the Army Sport Control Board and other authorities.

Having been away from their Aldershot base since March 2020, the fighters already have a date to work towards following news that the English National Amateur Championships will go ahead later in the year, with finals days scheduled for mid-December.

Army boxers will compete in individual qualifiers in November.

It is also hoped the squad will revert to a more traditional programme after Christmas, with the next UK Armed Forces Championships provisionally set for late March 2022.



Making up for lost time

AFTER seeing its initial races cancelled, the Army cross country mountain bike scene is stepping up a gear with four events planned between now and the end of the summer.

The riders were in action in Wimbish as this issue went to press and will face further tests in Edinburgh on June 9, at Sherwood Pines on July 7 and in Aldershot on July 21. A grand enduro leg has also been scheduled for August 4 at Milland, Hampshire.

For further information search "Brit Army Cycling" on social media or email james.cooper431@mod.gov.uk



Pictures: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

LEAGUE LAUNCH SEES REDS RETURN



**"IT IS
GREAT
TO BE
PLAYING
AGAIN"**

HAVING not played in almost two years, the Army women's rugby league team return to action this month in a new competition aimed at growing the sport.

The Women's Super League South will see the soldiers take on the London Broncos and Bedford Tigers in the contest's eastern conference, with the top placed teams going on to face their rivals from the west in a bid to be crowned overall champions.

Their inclusion comes on the back of an impressive 2019 when they won the Challenge Shield ahead of a victorious run in the Inter-Services.

However, the Covid-19 outbreak saw their 2020 schedule wiped out, meaning they have not set foot on the pitch since they lifted the Forces trophy.

Head coach WO2 Woz Broadley (RLC) has welcomed the launch of the new Super League format and told *SoldierSport* his team will start among the favourites.

"It is a fantastic opportunity for Army Rugby League and the women's game," he added. "It is great to be playing again, especially at a decent standard,

and this will hopefully help the sport's growth in the military and across the country as well."

However, with a number of players now contracted to sides in the full Super League – the latest of which has seen LBdr Abby Eatock (RA) and Pte Freya Hellin (RAMC) join Wigan Warriors – Broadley will be looking to the Army's wider talent pool to bolster the squad ahead of their opening clash with London Broncos on June 19.

The set-up was due to hold a pre-tournament training camp as this issue went to press and the coach said spirits have been high – despite the lengthy layoff.

"We've kept everyone together with Zoom meetings and online coaching sessions and there is a real appetite to get back," the senior NCO added.

"We've had messages from girls across the Army wanting to put their name forward – they saw our successes in 2019 and are keen to get involved."

Elsewhere, SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) was among the scorers as St Helens beat Leeds Rhinos in the Challenge Cup semi-finals.

They will face York in the final on June 5. ■

HULL FC IN NUMBERS

YEARS SINCE THE CLUB WAS FORMED

156

CHALLENGE CUP TITLES IN THE TEAM'S HISTORY - THE MOST RECENT CAME IN 2017

5

LEAGUE POSITION ACHIEVED LAST SEASON BEFORE LOSING IN THE PLAY-OFF SEMI-FINALS

6

THE SQUAD NUMBER ALLOCATED TO GNR MITIELI VULIKIJAPANI

27

TRIES SCORED BY PTE RATU NAULAGO IN 34 MATCHES DURING HIS TWO-YEAR SPELL

23

MONTH IN SPORT

June's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Unit Rugby League Nines
WHEN: June 9
WHERE: Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: A total

of 28 teams have already signed up for this short-format showdown, which features a day of cup, plate, shield and bowl competitions



WHAT: Army Inter-Corps and Individual Athletics Championships
WHEN: June 15 and 16
WHERE: Military Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The competition is being held over two days to allow for social distancing. Athletes will be looking to hit form with the Inter-Services looming in July



WHAT: Inter-Services Women's T20 Cricket Championships
WHEN: June 29
WHERE: Arundel
NEED TO KNOW: With the Royal Navy sitting out the

2021 campaign, the Army face the Royal Air Force in a winner-takes-all match to decide the first major silverware of the new season

Picture: Allan McKenzie/SPix.com

CROSSING THE RUGBY DIVIDE

RUGBY league convert Gnr Mitielei Vulikijapani (RA) is looking to make a name for himself at the domestic game's highest level after signing with Hull FC.

The outside back impressed during a trial period with the Super League outfit earlier this year – an effort that was rewarded with a one-year deal that has seen him step back from his Army commitments to become a full-time athlete.

Vulikijapani caught the eye with a string of impressive performances in rugby union's sevens code – winning the Premiership title with Saracens in 2018 before lining up for Harlequins last season – and it was this form that brought him to Hull's attention.

The move mirrors the one made by Pte Ratu Naulago (Yorks) in 2019, who enjoyed a successful two-year spell before moving to Bristol Bears, and the soldier is relishing the opportunity of performing on the elite stage.

"I was a little nervous at

first," the 26-year-old told *SoldierSport*. "I had only ever played rugby league for my regiment, never at the top level.

"But I was happy to get the chance. In many ways it is like sevens and we have a lot of experienced boys who have played in the National Rugby League in Australia, so it is a good place to learn.

"I've made a lot of improvements since day one and I want to thank the Army for releasing me."

With Vulikijapani quickly adapting to his new surroundings he is now looking to strengthen his case for a place in the squad and minutes on the pitch.

He added: "I'm working very hard and am just waiting for that game time to come.

"I'd like to think I'm getting close to the squad."

The soldier was handed the opportunity to gain further experience when he completed a loan move to Bradford Bulls as this issue went to press. ■



CUP CANCELLATIONS

WHILE representative fixtures resumed last month, the Army Football Association has announced that its flagship competitions will not be contested this season.

The decision to cancel the Major and Minor Units Challenge Cups, which were due to recommence after Easter leave, was made after Army HQ limited fixtures to intra-garrison level up until May 17.

With the limitations this placed on the matches still to be played, a move to shelve the tournaments was made.

However, the men's Massey Trophy corps league has resumed, and all teams will play each other once, with promotion and relegation from the two divisions to be decided at the end of the current campaign.

The Woolwich Cup has been cancelled but the women's corps knockout competition, the Edwards Cup, continues this month, with the final scheduled for June 23.

The Army FA hopes to complete all outstanding activity for 2020/21 by June 30.



BIRCHNALL BOWS OUT AS REDS BOSS



**"THE
TEAM
IS IN A
GOOD
PLACE"**

AFTER spending more than three decades in uniform Maj Sean Birchnall (RLC) is calling time on his military career and with it his tenure as head coach of the Army men's football team.

He will bid farewell to Service life in the coming months and leaves with an impressive sporting CV to his name.

As head coach of the Royal Logistic Corps, the officer guided the squad to four Massey League titles as well as two Woolwich Cup crowns, and was part of the Army Under-23s backroom team as the soldiers tasted Inter-Services glory.

He was appointed to the senior role in 2018 and added another Forces title to his haul in his first season in charge.

"I joined up in 1990 and was playing Army youth football a year later," Birchnall told *SoldierSport*. "I did my coaching course in 1998 and once you go down that path you always have the aspiration of being Army head coach.

"It is the pinnacle of the game and to make it to that level is

quite an achievement."

Birchnall ranked the Reds' clash with the German Bundeswehr (pictured above) in 2018's Games of Remembrance among the highlights of his time at the helm, along with a convincing 3-0 win over the Royal Air Force in his debut Inter-Services fixture.

"As a Nottingham Forest fan, to play the Germans at the City Ground in my first game in charge was unbelievable," he recalled. "It was such a big occasion, with 10,000 fans in the stadium.

"From there we went on to win the Inter-Services – it was a brilliant time."

However, Birchnall was unable to capitalise on the momentum as the Covid-19 pandemic ended his hopes of adding further Forces' silverware to his haul.

"It is disappointing," he added. "It was a three-year post and as a coach you set different challenges for each season.

"But the team is in a good place – we are definitely the best side in Forces football." ■

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I'm with 5th Regiment and we are all about tracking targets, but much of our sensor kit is static so we have to stop and set it up. I wish more of it could be integrated into vehicles and operated on the move, which would improve our mobility.

Lt Fergus Nimmo



A wireless system for the lightweight counter-mortar radar would be a great development as it would give the crew manning it a better stand-off distance and the ability to stay mobile. At the moment the kit is wired up.

Bdr Ian Bloomfield



Our fleet of Pinzgauers could be improved or updated because they get worked very hard and can suffer with niggles. We're trying out Jackals and while they are capable, they have no cover and you can't fit a full detachment inside them.

LBdr Ryan Fillingham



Our J-TAS surveillance system is a great bit of equipment with thermal imaging and laser range finder. But ideally it would be smaller and lighter.

Gnr Bernard Bretagne

I want a laptop-sized man-portable surveillance and target acquisition radar. The current system is very capable but is pretty old and bulky.

Capt Adam Naismith



Getting into gear

Royal Artillery troops talk dream kit upgrades

I'd like to see a way of remotely doing rebroadcast for a comms network to extend the range or work around obstructions. We do it manually, but it would be great if we had a drone with that function that could go out and position itself automatically.

Capt Chris Morris



During the pandemic Veterans Aid remained fully operational.

Here is a snapshot of what we achieved.

19,243

Nights of accommodation
for veterans in crisis.



1,862

Interactions with veterans from
around the UK & worldwide.



227

Veterans supported into
housing.



102

Veterans into work or onto
training courses.



70

Veterans helped into
detox/rehab.



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Official Fuel Consumption Figures for the Range Rover Evoque exd. PHEV in mpg (l/100km): Combined 29.3-46.7 (9.8-6). WLTP CO₂ Emissions 217-158g/km. Range Rover Evoque PHEV Range in mpg (l/100km): Combined 141 - 141 (2-2). WLTP CO₂ Emissions: 44-44g/km. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's tests in accordance with EU legislation. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO₂ and fuel economy figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental conditions, load and accessories. Range figures are based upon production vehicle over a standardised route. All features mentioned are optional, please speak to your Retailer for more.