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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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FREE STUFF . . . get your hands on a copy of Deryck Howell's Second World War action novel *Target Mussolini*, bank yourself £100 (Page 59) and embark on a war of destruction in a world split in two by a massive earthquake in PS3 third-person shooter *Fracture* (Page 75).



Cover picture (left): Paratroopers from 5 Platoon, B Company, 3 Para storm a compound during Op Eagle's Summit. See Pages 17-19

Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC

Background image: The Pathfinder Platoon on a Jackal patrol in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan.

See Page 33 Picture: Pathfinders

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"Cripes . . . I've only been for a five-minute coffee break and I get done for parking!"

● War games – Pages 39

Bald courage

FOR someone who started out pulling pints, picking fights and avoiding the wrath of Peggy, Ross Kemp has done a remarkably good job in reinventing himself as a serious reporter.

Since ditching his Eastenders alter-ego of publican Grant Mitchell, Bafta award-winner Kemp has won plaudits as a documentary maker, not least for the critically-acclaimed look at life in the Taliban's lair in Sky One's *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*.

As suggested in this month's vox pop (Page 90), the shaven-headed media man's bulletins from theatre were not just popular with civvies unaccustomed to the sharp end of operations in Helmand province. They also struck a chord with soldiers who have been there, done it and got the tour T-shirt.

But during an exclusive interview at Camp Bastion (Page 12) – where Kemp was filming his eagerly-anticipated second series – he said that no matter how good his documentaries are, they can never truly convey life in theatre.

Walford's finest may have a point. Doing justice to the thousands of men and women spread across southern Afghanistan is virtually impossible in the relatively short windows of time journalists spend in theatre.

Oversubscribed flights and inclement weather throw further spanners into the works for reporters by making it tricky to reach the forward operating bases where

some of the meatiest stories originate.

It is for precisely this reason the brave work that has been done by the likes of 2 Para – who have spent six months at the operational coal face, tackling the Taliban head-on and suffering several losses along the way – has not received the widespread acclaim it undoubtedly deserves.

Not that we wish to whinge, of course. Our team returned to *Soldier* HQ from last month's visit to 16 Air Assault Brigade with enough copy to fill two issues without even leaving the hubs of Camp Bastion, Lashkar Gar and Kandahar Airfield.

From first-hand information about the British Forces' largest op since deploying to Afghanistan in 2006 (Pages 17-19), to a padre's praise for the medical miracles performed on a regular basis at Bastion (Page 25), we hope this month's magazine shines a light on those making a difference throughout theatre.

Away from the front line, some of rugby's biggest names, including former *Soldier* cover star Martin Johnson, came out of retirement for one match only to play in a charity game in front of tens of thousands of fans at Twickenham, helping to raise £1.1 million for Help for Heroes in the process.

Proof, if it were needed, that while the Great British public may not always get eyes on the warts-and-all reality of life under fire, they are increasingly grateful to the men and women who put their lives on the line. ■

**'Walford's finest
may have a point'**



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Soldiers build on Herrick progress

Reconstruction schemes blossom as mentors show the way in Helmand

AFGHAN governance and reconstruction have grown markedly two years on from 16 Air Assault Brigade's first expedition to Helmand province, according to a senior officer.

Speaking from brigade HQ in the provincial capital Lashkar Gar, Chief of Staff Maj Simon Gilderson told *Soldier* the country still had a long way to go but that it had "developed significantly".

The brigade led the initial British task force to southern Afghanistan in the summer of 2006 and returned this year with more troops and kit to a well established theatre.

Maj Gilderson said that there was now a greater recognition of the competence of Afghan institutions as well as the security forces.

"The Afghan National Army has grown from a small, fledgling organisation two years ago to a very capable and much larger one now," he added. "There's space and a requirement for improvement but they are coming on."

"The Afghan governor here is a proper technocrat. He comes with a good team and if you get the governance right, everything else will follow."

With the 2nd and 5th Battalions of The Royal Regiment of Scotland continuing to drive the Taliban further away from the Lashkar Gar area, British-led provincial reconstruction teams have begun work on facilities such as roads, schools and health clinics.

Maj Gilderson said: "A lot has been achieved. Sangin has developed significantly and so has Musa Qala. We're beginning to expand those security zones and develop those areas."

The Chief of Staff also praised the work that everyone had put into making the brigade's second tour of southern Afghanistan a success.

"It's very much a team effort that we've been able to build up to. The Brigade commander's intent was clearly understood by everyone so we've been able to build on delivering the tour through some very good training."

"In that respect it's good to see it go through the full process from start to finish," Maj Gilderson concluded.



Picture: Steve Dock

Training team: British soldiers have been helping to transform Afghan security forces out in the field

Sun man calls for nominations

READERS of *Soldier* should not hold back from entering a new Services awards ceremony being run by *The Sun*, according to one of the paper's leading journalists.

Defence Editor Tom Newton-Dunn said late nominations for *The Sun Military Awards* would be considered, especially from personnel on ops.

Anyone can nominate troops for one of the so-called "Millies", which recognise actions over the last 12 months.

While nominations for the awards closed on September 22, Newton-Dunn called on *Soldier* readers to make contact.

He added: "We really want to hear from everybody that we possibly can so that we can present the very best shortlist to the judges in the competition."

"Remember that now is not the time for

modesty – you do that all the year round. We will accept late nominations, especially from those on operations."

Newton-Dunn said more than a thousand nominations for the 12 award categories of the Millies had been received just days after the competition was announced.

The winners will be presented with their awards in a televised ceremony just before Christmas. The event is being dedicated to the fallen of the past year.

The awards finals will also be attended by a number of senior officers. Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, the Chief of the Defence Staff, said Forces personnel displayed professionalism and courage that were "second to none".

● See www.thesun.co.uk

Troops mourn loss of two more Paras

But commanders vow Army will prevail on the front line of Afghanistan

TROOPS from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have been remembering two colleagues killed on southern Afghanistan's front line within 24 hours of each other.

Pte Jason Rawstron died after the patrol he was on was involved in an exchange of fire with Taliban fighters near Forward Operating Base Gibraltar on September 12.

Colleague LCpl Nicky Mason was killed in an explosion while on a routine patrol near Kajaki the following day.

Commanders said both men were capable, professional and committed to the dangerous mission in Afghanistan.

Originally from Clayton-Le-Moors in Lancashire, Pte Rawstron joined the Army in 2005, becoming a rifleman with 2 Para after completing his infantry training in Catterick.

The 23-year-old, who was a qualified Infantry Assault Engineer, had been marked out for his professionalism in



● Pte Jason Rawstron



● LCpl Nicky Mason

Helmand province. The tour had been his first operational deployment.

Essex-born LCpl Mason, who was 26, signed up for the Army in 2001 and soon became a valued member of 2 Para's specialist reconnaissance platoon.

Exceptionally fit and a skilled boxer, he had already completed a tour of Northern Ireland and two deployments to Iraq before embarking on Op Herrick.

Remembered as being tough and committed, he had set his sights on the

selection course to join the Special Reconnaissance Regiment on his return.

Lt Col Joe O'Sullivan, CO of 2 Para, paid tribute to the two men, adding that his thoughts were with their families and many friends.

The CO said of Pte Rawstron: "He was tough, resourceful and fearless under the fire he had experienced so often.

"We hope that what he was, and what he, his friends and his battalion stood for and have achieved in the most demanding of summers will in some way bring them comfort."

Of LCpl Mason, he added: "Those who celebrate the operation to move the turbine to Kajaki [see Pages 17-19] should reflect on the courage of those who were there beforehand and Nicky Mason who has given his life there.

"The battalion will remember him as it remembers all the other members of the battlegroup, and our thoughts are now with his family."

Insurgent bombs claim experienced soldiers

A **DECORATED** bomb disposal expert, who was killed protecting comrades as he attempted to diffuse an IED, has been hailed as an "amazing man".

WO2 Gary "Gaz" O'Donnell died after a device exploded while his team from the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group were clearing a route in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The NCO, who was from Edinburgh and serving with 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment RLC, had been called to Musa Qala to deal with the confirmed bomb on September 10.

WO2 O'Donnell joined the Army's ammunition technical trade in 1992 and was singled out for his exceptional ability.

Qualified to deal with high-threat situations, the 40-year-old had been on operations in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The married father-of-four, who was awarded the George Medal for his bomb disposal work in 2006, was remembered as a consummate professional.

Lt Col Dave Wilson, Commander of the Joint Force Engineer Group, recalled that



● Rgr Justin Cupples



● WO2 Gaz O'Donnell

WO2 O'Donnell was "a real character and natural leader of men".

He added: "Hugely talented and unbelievably brave, he was at the very top of his extremely dangerous and difficult trade.

"It was his passion and he took immense pride in making places safer for other people, and the danger to his own life rarely seemed to affect him."

● **SOLDIERS** in Helmand have been reflecting on the life of a gifted and experienced fellow professional who was killed in an explosion while on patrol.

Rgr Justin Cupples, of the 1st Battalion,

The Royal Irish Regiment, was fatally injured when an IED detonated in the Helmand town of Sangin on September 4.

An experienced soldier, Rgr Cupples was born in America and served with the US Navy during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He later moved from Miami to his family home at County Cavan in Ireland.

Signing up with 1 R Irish last year, the 29-year-old proved himself capable on manoeuvres in Kenya and learned the Afghan language Pashto during pre-deployment training for Op Herrick.

Rgr Cupples, who leaves a wife, was remembered as a strong team player who always put others before himself and was enthusiastic and mature.

Lt Col Ed Freely, CO of 1 R Irish, said the soldier's death had been a huge blow to the battalion, adding that he had been a "perfectionist and rising star".

Lt Col Freely reflected: "Rgr Cupples was a true Irish Ranger – tough, committed and dedicated.

"His comrades, mindful of the ultimate sacrifice made by Justin, continue with their, and his, mission."



Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RL C

Hands on experience: With a steer from British troops, Afghan National Army soldiers are increasingly taking the initiative in the fight against the Taliban

Heroes take shape

Afghan troops hit Taliban on own turf in latest phase of Helmand battle

AFGHAN National Army soldiers have reached another milestone in their history after taking on their own Forward Operating Base (FOB).

The Afghans at FOB Attal – which means hero in Pashto – have astonished British mentors with their professionalism and courage under fire.

They have been heavily involved in operations against Taliban fighters, engaging the insurgents on a daily basis with a new zeal and confidence.

Capt Doug Beattie (1 R Irish) told *Soldier* that the troops had taken huge strides forward in the past two years and were now emerging as a capable force in their own right.

In an interview from the FOB, the British mentor and Military Cross winner said: “The Afghan Army of 2008 is very different to the force that I was working with on my first Operation Herk tour two years ago.

“Back then the soldiers were not committed and did not want to fight, but now the opposite applies. They have moved forward considerably and are very astute.

“We are under attack from the Taliban every day, but the Afghan National

Army is holding, and that is testament to their commitment.”

The mentor’s colleague, Capt Jonathon Huxley (1 R Irish) said that civilians were shunning the Taliban and getting behind their own troops.

He added that the enemy had paid a heavy price for their actions.

“The locals now support the local Afghan National Army commander, giving intelligence on the Taliban’s movements,” he said.

“They are really happy that it is the Afghan forces that are protecting them and have requested another FOB to be built further up the Gereshk Valley.”

More routes for Brize buses

BATTLE-weary soldiers returning from operational theatres can now take advantage of extra transport to help them make their way home.

Under a trial scheme being run until November, additional buses are being laid on between Brize Norton, Swindon train station and Birmingham airport.

The new services join existing transport links from the RAF base to Heathrow and Oxford. The destinations will be made permanent if the trial is a success.

The move follows concern from some quarters that current scheduled transport services are not always available to meet flights returning from theatre.

Sqn Ldr Bill Backhus, who looks after

manning for air operations at Brize Norton, said the links would provide troops with extra options to get home. Military regulations make it clear that soldiers need to take a full eight-hour rest break before driving themselves if they are travelling for more than half-a-day.

Sqn Ldr Backhus said: “With journey times to both Iraq and Afghanistan, troops will generally have been travelling for some time before they get back here.

“Rather than using a hire car, most people will take public transport or their unit will provide a driver and a vehicle for them on their return.

“However we are trying to increase the available options for soldiers.”

UNDER Big Ben

A digest of what is being said on Army matters in Parliament

PM praises heroes battling the Taliban

PRIME Minister Gordon Brown has paid tribute to the British Armed Forces as "the true heroes of the country" during a surprise visit to southern Afghanistan.

Addressing soldiers from 16 Air Assault Brigade at Camp Bastion, the PM praised the actions of Service personnel in defending the British people at home.

He told the troops: "You know that you are on the front line against the Taliban. You know that, by what you are doing here, you prevent terrorism coming to the streets of Britain.

"You make your country proud everyday of the week and everyday of the year. I, too, wish to say how proud I am of you."

Warm Mitts: Huge progress has been made in training and mentoring the Iraqi Security Forces, according to Defence Under Secretary of State Derek Twigg. In an interview with *Soldier*, Mr Twigg said he had been impressed with the progress made by the British Military Transition Teams following a visit to Basra. He added: "It was great to see the progress soldiers have made despite living in difficult conditions."

Division bell: The 14th Division of the Iraqi Army is expected to be fully trained within the first few months of next year, Defence Secretary Des Browne has said. He pointed out that the HQ for the division had been established in Basra in 2005 before moving to Dhi Qar province in September last year. Coalition troops had since been providing "a residual mentoring role".

Good living: More cash has been made available to improve overseas accommodation for both troops and their families, according to Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth.

Responding to a question from MP Jim Cunningham, he said a dozen new houses had been built at the main Mount Pleasant base on the Falklands while refinements had been made to living conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

'No place for Army bullies'

Malpractice probe continues after documentary

DEFENCE chiefs are continuing an investigation after a BBC journalist claimed to have uncovered evidence of bullying at the Army's Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

In a statement, the MoD admitted that it had already been probing "several cases" of alleged malpractice before last month's controversial *Undercover Soldier* documentary but was unable to comment any further because of "ongoing legal processes".

In the programme, screened on BBC1, reporter Russell Sharp enlisted in the Army and underwent the demanding Infantry training programme, covertly recording conversations and filming on his mobile phone.

Among the allegations, he said he had seen two corporals in his platoon lose their temper and resort to using their fists while another urinated on a soldier as he was firing his rifle.

One recruit also claimed that his hand was so badly injured in an assault that he was left with lasting pain and was unable to salute properly.

While reports from some media outlets have suggested that up to five instructors at Catterick have been suspended as a result of the BBC documentary, this has

not been confirmed by the MoD.

But the department stressed that bullying was "absolutely unacceptable and fundamentally at odds with the Army's core values".

Any allegations of assault or harassment were taken seriously, and swift action would follow if incidences of malpractice were found.

The MoD statement added: "We have a duty of care to our people to make sure they are prepared for operating in the harshest of environments and for the challenge of combat operations.

"However, while the training regime must be tough, the Army does not tolerate bullying.

"All soldiers are made aware that if they are a victim of bullying then they can complain through the chain of command or to the independent Service Complaints Commissioner."

The statement concluded: "We keep standards of training across Army facilities under constant review and our training establishments are also the subject of continuous scrutiny by external and independent authorities.

"Where issues or problems are highlighted, the Army acts swiftly to deal with them."

Quads delivery for soldiers

THE Army is set to benefit from more mobility and agility on operations thanks to a new batch of quad bikes.

With a top speed of more than 40mph, the rugged vehicles are currently being used to deliver ammunition, food and water to remote and difficult operational locations. Connected to a trailer, they have also been playing a vital role in evacuating casualties from the front line.

Around 250 of the vehicles, which were shown to the media at the Defence School of Transport at Leconfield near Hull, have so far been bought from Japanese bike manufacturer Yamaha.

Half have been deployed on Op Herrick with 50 more rolled out for Telic operations in Iraq.

The all-terrain quads can negotiate the narrow streets and alleyways of urban environments as well as tackling streams and deep puddles when they venture off the

beaten track in the demanding conditions of operations.

WO2 Jason Peach (2 Mercian) used quad bikes in southern Afghanistan last year and said they offered soldiers a boost in both power and flexibility.

"They are ideal for the terrain of Afghanistan as they have no problem taking on the more rural terrain of irrigated ditches and poppy fields," he added.

Defence Minister Baroness Ann Taylor said the latest purchases were made in direct response to requests from theatre.

Baroness Taylor added: "Commanders in the field have said the quad bikes are a useful addition when flexibility, speed and agility are needed.

"We remain committed to providing the best vehicles and equipment for our troops on the front line."

● Kinetic kit – Pages 46-47



LA (Phot) Jannine B Hartmann

Back on the streets: British mentors serving in Basra were available to provide advice and help to their Iraqi counterparts during a search and clearance operation south of the city. The aim was to disrupt militia activity in the area and consolidate the progress made towards peace. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, the 9/12th Royal Lancers and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards were among the units assisting with the action.

Let there be light

New brigade HQ charges up as countdown to Herrick deployment begins

TROOPS earmarked for a purpose-built brigade headquarters have been put through their paces in preparation for an upcoming tour in southern Afghanistan.

Soldiers from the newly formed 11 Light Brigade are being mobilised for a one-off tour in theatre next year.

While the HQ is a temporary measure – the outfit will disband after its return from Op Herrick in 2010 – troops serving on the deployment have been rigorously tested on manoeuvres.

Their latest exercise included a river crossing at Hawley Lake, near their base in Aldershot, plus off-road driving and a section attack.

Brigade HQ spokesman Capt James Cackett (RE) said the exercise had been tough but had proved invaluable for the soldiers involved.

He added: “If you think of the Brigade as a body, we need to get the head and brain working before the limbs and organs function properly.”

Commanded by Brig James Cowan,

HQ 11 Light Brigade was formed last year as a way of meeting the testing demands of current operations on existing Army units.

Senior officers are confident that the

outfit is well on schedule to meet its commitment in southern Afghanistan next year, having now been on exercise four times and almost reaching full manning levels.

Elections get the Army vote

ARMED Forces personnel and their families have been urged to make their voices heard at the ballot box by ensuring they do not lose their right to vote.

Research by the Electoral Commission found that while most troops want to be counted at the polling station, they are among the people who are least likely to be registered to do so.

Now the Army is aiming to make sure soldiers do not lose out with a series of special registration days being held at units this month and throughout November.

Specially assigned Unit Registration Officers will be on hand, focusing their attention on making sure troops and their loved

ones are properly signed up to put their cross on the ballot paper.

A spokesman for the Electoral Commission said that local and European elections are on the cards for next year and there is the potential for a General Election to be called at any time.

The Army’s registration days would coincide with local authorities’ annual canvass of UK householders, he added.

Military personnel in the UK can register in the same way as ordinary electors while those posted abroad are advised to declare themselves as Service voters.

● See www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

IN BRIEF

● A NEW policy has been released on how much time those returning from operations – and who are leaving the Army – must have at their home base.

Officials have announced all personnel with six or more years' service will now be granted at least six months Residual Service after returning from operations. Those with less than six years' time in uniform, and who are not entitled to Resettlement Leave, will have a minimum of four months.

The latest policy applies to all those submitting Notice to Terminate or Premature Voluntary Retirement from September 2008.

Units can defer discharge on operational grounds if the leaver gives their approval in advance. Soldiers can give up their entitlement to Residual Service, but must make this request clear in writing.

● A MEMORIAL to one of the most decorated Territorial Army officers of all time is now standing in his home city of Liverpool.

The statue of Capt Noel Chavasse, who won the Military Cross, the Victoria Cross and the Bar for treating wounded soldiers in the First World War, was unveiled in a ceremony attended by hundreds of people.

Medical officer Capt Chavasse was mortally wounded in his final act of bravery, during which he moved to rescue injured troops.

The Noel Chavasse Memorial Association organised the raising of £120,000 for the statue.

● SOLDIERS based in northern Germany played host to a royal visitor when she stopped by for her inaugural visit as their Royal Colonel.

Troops from the 5th Battalion, The Rifles welcomed the Countess of Wessex to their Paderborn home for two days of events, which included presenting Long Service and Good Conduct Medals and meeting wives and dependants.

Lt Col Edward Chamberlain, CO of 5 Rifles, said the battalion was honoured to meet the Countess. He added: "I have asked her to act as our godmother, a role she has graciously agreed to take on."

● A PIONEERING young graduate has won a top business innovation award for a device that he hopes will save the lives of troops on operations.

Amin Ismail received a special commendation at the Lord Stafford Award East Midlands for the Ahky, a wrist-mounted translation machine.

The Iraqi-born employee of Civil Defence Supply, which provides kit to the military, said: "This project has been a way for me to thank British soldiers for their honourable work."

Back on tour

Actor returns to the road in Helmand war zone

BATTLE-hardened soap star Ross Kemp found himself dodging bullets in Afghanistan after returning for a second helping of life in volatile Helmand province.

The Bafta award-winning personality, who first ventured into theatre for his Sky One series, *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*, last year, came under attack just hours after arriving in the settlement of Musa Qala to film a follow-up documentary on the day-to-day life of soldiers.

He was full of praise for the troops from the 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment for their unflinching professionalism during clashes with enemy fighters.

Kemp (pictured right), who was last year embedded with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment for his documentary series, said he wanted to see what had changed for troops in the lush Helmand River valley.

He told *Soldier* that he hoped to bring "more awareness" to civvy viewers about life in the war zone and the pressures on British personnel. Kemp added: "What we didn't show much of in the first film was how dense and difficult it is to fight in the green zone. It has been good to see a different side of the fight and we're incredibly proud of the guys."

"I hope we are bringing more awareness to the civilian population. I don't care how good a filmmaker you are, there is nothing that will ever explain what it is like unless you have been there."



Picture: Steve Dock

Despite surviving clashes with the Taliban, Kemp, who played hardmen Grant Mitchell in BBC soap *EastEnders* and Hayden Tenno in ITV's *Ultimate Force*, admitted he had been left reeling after contracting diarrhoea and vomiting while in theatre. But he said that the humour of the troops pulled him through.

Kemp's new series on life with the Army is due to be screened on Sky TV early in the New Year.

Biker takes time out to go global

A MOTORCYCLE-mad officer has urged fellow troops to consider taking a break from their Army careers after returning from the adventure of a lifetime.

Maj Nick Foulerton of The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards took eight months out of the military to ride from Sussex to Singapore in a mammoth road trip.

Having returned to Army uniform with a new vigour and secured a promotion, the 32-year-old believes soldiers can gain a great deal from a sabbatical.

Maj Foulerton said: "A career break is available to all ranks once you have served three years."

"However you must say how the Army will benefit from you taking the time and a board will then decide whether or not to grant your application."

"Taking a career break means that every aspect of your Army life is frozen apart from promotion," Maj Foulerton added. "It

also means you have a good job to return to after your sabbatical."

The officer, who has served in the Balkans and Iraq during his decade of Army service, believed his road trip had given him a new professional edge. Travelling with wife Rebecca, the biker embarked on the 34,000km trek through 30 countries, among them Turkey, China and India.

Planning the journey turned into a huge task – the couple had to secure the right paperwork as well as ensuring they had sufficient spares, food and medical supplies to be self-sufficient in remote areas.

"Fortunately we didn't have any major crashes while we were travelling, but there were times when we fell while riding over sand and mud," said Maj Foulerton.

"The suspension on the bike broke twice and we had a couple of punctures but managed to get all the parts we needed flown out to us."



Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer/RLC

Riding the surf: The majestic mounts of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery took time out to enjoy the sea air at Woolacombe Beach in Devon after a busy schedule of ceremonial duties including the state opening of Parliament and the Queen's birthday parade. The soldiers head for two excursions to Fremington Camp each year as part of their training programme, where they can let their four-legged friends gallop along the coast.

Digital battlefields

Soldiers who fought at Arnhem return to action in video game campaign

VETERANS of one of the Second World War's most brutal campaigns returned to the battlefields of their youth to give a virtual tour.

Former glider pilot Des Page and ex-Para Arthur Letchford talked journalists through their experiences on Operation Market Garden before the reporters played a console video game based on the campaign in the Netherlands.

Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway, which puts players in command of a squad of US airborne troops, was due to go on sale as this issue went to press.

The veterans were delighted with the response of the journalists after they spoke about their experiences of close-quarter combat with German troops.

Letchford told *Soldier*: "It is very important that people understand the concept of comradeship and to realise what war is all about.

"It has been great for me to come here and speak to the journalists. They knew little about the campaign and lapped up what we were saying."

Letchford said the spirit of comradeship

between soldiers needed to be a feature of video games. "They should be realistic," he added.

The special event for *Brothers in Arms* was organised by Army tutor Maj Neil Powell and Ubisoft, the company which publishes the game. An expert on the Market Garden campaign, Maj Powell

also praised the journalists for welcoming the veterans.

He said: "It is important to set a game such as *Brothers in Arms* in context. I would not have agreed to do this event if the title glorified war."

● War games – Page 39

Website nets Army leavers

SOLDIERS bound for civvy street will be able to retain crucial military links following the extension of a major internet portal to those leaving the Forces.

Troops will now have access to ArmyNet, a password-encrypted site providing features including a secure email address, when they hang up their uniform.

Using their new Life Account, ex-soldiers will be able to access some of the key elements of the portal to remain in touch with their serving colleagues.

A spokesman for ArmyNet, which now has around 150,000 users, was confident

that former Service personnel would continue to benefit from the portal.

The spokesman added: "It will also enable those who are no longer in the Army to stay in contact through secure email and instant messaging.

"When they leave the military their Life Account will be activated automatically."

ArmyNet has attracted tens of thousands of new users in recent years and has been constantly refreshed. It was recently enhanced with improved security measures.

● www.armynet.mod.uk

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Picture: Paul Haley

From past to present: Soldiers who fought during the Falklands War are among those being assisted by accommodation projects like Mike Jackson House

Breathing space

Veteran's Minister promises assistance package for homeless ex-soldiers

MORE will be done to help former soldiers who fall on hard times after quitting the Army for civvy street, the Government has announced.

Speaking after visiting Mike Jackson House, a new refuge in Aldershot for homeless former Armed Forces personnel, Veteran's Minister Derek Twigg pledged that extra help would be available for those who needed it.

Reaffirming the commitment made in

the Service Personnel Command Paper, he said further projects would soon be set up to assist vulnerable ex-soldiers.

During his tour of Mike Jackson House, Mr Twigg spoke to a number of former military personnel and presented them with Veteran's Badges.

The minister said: "I am encouraged by what I have seen in Aldershot. Only a small minority of people become homeless when they leave the Armed Forces

but it is crucial that they are given the support that they need and deserve.

"Mike Jackson House is an important source of help to Service leavers at risk of homelessness, and we are committed to further housing projects."

A joint initiative between the MoD, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the English Churches Housing Group, the Aldershot complex has 25 modern flats plus an internet suite and gym.

Residents also have access to trained professionals who can help with finding employment and can stay at the house for up to 18 months.

Similar schemes to Mike Jackson House are now being considered in other major garrison areas such as Colchester, said Mr Twigg.

He added: "With the involvement of the Housing Corporation, local authorities and Service charities, we hope to have further projects under way in the months ahead.

"Having spoken to the people at Mike Jackson House, you can see that this project has given them the breathing space to think about their lives."

Indulgence 'burden' warning

MOVES to extend the offer of Falklands Indulgence Flights to the family members of those who served in the 1982 war would place "an extra burden" on the air bridge, the Veteran's Minister has said.

The MoD cheap travel scheme, which became available to holders of the South Atlantic Medal last month, reduces the return fare to the islands from the full price of £1,300 to just £150.

Despite being warmly welcomed by veterans across the board, some former personnel have called for the initiative to be opened to their close family members.

However, in an interview with *Soldier*,

Mr Twigg said that granting those who had fought in the war the right to use the Indulgence Flights package had been a move in the right direction.

He insisted that veterans currently had to take priority but hinted that eligibility for their close family members could be reconsidered in the future.

Mr Twigg said: "It is important to realise that you cannot guarantee seats on Indulgence Flights and the priority has to be on the veterans. Making these flights available to South Atlantic Medal holders has been a huge step forward but we do not want to overburden the air bridge."

● Badge of honour not enough – Page 51



LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT

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Power play

Success of Operation Eagle's Summit sparks Helmand's electric dreams into life



On the road: 3 Para troops patrol the convoy route in their Jackal during Op Eagle's Summit Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC

BRITISH soldiers have helped spread the supply of electricity throughout Helmand province and to Kandahar after the successful completion of their largest operation since deploying to southern Afghanistan in 2006.

An International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) group containing more than 4,000 troops – half of them British – braved Taliban ambushes and the threat of IEDs to transport a massive turbine from Kandahar Airfield to Kajaki dam during Op Oqab Tsuka, or Eagle's Summit.

Once installed, the turbine will kick out 18.5MW of renewable energy, more than doubling the dam's existing output and helping to power classrooms, businesses and hospitals across southern Afghanistan.

British Forces spokesman Lt Col David Reynolds hailed the mission, which was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as a multi-national success.

"It was a project which the Afghans will benefit from and ultimately we will all benefit from," he said.

"It demonstrated that the strategic intent of Isaf and the multi-national force to deliver reconstruction and development is making progress in southern Afghanistan."

The convoy took six days to travel the 180km to its destination, fooling the

Taliban by driving north across the desert rather than heading west on Highway One and taking Route 611, which runs directly to the dam.

As the heavy equipment trucks transported the 200 tonne cargo across the sand towards the remote Ghorak pass, British, Danish and Afghan troops moved along Route 611 seemingly in preparation for the convoy.

The deception worked and the vehicles emerged from the pass just a few kilometres from the dam without encountering any significant resistance.

The convoy's final hurdle lay in Kajaki Sofia, a village near the dam which had been infiltrated by the Taliban. Under the mentorship of British soldiers,

the Afghan National Army's 3/205 Hero Brigade fought to secure the settlement and gain support for the operation.

After unloading the precious cargo, the convoy set off on the return journey,

eventually arriving back at base six days later.

Speaking after the operation, Helmand province governor Gulab Mangal praised the efforts of all the coalition troops involved.

"Your real achievements will be spoken of for some time and that admiration of your accomplishment is felt by all the people of Helmand," he said. "I want to say a big thank you to the British embassy in Kabul, the provincial reconstruction team troops and the British people." ■

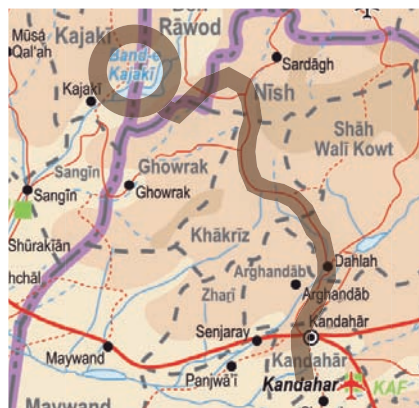
‘It was a project which the Afghans will benefit from and ultimately we will all benefit from’

Facts and figures

- **4,000** – Troops guarding the convoy, including 2,000 British, 1,000 Nato and 1,000 Afghan soldiers
- **250** – Taliban fighters killed during the operation. One Canadian soldier was killed in an IED blast and British Forces sustained one casualty when a soldier suffered a crushed pelvis
- **200** – Amount in millions of dollars that USAID provided to fund the new turbine
- **100** – Total vehicles in the convoy
- **50** – Armoured vehicles in support
- **20** – Length in miles of the dust cloud kicked up by the convoy
- **6** – Days to reach Kajaki
- **1½** – The number of tennis courts the steel used to craft the ISO container shells around the turbine parts would have covered
- **1** – Convoy's average speed in mph

British Army units involved

- 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment
- Elements of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment



- The Pathfinder Platoon
- 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment
- 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, RLC
- 23 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers
- 7 (Para) Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery
- 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps
- 7 Air Assault Battalion, REME
- 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
- 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
- 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Main picture. The long haul:
The convoy of 100 vehicles snakes its way up a mountain road on its six-day journey to Kajaki Dam

Below right. On the road: Maj Stuart McDonald, OC B Coy, 3 Para, right, briefs Lt Col Huw Williams, CO 3 Para, during the build-up to the operation



A large military convoy of armored vehicles, including several large tracked transporters and smaller wheeled vehicles, is moving through a desert valley. The terrain is arid and rocky, with some low-lying vegetation. In the background, there are some buildings and more vehicles. The scene is captured from a high angle, showing the scale of the operation.

On the ground

● ENSURING the convoy could pass safely through the expected flashpoint of Kajaki Sofia was the responsibility of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

Almost 1,200 soldiers, including 2 Para and Afghan National Army troops, conducted fighting missions to the south of Kajaki designed to give the impression that the vehicles would pass through the town.

They also led a clear-out operation on Kajaki Sofia, a notorious Taliban stronghold containing bunkers, tunnel complexes and hundreds of dedicated enemy fighters.

The operation was 3 Para's largest since the Falkland's conflict 25 years ago and battlegroup commander Lt Col Huw Williams said it was a "great honour" to have been in charge of the operation.

LCpl Ryan Kilpatrick, of A Company, 3 Para, added: "It was important for 3 Para to be involved after being out here two years ago. With all the new blokes, we have shown that everyone is just as professional now."

● THE ingenuity of a handful of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers proved crucial to the op's success.

A small team of engineers encased the turbine parts in widened, up-armoured ISO containers to protect them from small arms fire, RPGs and IEDs en route to Kajaki.

The improvised armour was made from 364 square metres of steel weighing 28 tonnes.

● ALSO involved in aiding the turbine's safe arrival in Kajaki was the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment.

Commander Maj John Lavery and 450 troops were based in the upper Helmand River valley for the operation.

Commanding officer Lt Col Ed Freely said: "It is a triumph for

allied cooperation but more importantly for progress and the people of Afghanistan."

● THE Royal Engineers embarked on a massive civil engineering task to clear the off-road route for Op Oqab Tsuka's convoy.

The sappers combed the desert track for explosive devices, discovering and safely detonating nine IEDs.

In addition to removing bombs, RE troops also strengthened the tracks to ensure they did not give way under the 110-tonne weight of the heavy equipment transporters used to carry the turbine parts.

● PROVIDING a snarling presence alongside the heavy goods trucks in the convoy were 50 armoured vehicles.

The Jackal deterred enemy attacks, while further firepower was provided in the form of The Queens Royal Lancers's Viking group, which heightened protection for the six-mile long convoy.





Ward rounds

5 Scots patrol hot Lashkar Gar suburbs with
intrepid combat medic

Friendly force: LCpl David Ravulo
(5 Scots) building bridges with the
community on a dismounted patrol
in Lashkar Gar, Helmand province





Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE stark reality of operating in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gar came home to a dedicated Royal Army Medical Corps combat medic in late June.

Cpl Neil McKenzie was called to assist with the casualties of a mine strike at a checkpoint. LCpl James Johnson, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, lost his life in the explosion.

The emotional shock of losing a comrade was

far greater than any physical blast but the medic soon felt the effects of the Taliban's deadly trade for himself. Just days later a roadside bomb exploded near his wagon while out on patrol. Thrown from the vehicle, he suffered shrapnel wounds and deafness.

Cpl McKenzie bounced back and told *Soldier*, as he tossed a borrowed medical pack into the back of a Snatch, that he refused to be sent home. He added that the Taliban hadn't finished with him. Later in the tour a mine strike threw him into the air, destroying his med pack and causing temporary paralysis.

It was his body armour, which withstood the explosion, that saved his life.

"I remember lying in a wadi with all the dust in the air thinking it was an IED," Cpl McKenzie said just before accompanying 5 Platoon, 5 Scots, on a district patrol.

"When the dust settled the driver came up, flipped me over and then went off. I had spinal shock but I got the feeling back and there was a massive crack down my Osprey plate.

"The whole platoon was lucky but I go back out again because I've been with them for four-and-a-half years and I trust them."

As the vehicles were finally loaded up, the tale of two young 5 Scots' soldiers who survived an argument with an RPG during the previous night's patrol

Left, Medic alert: On-call duty for Cpl Neil McKenzie (RAMC)

began to circulate. Along with a large chunk of flesh, one had lost the bottom half of a tattoo as the grenade ripped through his upper arm and ricocheted onto his mate's helmet leaving a massive dent and a headache. Both were feeling lucky.

Battlegroup south, run by the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, tasked their 5 Scots comrades with keeping the sprawling provincial capital secure and Taliban-free. They had engaged the enemy on urban patrols, as the quick reaction force and when river zone patrol fighting. There was little time for eating and sleeping but the town is now secure and safer.

Cpl David Richardson agreed that multi-tasking and taking on the Taliban had been demanding but that the lads had been "really spot on and professional". On this patrol they had the added pressure of respecting the Muslim faith and Afghan culture during the fasting of Ramadan. Despite soaring temperatures, the infantrymen could not drink or smoke in front of the locals.

"We've done more work to get on the ground and have more interaction with the Afghans to find out what they want. The locals like to have a chat, as it makes them feel important and it's part of their culture to be friendly," Cpl Richardson explained and, on cue, shop owners appeared and invited him to pass the time of day. The platoon soon found itself the object of interest, as

countless children materialised from the dusty, baked compounds.

Foreign soldiers with potential loot in their pockets provided the day's entertainment for the families living in a poorer district of Lashkar Gar. But although the presence of children and laughter was a good sign that the Taliban were not about, the multiple commander and his platoon could not afford to take any chances, especially as the crowd swelled in size and the interest intensified.

"We enjoyed the kids at first but at the end of the tour we have no more pencils and notebooks to give away. We need to get them dispersed otherwise the patrol turns into a circus and they become really distracting. We just don't want something bad to happen."

As something bad had happened many times when 5 Scots had ventured into the provincial capital, Cpl McKenzie carried life-saving supplies, including the latest tourniquets, QuikClot and HemCon to stop

massive haemorrhaging, in his borrowed med pack.

He'd also become a dab hand with the 50 cal and GMPG when providing top cover for his comrades. His 11 years as a combat medic, which include tours in Iraq and Bosnia, had proved as indispensable as his meds in Lashkar Gar's hotly-contested east and west districts.

Cpl McKenzie had also trained almost all the platoon as back-up team medics, in case he went down as a casualty again.

Pte Chris Davidson (5 Scots) valued the experience and support of Cpl McKenzie, especially as Op Herrick 8 was his first tour. He'd been trained as a team medic and had learnt to cope with the Taliban attacks along with the rest of 5 Platoon.

"You get used to going out on the ground and if you get contacted the training takes over and you just get on with it," he said.

"It's been a good tour with quite a few major incidents to push us back but everyone cracks on with the job. It's handy to know you've got your teammates around you. I

have all the confidence in Cpl McKenzie.

If anything happens there are medics everywhere so it's a bit of a safety net." ■

**Main picture, Inquisitive minds:
Children crowd around a Snatch as 5
Scots' soldiers dismount and patrol**

**'I remember
lying in a
wadi with
all the dust
in the air
thinking it
was an IED'**





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God's squad

Padre's high praise for life-saving commitment of hospital comrades

Interview: Karen Thomas
Picture: Steve Dock

WITHOUT exception, padres spend their entire tour hoping their most onerous duties will be providing a mug of tea and a sympathetic ear for troops and delivering an uplifting Sunday service.

But the tempo of operations in southern Afghanistan made that highly unlikely for Rev Dr David Latimer (RACHD), the TA chaplain attached to 204 North Irish Field Hospital (V). Released from his Londonderry parish, the Presbyterian minister had a wake up call on his first day at Camp Bastion with the arrival of 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment casualties, although the shared homeland and accents boosted morale.

As his first tour progressed, the sick and injured under his pastoral care often confessed to being a bit slack in their faith. Yet some survivors had paused to consider whether it was God's hand rather than luck that had brought them through. Without judging them, the padre just told them to "say a wee thank you" the next time they found themselves sat on a pew.

"In the last six weeks we've had hundreds through our doors and I feel I've been lifted out of my comfort zone. In my parish people had received a certain level of care before I saw them but here I see the casualties straight out of the ambulance," he told *Soldier* in the calm of Camp Bastion's tented church.

"I can only express my appreciation of the tireless work of the

medical specialists, as guys have been brought back from the brink of death time and again.

"The surgeons work around the clock and refuse to give up. When they've worked a miracle, I step in and say thank you in God's name for refusing to give up and saving the man's life. The more this side is talked about, the more it gives the guys out there the confidence and hope that if something goes wrong there are people in the hospital who are equipped to save their lives."

Thoughts of home and the support of his parishioners kept the padre going through the dark times. More than 400 people

crammed into his farewell service to give him a momentous send off.

"Everyone wanted to shake my hand and wish me well and the comfort boxes have poured out here. It was not only Protestants – Catholics also said they would light candles for me, which is quite unique in Northern Ireland. These are nice thoughts to have during some pretty rough moments here," Padre David said, adding that he had an unusual Op Herrick 8 souvenir for his Londonderry flock.

"I'm getting a cross made of 50 cal shells, as a symbol of pain and hope. It's how I view Camp Bastion. On one side of the wall are people who want to create mayhem and destruction, and on the other side there are people struggling to give life and hope. The cross is the pain and disability and sadness but it's very clearly a sign of hope and life provided by the dedicated team of doctors, surgeons, medics and anaesthetists." ■

Advice from up high: Rev Dr David Latimer herds his flock on the god squad's personalised quad bike



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Striding forward: Infantrymen show off the huge advances in their personal equipment during the UOR demonstration day on Salisbury Plain

Urgent business

Rapid deployment of latest kit continues to save lives on front line ops

Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Steve Dock

A MULTI-million pound programme of Urgent Operational Requirements is saving lives and improving the capability of British troops, according to senior officers.

More than £3.6 billion worth of the special projects, which range from tweaks in weapons to brand new armoured vehicles, have now been approved for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan as they continue to take the battle to insurgents.

And at a demonstration day held on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, Government ministers and journalists joined Army top brass to see the latest innovations in action.

The event included a show of strength from vehicles procured through the UOR process, including the Mastiff and Vector troop carriers, plus the fast and formidable Jackal (see Page 33).

There was also a demo of the most up-to-date infantry kit, including a new grip for the SA80 rifle plus the latest suite of sights, night vision goggles and a lightweight mortar.

Many of the new vehicles, armour upgrades and refinements to weapons have been purchased in just a few months and immediately delivered to the front line.

Officers behind the procurement process are delighted with the way soldiers in theatre, the MoD and industry have pulled together to work on the programme, which has transformed Army capability in a few short years.

"From the feedback we are getting from

personnel on operations, soldiers think the equipment they need is being delivered in a timely fashion, although we know there are some things we could do to make the system better," said Brig Chris Devereil, one of the directors at the MoD responsible for managing UOR issues.

"However, there is a big partnership in this process – although it is the troops who tell us what they need, we then have to translate that into a requirement to do the job."

With the success of UORs measured in speed of delivery rather than cost, contractors have needed to alter their working practises, making sure that they keep tabs on the emerging threats and starting the design process for new products early on.

"Life can be very difficult unless you have already anticipated what the need is likely to be," admitted Stephan Pattoni, director of Land Systems at defence firm Thales UK. "With UORs, you are likely to be putting out modified equipment rather than a new design as they have to be supplied so quickly.

"You have to try to second guess what is likely to happen and have an understanding of what is going on as well as being willing to take a bit of risk. As a company you must be able to offer value for time rather than value for money."

The efforts of the UOR chain have not gone unnoticed by soldiers on the ground who have seen huge changes in equipment during

successive tours over the last few years. The efficiency of the process has given them huge confidence in doing their job.

"We're getting a good variety of kit, there's no doubt about that," said Pte Kenny Meighan (1 R Anglian), who was involved in the demo event on Salisbury Plain. "I was in Iraq in 2005 and southern Afghanistan last year and there was a big improvement in kit and equipment even in the space of two years.

"The new vehicles that we have been given are battle winners and the Osprey body armour is superb – the manufacturers have really thought about it."

Cpl Paul Watson (REME), who is working with the Armoured Trials and Development Unit, had also noticed the change in the

quality of kit and the speed of delivery.

He said: "I was on both Op Telic 4 and Op Telic 8 and the difference between the equipment on those two tours was massive. The promising thing is that it's still getting better."

With the quality of equipment a talking point among soldiers, the Army is set to continue to benefit from the new relationship between the MoD and industry.

But with soldiers fighting in some of the world's most extreme conditions, at the very limit of their range and confronted with a determined enemy, the Army's equipment will need to remain top-notch if they are to keep the edge in future. ■

‘Life can be very difficult unless you have already anticipated what the need is likely to be’



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A close-up portrait of Tony Hadley, a man with dark, wavy hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark pinstripe suit jacket over a light pink shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with warm, golden light.

True supporter: Eighties icon Tony Hadley has forged a reputation as a great friend of the Forces
Picture: Dave Hogan/Getty Images

Golden boy

Former Spandau Ballet front man leads home brew charge for troops

On the pop: Hadley and Tony McHenry are fronting a campaign to buy the boys and girls beer



Tony Hadley – MY ARMY

Interview: Karen Thomas
Picture: Mike Weston

ANIGHT on the beers has led to many a dodgy – if transient – partnership but buying a round for carousing crooner Tony Hadley fermented into something longer term for ex-Viking Kevin McHenry.

The former 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment sergeant is a dedicated fan of “Tone” but is equally passionate about brewing quality beer. Hadley loves drinking real ale and is just as much a devoted follower of the Armed Forces. When the former Spandau Ballet star sampled McHenry’s unique malted concoction after performing in the smash hit West End musical *Chicago*, one thing inevitably led to another.

Hadley’s Golden Ale – “too good to be True” – is an award-winning jar customised to the singer’s palate by the soldier-turned-ale alchemist. The pair have consolidated the partnership by procreating sibling beers Woolly Pig, Nutty Squirrel and Talking Bull at their Suffolk-based Red Rat Craft Brewery. But the Hadley and McHenry duo remains a stylish act for the classiest Army on the planet.

“We’re precious about who drinks our beer. It takes a lot of work to make what we make and I make sure that it’s being enjoyed by the right people and not by lager louts,” McHenry told *Soldier* in the kitchen, as he described the tailor-made regimental beers he carefully prepares using only the finest of brewery ingredients.

“It takes a lot of effort to get into a sergeants’ mess and when you get there all you see are run of the mill, watered-down, foreign beers when you want a decent one. I was quite amazed that they didn’t have regimental beers. It’s just John Smiths and Carlsberg. They have what they’re given and I think they should have something that’s just a bit special.”

Appreciating how close the British Tommy holds a tippie to his heart, and knowing that the front lines of operations are dry, Hadley and McHenry launched their “Buy the Boys a Beer” campaign. Anyone can purchase a bottle of the good stuff with their personal message for a soldier returning from theatre labelled on the back, and 50 pence from each bottle sold will be donated to Service charities.

Despite McHenry serving for 17 years, including a stretch on Op Fingal in Afghanistan, and Hadley entertaining the troops in hot spots such as Bosnia and Kosovo, the pair were adamant it was the least they could do to continue to support soldiers. The singer was particularly passionate about celebrities throwing their weight behind the troops, especially after Sky televised the *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan* series.

“I thought it was a great programme but I don’t even think on film you can begin to

capture or realise exactly what it’s like out there and the sheer terror that you must experience sometimes.

“People say to me it must be so hard on my family when I go on tour for two or three months at a time but it’s not really when you compare it to the troops. They have got to go away for six months, they don’t see their families and someone’s trying to blow their head off. That’s hard. What I do is a piece of cake.”

Yet the 48-year-old has put himself in the firing line when performing overseas and holds a lifelong affection for the Services. He confessed to “flirting with the idea of joining the Royal Marines” to follow in the footsteps of a couple of mates, and his Army connections range from the Paras to Brigadier David Homer, a cousin of his girlfriend Alison Evers. Although he had performed in the combat zones of the Balkans, his courage was tested a little closer to home.

“There was more security in Northern Ireland. Loads of troops were bagged up and ready to go out, and helicopters were flying continuously. I said to the RSM ‘has something happened?’ and he replied, ‘for you guys to play here we’ve got to have our mob out making sure that they don’t lob anything over. Where you’re playing is the only bit that’s not mortar proof’,”

laughed Hadley, dismissing concerns for his security when in the safe hands of the British Army. He believes the difficulty when performing for soldiers comes from a different direction.

“We’ve been so well received wherever we’ve been. Going to the Falkland

Islands was hilarious. It’s great fun down there and there’s a lot more women. It’s very difficult to sing a love song to a hairy-arsed squaddie and mean it.”

As Hadley’s efforts to entertain those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have not yet met with success, the brewery channels his support to the Services through more than just free upmarket beer. McHenry said he would encourage anyone who has left the Army, injured or otherwise, to get in touch with him and see how they might fit into the business.

“Even if they just stay with us for the transition, they needn’t be scared if their stump hurts and they take their leg off, we can still get them doing things. There are plenty of jobs – labelling, designing, doing the accounts, brewing the beer, driving the vans, and dealing with the whole logistics thing.”

The former Spandau Ballet lead vocalist agreed. “I’m a bit ‘Queen and country’ and I know some people find it’s not very trendy to be like that but I am and always have been. I don’t care what anyone else thinks and we brew a fantastic brew.” ■

● For more details on the brewery and the Buy the Boys a Beer campaign, go to www.redratcraftbrewery.co.uk



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Day of the Jackal

Recce platoon play Taliban cat and mouse with new Helmand hound

Report: Karen Thomas

ELUSIVE and anonymous, the Pathfinders are racing around southern Afghanistan in a new set of wheels aptly named after the notorious assassin with a similar modus operandi.

The Jackal has gifted the eyes and ears of 16 Air Assault Brigade supreme mobility on the rugged mountains, shifting sand dunes and deep rivers of Helmand province. The vehicle has enabled the platoon to size up remote places that few International Security Assistance Force troops have reached to keep tabs on the Taliban.

The reconnaissance force likes to go about its business quickly and quietly although if the enemy wants to pick a fight, the Pathfinders can hit back hard. Let off the leash with its GPMG, 50 cal and GMG, the Jackal can put up a robust defence if provoked.

But they have plenty of muscle to extract quickly if required. With a powerful Cummins diesel engine matched with a unique air-bag suspension system, the Jackal has a top speed of around 80mph, can shift across all types of terrain and can

be used for assault, fire support and convoy protection roles if needed.

It was announced in May that 80 extra Jackals would be deployed in Afghanistan, and troops are already fired up at the possibilities the vehicle has to offer. One pathfinder told *Soldier* at Camp Bastion that he was so “keen and passionate” about the three-tonne Jackal that he’d whinge if he had to go back to using a Land Rover.

“The designers have really thought about this wagon,” he said when asked how the latest addition to the Army’s wheeled transport was performing on the ground.

“The maintenance is high but if you put a lot into the vehicle, you get a lot out of it. The reason why the Jackal is so good is because of its suspension.”

This is certainly true. With the system adapted from civilian commercial vehicles to speed up procurement of spare parts, the Jackal can clear up to 20 inches off the ground and wade through a metre of water.

Fitted with a roll-over protection system, the Jackal has shrugged off mine

strikes, small arms fire and IEDs during its debut tour on Op Herrick 8. Its armour and weaponry has saved lives, and the Pathfinder Platoon has been impressed with the support from the Infantry Trials and Development Unit, which has come up with solutions to problems arising from driving around Helmand province.

The troops describe what is essentially an upgraded WMK Land Rover as one of the best vehicles in the Army fleet.

“The more people who have these vehicles the better, especially if we can replace a Jackal that needs repairs at a forward operating base,” the pathfinder said.

“The Jackal is like a big Mechano set. You can take the armour off and put more food and water on. It can cover the ground twice as fast as a Land Rover and you can carry twice as much food, water and ammunition. It can sustain us for as long as we want, as long as we can get food, water and fuel.” ■

‘The designers have really thought about this wagon’

Off the leash: The Jackal has extended the British Army’s reach in Helmand province Picture: Pathfinders



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Bad heir day: Cornet
Wales (HCR), during his
deployment in Helmand
province, Afghanistan
Picture: John Stillwell/Anwar Hussein
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Life after Harry

**Gunners reflect on what happened
after Royal extraction from Helmand**

Report: Heidi Mines

DESPITE the daily heroics of hard-working Herrick troops, it was the sight of Prince Harry caked in the dust of Helmand's desert that really got the world's media salivating.

The young Royal's presence in the country became one of the year's biggest stories after the end of a self-imposed blackout allowed newspapers and television stations across the globe to recount tales of his work as a forward air control officer.

But in their rush to thrust the spotlight onto The Blues and Royals' officer, journalists missed out on the boy's own tale of a group of gunners who mounted the British Army's longest recorded desert patrol since the Second World War.

In the lead up to the assault on Musa Qala last December, members of 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery provided vital intelligence for the upcoming operation and even liaised with the young Prince to call in supply drops.

The specialist unit lost two men during the deployment to Afghanistan – half the casualties it has suffered in its entire history

– but its troops were ready, willing and able to take the fight back to the Taliban.

"We had a tough time last year," said patrol commander SSgt Tim Godfrey, adding that teams from the Yorkshire-based battery will be exercising in Germany and Belize in the coming months. "It gives us the luxury that all of our patrol commanders will have Afghan experience."

An elite unit within the Royal Artillery, 4/73 Battery were formed in 1982 to provide commanders with crucial battlefield intelligence on enemy positions and are tasked with directing artillery fire deep into enemy-held territory.

After returning from Afghanistan in July, the unit received a hero's welcome during a homecoming parade in Catterick. Soldiers from the battery also held a memorial for their two fallen comrades.

The troops' subsequent leap back into training heralds

expected future Op Herrick deployments, during which they will provide a different but still much-needed function.

"Instead of gathering intelligence and surveillance, we will be attached to units to provide offensive support fire artillery, close air support and protection for ground

troops," explained SSgt Godfrey.

"Basically our job is to make sure that there is as little collateral damage as possible and no friendly fire incidents."

As well as suffering two fatalities, the battery also had seven personnel seriously injured by enemy actions.

Included in this number was LSgt Glynn Bellman (Coldstream Guards), who has been attached to 4/73 Battery for the past two years.

LSgt Bellman broke his back, leg and ankle when a mine blast killed the top gunner of the vehicle he was travelling in and needed major surgery as a result of his many injuries.

But after returning to work on limited function just seven months later, he is pleased that a quicker-than-expected recovery has opened the door for him to get back out onto the front line.

"I am now exercising again, which shocked my doctors. It's a miraculous

‘Basically our job is to make sure that there is as little collateral damage as possible and no friendly fire incidents’



recovery really,” he said. “I love my job and I just want to get back and hopefully deploy next year with the rest of the lads.

“The way I see it is that if I sat feeling sorry for myself it won’t help anyone. I used my determination to get back to work.”

Another Coldstream Guard attached to 4/73 Battery, LCpl Matthew Lindon, also had first-hand experience of southern Afghanistan’s deadly minefields during the tour.

The junior NCO was travelling in a convoy that suffered a double mine strike, killing one soldier and wounding a further six.

The incident had a huge effect on morale, but such was the importance of the battery’s mission that LCpl Lindon and his colleagues pressed ahead with their duties around Musa Qala.

“It took about seven hours to work our way out of the minefield,” he said. “Our wagons were stuck in location and we knew the Taliban were likely to attack us.

“We knew we had months of the tour left to go, driving in the same area and seeing the devastation that mines cause. But I think the fact that we just got on with it showed the courage of a British soldier.”

Although the battery’s historical role is a covert one, many of 4/73’s troops were left with a general sense of disappointment on their return to Britain.

While Prince Harry’s time calling in air strikes and supply drops in Helmand dominated column inches for several months, their work – which proved to be instrumental in capturing Musa Qala – went largely unnoticed.

But despite the media snub, the specialist battery are confident their operational experience and expertise will continue to help make headway – if not the headlines – in Helmand province. ■

Battery power: The Sphinx convoy of vehicles park up during a break in a patrol in Afghanistan

Picture: Courtesy of 4/73 (Sphinx) Bty



Top, Eyes on: Bdr Dave Seymour checks for enemy activity near Now Zad
Bottom, Desert drills: SSgt Tim Godfrey checks the battery’s comms

Pictures: Courtesy of 4/73 (Sphinx) Bty





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War games

First-person shooter helps to train soldiers on the front line

Driving school :
WO2 Gary Miller,
Land Warfare
Centre, Training and
Development Team,
enters the virtual
world to learn how to
drive under fire

Report: Heidi Mines
Picture: Steve Dock

IN the hi-tech world of computer gaming, almost anything is possible. From raiding tombs to becoming a guitar hero, modern consoles can make even the most unlikely of fantasies a reality.

But the technology is also being used for a more serious purpose with soldiers entering the virtual domain to hone driving skills before deploying on operations.

The Joint Combat Operation Virtual Environment (JCOVE) will be familiar to those who play first-person games as it uses a specially modified version of off-the-shelf shooter *Virtual Battlespace*.

Utilising an arcade-style steering wheel and pedals, JCOVE allows troops to cruise through 3D versions of Iraqi towns to practise driving under fire from the safety of a classroom.

Maj Tom Mouat, from Defence Equipment and Support's simulated and synthetic environments team, explained that the software was not a replacement for real-life training but was an excellent addition.

He said: "The programme is a great solution to the problems of driving-under-fire training. Previously the course was one day of death-by-PowerPoint and the next day out in the field on Salisbury Plain, which does not mirror the terrain of Iraq."

Driving a fleet of virtual vehicles including Mastiff and Challenger, students face in-game dangers such as roadside explosions, ambushes and direct fire, all of which are set off by military instructors.

The £2 million package allows soldiers to practise tactics, techniques and procedures for road convoy operations.

Users are assessed throughout the programme and receive feedback on their successes and failures at the end of each mission.

Although not entirely swapping the real for the virtual as soldiers still complete in-field training, the JCOVE system is versatile enough to be used across the UK.

"With this system we can test in the virtual world which is cost-effective and very easy to use," continued Maj Mouat. "We hope to deploy five sets to both theatres in the near future."

"This is a unique militarised adaptation of a commercial game and we hope that by Christmas a freebie version will be handed to every soldier who has passed the live range test."

Managed by Newman and Spurr Consultancy based in Camberley, the equipment, which consists of laptops, projectors and screens, can be transported

and takes only 30 minutes to set up.

The simulation software, which has been running for a year, is primarily used by the Royal Logistic Corps but can be adapted for all Service personnel.

As many of the Army's new recruits are already adept at video gaming, the training environment is familiar to most. One of the RLC phase two recruits *Soldier* spoke to was already behind the wheel in the classroom – despite not having passed his driving test.

Cpl Tony Young (25 Training Regiment RLC) explained that the simulator provides essential experience in the absence of access to training areas.

"For many of the lads they will be approaching their first time in theatre," said the junior NCO. "Whether you are out in the field or using this programme, the skills and drills are going to be the same."

The design and implementation teams are now awaiting feedback from elements of 16 Air Assault Brigade who were trained on the software before deploying to Afghanistan.

And with air, land and sea simulators on the cards, the constant evolution of computer games could play an important role in saving lives on the front line. ■

"It is so versatile that we hope to deploy five sets to both theatres in the near future"



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Marking new territory:
A paratrooper rides a
stores-laden quad bike
and trailer near Zabol in
southern Afghanistan,
during Operation Janub
Zilzila Picture: Sgt Craig Allen



Call of duty 2

Paras complete return tour of Afghan badlands

Report: Karen Thomas

IN the summer of 2006 the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment underwent a baptism of fire as part of the Nato expeditionary force in southern Afghanistan.

Overthrown from government in the capital Kabul in the aftermath of 9/11 and driven south to its poppy heartland in Helmand Province, the Taliban had regrouped in strongholds and began harvesting the opiate to fund its ongoing insurgency. Sangin, Musa Qala, Kajaki, Lashkar Gar and Gereshk provided safe havens along the lush Helmand River valley now known as the green zone.

The men of 16 Air Assault Brigade fought ferocious battles in searing temperatures with a fanatical enemy, which had resolved to recapture the district centres and compounds at all costs from the 3 Para troops. Living in the most spartan conditions, the paratroopers repelled the unrelenting attacks and began to squeeze the Taliban out of town.

Every six months since 3 Para returned from Op Herrick 4 the baton for defeating a tenacious enemy has passed between brigades. This summer 16 AA Bde deployed again to Helmand but it has been the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment that has borne the brunt of the fighting in the green zone.

The men of 3 Para were sent on a different mission working directly for a Canadian general. They found themselves back in Helmand and, for the first time, in neighbouring Kandahar and Zabol provinces. They sought out Afghans in places where few Isaf had been, working with local communities on development projects to get them on side with the new government and facing down any Taliban that crossed their path.

But the memories of the green zone were still fresh for 60 per cent of the regiment who lived through the fire of two years ago.

Soldier recounts 3 Para's Op Herrick 8 tour and asked the paratroopers who had returned to Afghanistan's badlands how their work in 2008 compared to that of 2006.

Ready for anything: Paratroopers from 3 Para, on foot patrol in the hills of Helmand province, below left, and operating a ground-based, tripod mounted Heckler and Koch 40mm Grenade Machine Gun (GMG) near Zabol, southern Afghanistan, during Operation Janub Zilzila Pictures: Sgt Craig Allen



3 Para Op Herrick 8 2008

March and April

3 PARA were first sent to Maywand district in Kandahar province. In Huta, A Coy built a new forward observation base (FOB) for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police (ANP) to secure the town, which lies on the main route between Kandahar city and Helmand province.

A Shura – or council of elders – was called to find out what facilities were most needed in the town. Local artisans were used to renovate a school and install electricity in the health clinic. The school saw a four-fold increase in attendance and the market began to thrive as the community felt less intimidated by the Taliban.

The shuras continued to keep the Afghan civilians updated and strengthened their

rapport with Isaf, the ANA and ANP.

The paratroopers were deployed to the desert to screen A Coy from Taliban attacks and disrupt the insurgents' activities. This included a short strike operation to find a suspected bomb maker. On their first air assault the troops had to carry everything supported only by fully-loaded quad bikes.

They landed in a blooming poppy field and worked with the ANP when searching compounds. The Taliban attacked with their trademark "shoot and scoot" tactics.

May

The paratroopers returned to Helmand. As temperatures soared into the high 40s, they sheltered from Taliban mortars in shell scrapes, drinking up to 12 litres of water a day to stave off dehydration. The battlegroup



punched into the green zone around Qal-eh Gaz, a valley between Gereshk and Sangin, forcing the Taliban to flee in the face of overwhelming force.

June

THE battlegroup deployed by air assault to the Mizan district of Zabol province. The troops were searching for weapon caches in mountain caves and tunnel systems discovered in a village at the foot of the slopes. On the third night the patrols platoon providing overwatch from the mountain slopes came under a sustained two-hour mortar and small arms attack. One member described it as more ferocious than anything he had endured during 2006.

The paras embarked on their first tour of Kandahar city where they lived in the

landmark stadium in the wake of a massive prison break. After a week of foot patrols the local Afghans began to come out onto the streets increasingly confident that the Taliban were not around.

July

AS B Coy took R&R, A Coy conducted a strike op in a remote and barren area of Kandahar province with the ANA. On its return, B Coy pushed the furthest south in Helmand province that British Forces had been before moving to FOB Inkerman to cover for 2 Para's R&R.

August

THE troops were back in Maywand district, establishing a permanent Isaf presence and looking for significant Taliban

and drug lord figures in the community.

They found signs of an enemy hospital and large amounts of money and opium left behind in a hurried retreat. They detained a number of Taliban and held the first district governor-led shura for some years. Preparations then began for the biggest Nato operation since British Forces first deployed to Afghanistan.

September

OP Oqab Tsuka delivered a turbine to Kajaki by road which will increase the power output down the Helmand valley and into Kandahar. 3 Para commanded the op to repel Taliban attacks and allow safe passage of the convoy through the worst stretch of its journey with 2 Para and the ANA in support. ■

Soldier asked the paratroopers what it was like coming back to southern Afghanistan's badlands

Cpl Nicholas Dargan, 3 Para



● **THE rules of engagement have obviously changed. It's a little bit more frustrating as the Taliban are working more with IEDs and less with small arms. We were back in Musa Qala supporting**

2 Para and the Taliban were hitting us from just 40 metres away. It's been harder for 2 Para as they are in the FOBs for six months and that's hideous. At least we were rotated when we were out in 2006.

The Taliban are still very fanatical. The expectation is that the paras will push the bar higher every time. We do the job and get a result, which pleases the top brass but now we are expected to continually increase the pace. In 2006 the tour was a lot more straightforward. You went out and when the enemy was there you smashed them up and dominated the ground. This time there is a lot more strategy worked into the bigger picture.

LCpl Gerrit Vanzyl, 3 Para



● **WE'VE been deployed all over the province this tour, time went a lot quicker and it was a lot more interesting.**

In Zabol, Isaf had not been to certain places that are very isolated. Some of the older Afghans

thought we were Russian. I think the tour in 2006 was down to our skills and luck but this time we really needed the new kit and the armoured WMIKs really work. The procedures and equipment for finding IEDs has also evolved, which helped. The job was better and I saw more of the country, and that was enjoyable. We could come back to Kandahar and be refreshed whereas 2 Para at the FOBs were on ten-man rations for six months. It was different for us in 2006, as we were rotated and only there for four-to-six weeks.

As for any personal changes after last time, I would say that your life is shaped by the situations you are in and how you act in and after those situations is what makes the difference. People react differently and it's down to your personality and the circumstances. It's very individual.

Cpl Dave Benfell, 3 Para



● **WE are doing a different job and working in other areas on Op Herrick 8. The tasks are more varied and we've been mounted and dismounted.**

In 2006, we were doing the same thing everyday but it was more exciting because the enemy was right there and you had to get everything right. We

were aware we'd be doing different tasks before coming out the second time but we thought that, with our reputation, we would be spearheading the operations. This was not the case but we've covered more miles.

Personally, I was more aware of the dangers and how things can go wrong but you can't think like that. You need to be more aggressive and positive and you can't let any negativity get on top of you. A lot of the guys who weren't here in 2006 wanted to have more of a go at the Taliban, especially when we tell them what happened. But the guys who were here before wanted a quieter tour and we've not lost anyone, which is really good.

It's rubbish that we are not winning here. In the bigger picture we are making great progress.

LCpl Aaron Parker, 3 Para



● **I WAS just 18 for that first tour. It was clear cut and full-on fighting. I had to grow up quickly if I wasn't going to get hurt or get someone else hurt. Now I'm more grown**

up and I could prepare myself. The blokes remembered the ground this time round.

We knew what to expect and you can build up the knowledge and experience.

This time I'm a lance corporal and we face less fighting and more IEDs. It's harder mentally. I was involved in two minestrikes and, in the first, the front wagon was flipped over and one man had both his legs broken. As a driver I strapped the casualty stretcher to my bonnet and drove off.

I've enjoyed some parts of this tour. Having down time at Kandahar has been good and the welfare is much better two years on. Being with the blokes has boosted morale.





Keeping the peace: A Paratrooper from 3 Para on a foot patrol in Kandahar City

Picture: Sgt Craig Allen

Kinetic kit

Modified body armour gets thumbs up from the Infantry under fire in Helmand's furnace

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: 3 Para

TWO years ago a new body armour system, designed after sounding out soldiers and built to withstand the most lethal assault rifle rounds, debuted on operations.

Osprey heralded a new era of protection from bullets and roadside bombs for troops deployed on the ground or in vehicles.

Replacing the enhanced combat body armour for soldiers patrolling in high threat environments or in dismounted close combat, the upgraded vest added better arm protection and a flexible collar.

As Service personnel were instrumental in developing what would rapidly become a life saving piece of kit, the new system unsurprisingly got the thumbs up from troops on

the ground. Large, dense plates cover the entire front and back of the torso and the wrap-round side panels of the vest shield against shrapnel.

The drawback with Osprey was that one size did not fit all operations. As Iraq evolved into a dangerous game of cat and mouse with IEDs and suicide bombers, the new system came into its own for troops on top cover. However, soldiers deployed to southern Afghanistan engaged in a different type of combat with a fanatical Taliban.

Back to basic war fighting in the lush Helmand River valley, troops were getting up close and personal with enemy fighters in the green zone. And they began to feel the 50-degree heat of the desert sun under the weight of the hefty Osprey body armour. A balance had to be struck between being protected and the need to move unhampered about the battlefield.

But a simple modification to the vest has made soldiering easier in the heat of close combat around Afghanistan's scorched landscapes. The plate carrier system, offering the same ballistic protection, was confirmed as a huge step forward on the

battlefield by LCpl James Harrop (3 Para).

"The new body armour is much more breathable, as there are no side panels. Less

'The plate carriers are more breathable and you can get into better fire positions'



is more in the Infantry and now you can get into a lot more positions and do your job better. The trade-off is the side protection but you don't feel vulnerable because you can move quickly towards the enemy before they hit you," he told *Soldier* at Kandahar, recalling many contacts with the Taliban during his tour.

"The weight in the heat means that it's not as bad to wear as Osprey but it still makes you sweat a lot. However, it is definitely going in the right direction. The plates slip up and down so it could do with more straps to keep them in place, and the weight needs to be reduced with maybe thinner plates. As infantry you need that added mobility."

The BlackHawk plate carriers have webbing and Velcro strips to attach the individual's blood group and unit patches. They are easily transferred between the Osprey and carrier systems, as they readily slot into Velcro-sealed pockets.

Pte Oliver Williams (3 Para) agreed with the benefits of being able to swap between the two body armour systems according to what each operation demanded of a soldier.

"The plate carriers are more breathable and you can get into better fire positions. Osprey is like a body warmer and it is bulky but the air circulates around your body with the plate carriers. I still feel protected because I'm quicker on the battlefield. I feel more refreshed as I'm not clammy and sweaty, so I perform better." ■





Main picture, Fantastic four-wheeler: The quad bikes get tested to the limit in the rugged landscape of southern Afghanistan

Bottom left, Cool comfort: Osprey body armour is adapted to fit the Infantry's mobility needs in the heat of combat

Quad squad foot soldiers bring on extreme biking

THERE'S no denying that as the funkiest four-wheelers to hit southern Afghanistan, quad bikes begged to be pimped up and let loose in the fight against the Taliban.

But the fun-factor of the quads was soon forgotten in the heat of battle. The infantry fighting in the dusty, enemy-infested desert came to rely on the mini-workhorse that can reach speeds of 75kph.

Fitted with a fixed trailer, the bikes carried essential water and ammunition supplies for troops on prolonged operations. The nifty MoD all-terrain vehicles proved their worth on Op Oqab Tsuka, which delivered a turbine to Kajaki dam (see Pages 17-19), when they acted as a speedy resupply shuttle service for front-line troops taking on the Taliban.

Around 120 of the chunky-wheeled bikes deployed to Afghanistan, doubling up as ambulances and swiftly but safely transporting the wounded from the battlefield on their trailers. Quad driver Cpl Paddy Burrows (3 Para) confirmed that soldiers in theatre had come to depend on the bikes.

"It's an essential piece of kit as there is no way you can carry enough water in this heat

and there is obviously the increased speed with which you can evacuate a casualty," he explained to *Soldier* at Kandahar.

"On patrol it's brilliant and in the forward operating bases it's used as a workhorse to move stuff around the compounds. I think they need a quad bike made specially for the Army, as this one was bought off the shelf and modified.

"Changes are needed to the ammo shelf on the back to stop ammunition sliding off when you ride down hills. You can drive in the dark using night vision kit but it's easy to roll if the terrain changes. And you need a weapon rack."

Afghanistan's rugged terrain had tested the quad bikes' ability to eat up the worst of gullies and dunes. Switching between two- and four-wheel drive, the quads motored up to 50kph off-road on tyres fitted with a puncture repair system. Expert handling was required to assess how the added weight of supplies and drag of the trailers would

get across rough ground and drivers looked for the best routes over and around natural obstacles. But the troops could be confident that quad and trailer would clear water that came up to half the wheel height.

Kandahar airfield provided the perfect

training ground for quad driver Pte Anthony Nicklin (3 Para). He also thought the chance to be in the quad squad was "brilliant". "They teach you about the bike, as we're responsible for the maintenance. The rest is learning how to control the bike off-road with the different weights

and for the different roles such as delivering water and extracting casualties.

"I accompanied the patrols and was sometimes out for six or seven hours. It can be a lot of fun to ride but it can be frustrating when it gets stuck. But they are brilliant. They can be put on fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters and are probably the best thing the Army has got." ■

‘It's an essential piece of kit as there is no way you can carry enough water in this heat’

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No military case to answer for Mulder and Scully

I'm afraid your decision to publish an article concerning the supernatural musings of former soldier Jock Brocas, "Soldier sense" (July), has eroded your credibility in the eyes of my peers and I. We can only hope it was a dry month for good stories.

The idea that we have a sixth sense, a psychic one, is unproven by science. Most occurrences of premonition and other phenomena that people experience can be explained quite rationally. If they cannot, it does not mean we have to resort to fantastic tales of the supernatural.

When scientists find something they cannot explain they set about working it out, not saying "this must be supernatural" and doing nothing. That's why we have progressed as a race.

Believing in this hokum is simply lazy. Sadly many people do, so writing a book on the subject is potentially lucrative.

The idea that troops have an ability to sense danger as suggested in the example of a soldier who had a "bad feeling" about

PRIZE LETTER . . .

a compound sounds great, but there are many dead ones who did not.

Where was their sixth sense? Presumably not working that day. Should we have our Generals go to Mystic Meg for direction on what to do next? Hunches are explained by experience, the brief on the area the soldiers had before they left camp, their knowledge of the area, and sound military judgement built up over time. There is no need to resort to fantasy to explain this.

And what about this ghosts and auras rubbish? People do not have auras. Aura photography is a clever trick (enabled by science). People who stare at objects for a long time to see auras get eye strain and see colours, not a magnetic field. There is plenty of information on the web debunking this particular attempt to get money from the gullible. The reason Mr Brocas did not

mention this in the Army is because it is unmitigated rubbish and he would have been laughed at.

Please, *Soldier*, retain your journalistic integrity and don't print this sort of rubbish again. And for the record, I'm a huge fan of *The X-Files*. – Maj Ben Howell, RHA, 3 Para Battlegroup, Kandahar.

The editor writes: If believing in the supernatural is "hokum", how do you explain away the psychic power-up provided to Glen Hoddle's England 1998 World Cup squad by Eileen Drewery? On second thoughts, perhaps you have a point.



PS . . .

A CAUTIONARY note for the lance corporal who complained about his ration pack-issued biscuits being too large to dunk in his mug (August) – this is just one aspect of a much wider problem.

Your 350ml thermal mug is measured in metric units, whereas your biscuits are imperial. – Robert Steel, E2 Pers Ops Plans, HQ Land Forces, Wilton.

IN response to Sgt Lovell of ACIO Strand, "Please could I have time to keep fit?" (July), the Army already does provide you with time to maintain your fitness.

You have from 0001 to 0829 and/or from 1701 until 2359 hours to take yourself off for a run.

If you consider a working day of 0830 to 1700 – with the luxury of a lunch break, however brief – a very busy job, you are indeed fortunate. I will swap with you tomorrow! – WO2 D Mitchell, APC Glasgow.

Unappetising for family guy

AS part of a team which travels from unit to unit training branches of the Army on communications equipment, I have found I am out of pocket when working or attending a course at establishments which have introduced Pay As You Dine (PAYD).

Married personnel on courses are paying up to £5 a day to eat – even though they are there training to do their job. In the good old days this used to be classed as a duty.

PAYD in general works well, but when you are on virtually a back-to-back conversion/training cycle, you are constantly paying out for food.

This is fine for the single soldier but for a married man like myself it can run to in excess of £140 for a four-week course (given that transport is only provided to get you there on day one and back at the end). Although £140 doesn't sound like a lot of money, when you have to meet this cost several times a year it is to the detriment of the family back at home.

Incidental expenses can be claimed at £5 per day for the duration of the course. However, this money is to cover the cost

of phone calls, newspapers and laundry and not food. Why should I pay for food on what essentially is a duty away from my own station? We're back to the days where families are penalised for the duties we carry out. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds: There is no rationale to support charging single soldiers for food which they eat but not the married unaccompanied soldiers sitting next to them.

The allowances and charges package is designed to be as fair as possible; it is considered reasonable that you pay for the food which you eat. Paying the daily charge of £3.89 for the core menu five days a week for four weeks costs £77.80.

If your course is more than ten days in duration you are entitled to get you home travel from the first day. This will offset the cost of returning to your family once every fortnight. If you are unable to return to your family at weekends then after ten days you would be entitled to Longer Separation Allowance.

Sauce of brand problem

I WOULD like to know why Naafi is cutting its supplies of Tesco, Iceland and other cheap own-brand products in favour of dearer brands like Walkers Crisps and HP Sauce.

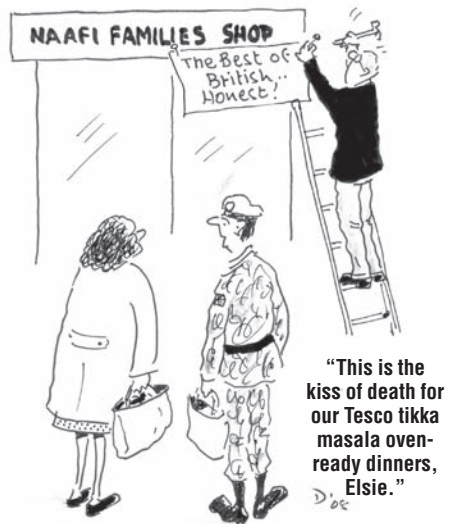
As household costs rise, soldiers want the cheaper quality products, not the expensive brand names that taste the same.

While I understand that Naafi profits go back to the Armed Forces, as a soldier I am more concerned about the money left in my pocket after a shopping trip than the sum the military gets in return for my hard-earned money. — [Concerned soldier, Germany](#).

Sue Smith, Naafi Administration & Communications Manager, responds: It's widely accepted that UK grocery pricing

has gone up by 15 per cent over the last 12 months. This has largely been driven by agricultural price increases and fuel costs.

Because of the exchange rate benefit, we have managed to absorb these costs rather than pass them on to customers. However, Tesco imposed an additional 12 per cent increase on to our standard price. As a result, we took the decision to remove tail-end Tesco lines [lines which sold less than one unit per week per store]. We have also switched from Tesco products where we have been able to source a comparable brand or tertiary label which can offer value to our customers. At no point are we planning to remove Iceland or other competitively priced tertiary brands and we have, in fact, expanded participation.



One Army concept, but two sets of rules

I'M a regimental admin officer on Op Herrick and would like to question the disparity in how Territorial Army and Regular soldiers are treated regarding the Allowable Expense Claim.

Regular soldiers have to shoulder any added financial burden of childcare when deployed – whether it be minder's fees or the cost of a new uniform if it is necessary for the child to move school.

This also extends to soldiers who live in their own home and have to pay for essential maintenance to be carried out while deployed (work which they would otherwise have done themselves).

While many soldiers live in Service accommodation, there is a growing proportion of those who do not, especially as the frequency of moves is decreasing with super garrisons.

As the Army is struggling to retain personnel, surely some recompense in line with what the TA receive is only fair, especially given the "One Army" concept. — [Capt S E Freeman, RAO, 3 Para](#).

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: The bottom line is that Regular and TA soldiers are on different terms and conditions of service because one

is full-time, the other part-time. The personal consequences of a compulsory mobilisation, albeit voluntary, are greater to a TA soldier's life than to a Regular.

TA soldiers' families in general do not have the support of a "patch" with dedicated welfare office staff, HIVEs, the AFF and the PRI minibus.

It is for this reason that they gain additional support.

The compensation is limited and has to be submitted to an authorising officer who checks that they are not an additional benefit, but fulfil a genuine requirement arising from the mobilisation.

PS...

SSAFA Forces Help has become aware that a great number of National Service personnel believe they are not classified as veterans.

This is far from being correct. SSAFA exists to help the needs of all serving men and women and those who have served at any time in the Armed Forces, and their families and dependants, which includes widows and widowers.

SSAFA provides support through a local branch network that operates throughout the UK and in some countries abroad. Our case workers act as sympathetic, knowledgeable and confidential friends to people with problems and difficulties, however personal and varied, and make financial grants when needed.

To contact SSAFA Forces Help or find your local branch, visit our website at www.ssafo.org.uk or call 0207 4038783.

Soldier shoulders the blame



I'VE just read the book review of *A Cold War: Front-line operations in Bosnia* (August) and am writing to point out a mistake. The caption which accompanies the main photograph states that the picture shows a Light Infantry Battlegroup mission in March 1996 – it does not.

I was part of that mission on Op Resolute and the unit pictured is the anti-tank platoon of 1st Battalion, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment – look at the regimental flash on the right shoulder on the right of the picture.

We were a mechanised Saxon battalion (part of 1 Mechanised Brigade) and had deployed by Chinook as part of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. — [Name and address supplied](#).

An editor in need of an eye test writes: Good spot. We stand corrected.

Birthday blues

WHY should my date of birth determine whether I receive a Committals Bonus (CB)?

I enlisted in June 1987 as a junior entrant on the Notice Engagement and have queried with my unit why I did not get the CB that others who joined the Army at the same time did at their five-year point.

After various conversations I have been informed that those on the Notice Engagement were eligible for the CB up until April 1994 and after that only those on the Open Engagement qualified. Is this correct? If so, why should I be penalised just because my qualifying date wasn't until June 4, 1994 (five years after my 18th birthday)? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), writes:

Reckonable service starts when you are 18 or when you join if this is later.

The 1991 CB scheme was open to those serving on an Open Engagement, which was also introduced in 1991, with CB paid at the five- and eight-year point.

Those serving on a Notice Engagement could also receive CBs at the time, but this was discontinued in April 1994.

I am afraid you have missed out and join the club of those, including myself, who have never qualified for a CB or financial retention incentive. Those on Notice Engagement who signed for nine years will have received committal pay.



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Call 0845 241 4820 or visit www.armybenfund.org

Inflation sees fortune cookie crumble

I AM lucky enough to have been posted to a great job in North Wales and have the even greater fortune of being housed in Substitute Service Single Accommodation (SSSA).

As I have to provide my own catering, I also have the welcome bonus of getting a Food Incidental Allowance (FIA).

However, with inflation pushing up the cost of living I believe the amount of FIA received by those in similar situations to myself should be reviewed.

Our annual pay increase was poor and with the price of food rising it almost amounts to a pay cut. – Sgt B McGuire, JSATI, Llanrwst.

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: You are indeed fortunate – Substitute Service Single Accommodation and Food Incidental Allowance; many personnel would be envious.

FIA assists you to meet the necessary additional costs of food and incidental

expenses when you do not have easy access to a mess and have to self cater. It is not supposed to provide free food.

Recent inflationary rises have put additional financial pressure on all Armed Forces personnel.

FIA will net you around £350 per month to buy groceries.

If you think that this is not enough then raise the matter with the chain of command through your regimental administrative officer.

Badge of honour not enough

I SHARE the views voiced by Charles Lovelace (July) with regard to the Veteran's Badge and in particular his support for the striking of a National Defence medal.

I served as a National Serviceman from 1954-56 rising to the rank of sergeant, which, in my opinion, is worthy of greater recognition than a badge.

Although I am proud to own a National Service medal it lacks the formal status of an official decoration. Many young men of my generation served the nation with genuine pride and distinction, a substantial number

making the supreme sacrifice, yet successive Governments have failed to recognise their contribution. What a sad reflection upon our political representatives. – Bernard R Pumfrey, RAOC & RLC Associations, Stratford upon Avon.

I JOINED the French Army in the mid-1980s and was awarded a medal for being injured in combat and another for serving one full year. If the Americans and French can give wounded soldiers a medal why can't the British? – Anthony O'Keefe, Ottawa, Canada.

PS...

HAVING read the letter from Nick Hill, "Palestine veterans back in the picture" (August), I'd like to extend an invitation to all members of the Palestine Veterans Association to return to the region.

My friend and I will be only too pleased to act as guides, friends, cooks and bottle-washers.

Anyone game enough will be given due honour and respect. – Maj Bob Mountwitten, Yasham Anti Terrorist Unit (Volunteers), Israel Police, Jerusalem (mountwitten@gmail.com).



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Caps off to those with their berets on

HAVING followed the debate on “front-line cool” (*Talkback*, recent issues), I find it somewhat disturbing that people think “the old school” should just move with the times.

The British Army has been transformed over the last three decades, during which I have served as both a Regular and Territorial Army volunteer, and in most parts it's been for the better.

Most soldiers pride themselves on the six core values and standards that we all should abide by. However, it is clear that for some this is not the case.

I'm currently coming to the end of a six-month tour in Afghanistan at Kandahar Air Field and, for the first time in my career, I can say that I have spent a deployment in “slipper city”.

I have found myself constantly reminding British Servicemen and women about wearing headdress while walking about,

whereas in contrast I never see American or Canadian troops in anything other than smart apparel. They always have the correct uniform on (and when they are not, they tend to wear issued PT T-shirts and shorts) and look like a professional army. We, on the other hand, do not.

I, even in these conditions, make sure my kit is clean and pressed, ensure my shirt is tucked in and wear my beret. Why? Because I am proud to be a British soldier and am proud to wear the uniform.

When I look around the cookhouse and see overweight soldiers in shorts and with shirts hanging out I feel so let down.

If people come in from the forward operating bases having had a hell of a time, why do they then let their values and standards slip? If you are in an elite unit, be proud of it. Wear your beret with pride and show others who you are. — [Name and address supplied](#).



“I bet he even presses his pyjamas.”

PS...

BRIGADIER Gordon's response to the letter titled “Get on your bike, MoD” (July) was enlightening about the pace of change in certain circles.

The key point I wish to highlight is that the Cycle to Work scheme has been in existence since 1999. One can perhaps accept the ongoing limitations of JPA, but why was there not a process in place to enable military personnel to take advantage of this scheme in 1999 (ahead of the roll out of JPA to the Army in 2007)? Would our elected masters be impressed in these times of high fuel costs and climate warming to learn that we are not able to take advantage of the Government's tax efficient means of purchasing and using bicycles to travel to work? — Maj Derek Fagg, AAC, RAF High Wycombe.

Pension switch confusion

I AM a re-enlistee having initially joined the Army in November 1994 and left in July 2005. Entering the Army Careers Office in 2005, I officially rejoined my regiment in March 2006.

I was promised at the time of rejoining that, because I had been out of uniform for such a short time, I'd keep my rank and seniority and more importantly be kept on the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS75). I checked this with Glasgow and they confirmed I was still on the scheme.

However, when a colleague, who had rejoined under similar circumstances, checked his own details he was told he had been placed on the new scheme. And, sure enough, when I phoned the Joint Personnel Administration Centre I was told the same. Surely they can't just transfer me on to a new scheme without my permission. Shouldn't I have to sign something to say I want to

switch? — [LSgt Treharne, 1 Welsh Guards](#).

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:

Whatever you have been told, re-enlisting after April 2005, when AFPS75 closed, and leaving the Service for more than 30 days removes your entitlement to rejoin the scheme. From your re-enlistment date you are accruing a pension under AFPS05 and will receive this pension from 60 or 65 depending on how long you serve.

Assuming you left with a preserved pension, you will have to claim it at 60 by writing to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA). You also have the option to put your preserved AFPS75 value into your AFPS05 pension, which will increase your benefits but remove all your rights under AFPS75.

Contact SPVA by emailing JPAC@spva.mod.uk or calling 0800 0853600.

Unit all at sea thanks to shipping delay

I WRITE with regard to paying quartering charges when a Service person is unable to occupy their residence and their entitlement to claim Private Arrangements Rate (PAR).

My husband's unit recently returned to the UK after a 28-month tour in Cyprus. A large number of personnel took over their quarters and were due to have their Personal Effects (PE) delivered the following day. However, due to a shipping delay, their furniture was not available for delivery. Some had to wait up to three weeks for their PE and were consequently unable to occupy their Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and had to seek alternative arrangements.

Are personnel entitled to claim back quartering charges/contribution in lieu of Council Tax and PAR for this period?

I look forward to passing on any reply to a large number of personnel who are out of pocket for reasons beyond their control. — [Sgt M Humble, TPMH, RAF Akrotiri](#).

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds:

Charges for SFA start from the day of occupation, and it is assumed that your PE arrive at the same time or very soon after. As these were delayed for reasons beyond your control, I believe you have a case for asking for a refund for the period between

SFA takeover and the arrival of your PE. You should submit a case through your unit to SPVA JPACC.

Where personnel and accompanying dependants are unable to move into Service accommodation there is an entitlement to night subsistence (NS) for up to 14 nights from arrival, which may be extended up to 28 by the CO if continued occupation of hotel accommodation is unavoidable. PAR is admissible when staying with friends, instead of NS, at a rate of £25. But only one PAR may be claimed per night regardless of the number of family members accommodated.

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Kick aimed at soldiers' sole providers

AS a member of an Infantry ops company, I want to publicise the disgraceful attitude of the quartermaster's department of 52 Infantry Brigade on Op Herrick 7.

During the entire six month period we were in theatre it was virtually impossible to obtain replacement kit such as boots, goggles and gloves.

On several occasions myself and colleagues attempted to get various worn-out items of equipment changed only to be met with responses such as "come back later", "we're closed", "we've not got that size" or "none in stock". The latter two excuses were hard to swallow as the items in question were seen in the store or issued to other base personnel that same day.

This problem needs to be addressed so that those on future tours don't encounter the same problems we did. – [Name and address supplied](#).

Maj T N Crapper, OC 52 Infantry Brigade



"Cut out the whinging corporal, you're not the only one with worn-out boots."

HQ & Signal Squadron (258), responds:
Regarding the first issue levelled,

the QM's department availability was published by the camp commandant (the QM) daily and was open most days with emergency issues available 24/7.

As for the other, more serious accusations, I know that the clothing store issued whatever was requested whenever it was in stock. I too could not get boots during the tour, and I commanded the base. The problems related to the supply of kit which, given the nature and frictions of the operation, is unsurprising.

Herrick 7 was particularly demanding for all concerned; this was also the case for the QM's department. Despite supply chain issues relating to the nature of the op, the QM was relatively well stocked.

To allay your concerns for the future, the writer will be pleased to know that the QM's department was entirely restructured during the tour in order to make the support for all those in remote locations much more impressive.

Mess debate gets heated Disturbing development

AS a sergeant living in the Duchess of Kent's WO's and Sgts' Mess in Aldershot, I'd like to draw attention to the fact that we've had no heating or hot water for the past seven months.

This has been a recurring problem and it seems that between the garrison and related contractors nothing is being done. You can't sit in the ante room during the winter as it is too cold, unless you are wearing several layers of clothing, gloves and a duvet! I hope that this letter stirs someone into doing something to sort out this completely unacceptable situation.

I understand that part of the problem relates to asbestos in the pipes and although this is serious, it does not justify why nothing has been done. The normal excuse given is that the garrison will not put any money into the barracks as they are set to be demolished in the future.

I would also like to point out that the kitchen staff have to boil large pans of water to enable them to clean the kitchen equipment and our plates/cutlery. I am sure this contravenes most health and safety laws. – [A concerned SNCO](#).

Col Tim Forster, Aldershot Garrison Colonel, replies: Your correspondent is correct in that the barracks is being disposed of in 2012 and that there have been serious issues surrounding the provision of hot water and heating since February due to the failure of the antiquated district heating system.

However, I take issue with the suggestion that Aldershot Garrison and Aspire Defence Limited have done nothing to resolve the issue. In February there

was a major failure in the heating system. Attempts to remedy the faults proved ineffective in spite of the best efforts of the contractor. A minimum provision of temporary heating, hot water and an electric power shower for each floor was provided to the WO's and Sgts' Mess. It was accepted that this was a less than satisfactory situation and authority was granted for a "rental waiver" for all those living in the barracks and this was backdated to February 19.

The writer will know that Aldershot Garrison will benefit from a £325 million construction and refurbishment project as part of Project Allenby/Connaught between 2006 and 2015, which will deliver Z-type accommodation. Notwithstanding this investment, the MoD agreed on May 20 to finance an interim solution for the barracks which will see the installation of a new standalone hot water and heating system [scheduled to be operational by the time this issue goes to press].

Mention is made of conditions in the kitchen. I can confirm that pots and pans are being washed by hand, but the correspondent can be reassured that this practice complies with health and safety regulations and Food Safety Standards.

Reference is also made to asbestos. The underground heating pipes are lagged with asbestos and the management of this has been in full compliance with The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002.

Finally, a note to readers in Aldershot. Please be assured that you have a contractor and Garrison staff who welcome dialogue and are committed to delivering betterment within the resources available.

I AM a serving Army welfare worker and by virtue of my appointment as a single soldier I am entitled to occupy Service Families Accommodation (SFA) under the Substitute Single Soldiers Accommodation rule (which allows me some form of separation and distance from potential Service users).

My question relates to a recent move following an assignment to a new post. When I came to apply for Disturbance Allowance (DA) to financially aid my move and any reasonable costs I might incur on setting up home once again, I found my initial claim was rejected.

I was informed that my move could only be classed as a Single Living Accommodation (SLA) move, which meant I received the grand total of £88. I find this ridiculous. How can you compare the costs incurred in a single room move to that of a two bedroom house move? There is no way I can possibly clean one SFA and set up another SFA on £88, particularly when I was picked up for limescale on my toilet and was promptly billed a third of my DA. – [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), writes:

At the moment you are entitled to SLA DA because you are single. One of the principles of DA is that it reflects the type of accommodation being moved into.

I agree the expenses that you might incur moving from SFA to SFA are likely to be greater than from SLA to SLA. I have asked my staff to review the deal offered to single soldiers in your situation.



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Soldiers setting gold standard

BACK in August, Gordon Brown told British troops in Afghanistan that they showed a heroism and dedication that would put even the country's Olympic athletes to shame. But I wonder if comparing soldiers with Olympians is fair.

This summer Team GB gave a much needed boost to the nation. We British seem to accept and even expect our sportsmen and women will deliver a mediocre performance, but this year our athletes were among the best in the world. During the long wet months of summer and with spirits dampened further by the credit crunch, they helped uplift the nation's morale.

Similarities between the characteristics of the athletes and our soldiers are many: determination, endurance, discipline and pride in their performance. But can we really call the Olympians heroes?

Did they really display heroic acts? This is where British soldiers distinguish themselves from top sports' performers – they are prepared to lay down their lives to protect others. However, the respect given to our soldiers does not always reflect their selfless sacrifices.

I have been disappointed by a number of stories in the media over the last few weeks which have highlighted a lack of respect or appreciation: a soldier not being allowed to stay in a hotel; a soldier on his way home from Afghanistan being refused a military discount on a train; and a town hall banning a parade for war heroes.

I would hope that these reports will lead to a period of reflection for those involved. It is interesting that incidents like this still occur when there has been such tremendous recognition of soldiers through support for Help for Heroes. Such negative



Silver service: Op Telic veteran-turned-Olympic rowing medallist Capt Al Heathcote (Blues and Royals) has a dual claim on being dubbed a hero

‘It takes one kind of courage to race in front of millions, but another kind entirely to put your life on the line’

stories will doubtless add to families' reluctance to support their children in joining the Armed Forces and so exacerbate poor recruitment and retention.

What is needed are some good news stories, such as the recently announced investment of £10 million to support state boarding schools and so increase the number of places available to Service children. This will provide more stability of education – and friendships – for children who are constantly the “new kid”.

I spoke to a family that were due an imminent move and their priority was getting school places secured for their children. “My children's education is the most important thing to me – even more important than a house”, I was told. With those words in mind I am pleased to see that the education of our heroes' children is receiving more funding.

There have also been a few pieces of good news about housing. Soldiers from 1 R Welsh moved into newly refurbished houses in Chester, and the battalion reported that families would be living in high quality housing during their time in the city.

Here, the impact on morale of a decent home was tangible. I hope that the £8 billion allocated to improving Service accommodation over the next ten years will be sufficient to provide all those in uniform, and their families, with homes fit for heroes.

Unfortunately in September, squatters in London felt that empty Service Families Accommodation provided suitable housing for them, and the MoD saw fit to blame the squatters for the delay to the renovation of these homes. Let's hope that when Defence Estates starts letting out long term voids to Housing Associations we don't have a similar problem. Our heroes and their families do not need to be subjected to any more excuses.

So, was it fair of Gordon Brown to compare Olympic athletes to soldiers? On the one hand yes, because they both display admirable characteristics, but if we look at the definition of hero (a person who is admired for their courage), then perhaps not. It takes one kind of courage to race in front of millions, but another kind entirely to put your life on the line to save others. ■

The column that offers you a confidential way to tackle debt – and it won't cost you a penny

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Credit Action Director Chris Tapp will be pleased to answer, in confidence, specific questions addressed to the Editor.



Markets and me

FOR the financial world, this year will be remembered as one of the most dramatic in living memory. There has barely been a week go by without news of another bankruptcy, merger,

nationalisation or government bail-out. All this makes for lots of exciting headlines but the goings on in the offices of the City, Canary Wharf and Wall Street can seem very distant. So what difference does it make to us?

For one group of people – those who have investments in stocks and shares – the impact of struggling companies and a slumping stock market will be quite direct. For many others the impact will be indirect but just as painful. Many savings accounts such as stocks and shares ISAs and pension funds are invested in the stock market, which means that as the value of major stocks like the FTSE falls, so the value of people's pensions and savings is reduced. Even if you don't have direct or indirect investments in stocks and shares, you will still feel an effect. As more financial

institutions struggle, so the level of confidence banks have in each other falls. This means it costs banks more to borrow money and if it's more expensive for them, then it's more expensive for us. We should all be prepared for high mortgage payments and credit costs in the coming months.

On the other side of the coin, banks are looking to shore up their finances by encouraging people to save more by offering higher interest rates.

The one thing not to do is panic. Instead, sit down, draw up a budget and plan your finances to ensure that you are well-placed to ride out the current storm.

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TEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 803, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by October 31.

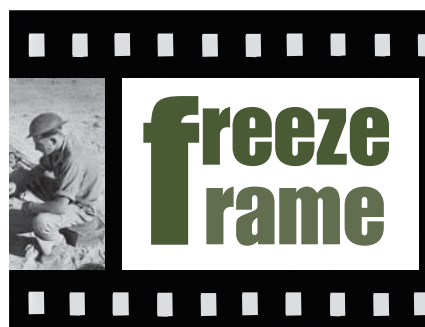
A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the December issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

August competition (No 801): First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Gnr Underdown**, Hambrook, West Sussex. Runners-up **Mr E Searcey**, Nottingham and **W02 Bridge**, Airfield Camp, Netheravon each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: Para wings; number 75 on glider nose; port hole under glider wing; parachutist from glider; trigger guard on machine gun; hob nails on boot; axle nut on trailer; centre of roundel insignia; upper gable window in house; wheel assembly under glider on right.



Winner of our August competition (below):

A COPY of James Fergusson's *A Million Bullets: The Real Story of the British Army in Afghanistan* is being issued to 2 PWRR welfare officer P Lightowler for: **"The RSM**

tries to prevent a mass resignation after his troops find out the new rates of pay for traffic wardens."

Also picking up on the "traffic Taliban" theme was Sandra Shephard, FMO, who suggested: **"As an example, numerous tickets were given out for clumsy parking."**

Among the best of the rest were: Simon Harrison's **"The investigation concluded that it was Colonel Mustard in the Ford at the turning to the Officers' Mess"** and **"Sir, perhaps we should ask the drill sergeant to lower his voice when calling 'left, right, left, right', it seems to be causing a few problems"** from Ian Goodwin-Reeves, Admin officer, 150 Recovery Company, REME.



Picture: LA Jamine B Hartmann

Bob had been coping admirably with the summer heat of Iraq until following Pte Caswell's advice to "spice up" his rations with a full bottle of Tabasco sauce

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by October 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Target Mussolini*, Deryck Howell's new Second World War action novel about a mission to recover Italy's missing millions (BCB International, £14.95).

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www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.baor-locations.com

Website of the British Army of the Rhine and its locations.

www.forcesresources.co.uk

Lists hundreds of BFPO-friendly companies, a forum, classifieds section and information on the EHC and much more.

www.sftf.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

www.army.mod.uk/army_health

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.iam.org.uk

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www.supportourtroopsuk.co.uk

Support our Troops event at Basingstoke, Aug 16-17.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

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www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/

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Official website of the British Army.

www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

Website of HQ Land Command's chief environment and safety officer.

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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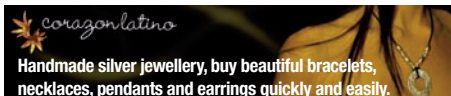
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www.rememuseum.org.uk

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www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

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Also available at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Information Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/awf

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 020 8590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gt.net

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

MoD Medal Office: Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group): 07962 023654, 01803 311527; www.mutualsupport.org.uk; email welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk; fax 01482 808731

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 2360058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association) Falklands conflict veterans: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 020 7403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA): 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment Programme: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS (24-hr answer service): 02920 739016; general enquiries 02920 739016

Reunions

Black Watch Band: Reunion at Queen's Barracks, Perth on Oct 4 at 1930. 7 Scots Central Band, open to all members and families, cost £10. Bring your instruments. Contact W02 S Malcolm on 0131 310 8554 or email highlandbandrrs@btconnect.com

RADC: WOs' & Sgts' Mess Dinner Club Oct 17 at Duchess of Kent WOs' & Sgts' Mess, Aldershot. All ex-members, serving and retired, are welcome. Contact W01 Rob Pratt, DDS Complex, Evelyn Wood Road, Aldershot GU11 2LS or ring 01252 347780.

British nuclear bomb test sites: Reunion weekend for all Service personnel and civilians who were based at Monte Bello, Maralinga, Malden Island and Christmas Island on Oct 17-20 at Sand Bay, Weston-super-Mare. Details from Jim Cooper on 01903 533768 or email jim.cooper4@ntlworld.com

10th Royal Hussars: Reunion and dinner Oct 18, at The Acton Court Hotel, 187 Buxton Road, Stockport. For details ring Ron Fletcher on 01405 763235 or visit www.xrhgb.com

Alex Soyer Dinner: Officers' Mess, St Omer Barracks, Aldershot on Oct 30. Dress black tie. Attendees officers who have completed the Food Service Officers'/Food Supply Officers' courses or are currently in a FS supporting role. Contact Guy Thewlis on 01252 348164 by Oct 17.

56th Midlands Festival of Remembrance: In the Town Hall, Birmingham on Nov 2 to mark 100 years of TA. Contact F Manning, 22 Lambeth Road, Birmingham B44 9BA.

South Notts Hussars Association: Dinner on Nov 8 at TA Centre, Bulwell, Nottingham. Past and present members with wives and partners. Ring Miss D Pover on 0115 927 2251 for tickets. Remembrance Service in St Mary's Church, Nov 9 at 1055. All ex-members of HM Forces welcome to attend.

Devon Festival of Remembrance: Exeter University, Nov 6. £6 RBL members, £8 non-members. Call RBL Devon on 01392 272211.

155 (WX) Transport Regt RCT (V): HQ Sqn reunion Nov 13 at the Royal British Legion, Taunton. Open to members who served at Bishops Hull TAC prior to disbandment in 1993. Contact Colin Hole with a SAE at PO Box 760, Taunton TA1 9BA.

Farewell to St Omer Day: Nov 22, open to all who have previously been stationed at St Omer to bid farewell. Entry by ticket only. Contact Mrs Elaine Hill on 01252 348108.

Competitions

A Cold War: Maj P MacFarlane RDG, Op Telic, BFPO 641. Answer: Sarajevo.

Searchline

A researcher is trying to put a name to the regiment(s) that were stationed at **PoW Camp 28, Garendon Park, Loughborough**, during 1942-45. The camp may have been attached to Knighthorpe Camp. Contact Michael Lowe on 01509 672928 or 4 Hillside, Kegworth DE74 2EB or email michael.lowe2@ntlworld.com

Where are you **25015959 Richard D Bulter REME?** Possibly now serving in Germany, was at 40 Regt, Topcliffe in the late 1990s and had a trade of gun fitter. Contact Neil Watson by email lisajwatson@btinternet.com

Josephine is trying to contact her father **Keith Prince**. From Manchester, he was a lance corporal in the RAOC based at Deepcut, Surrey in 1971 and worked in the transport dept. Contact Josephine Matthews at 165b Winchester Road, Brislington, Bristol BS4 3NJ.

Ex-Cpl William Warren is trying to find **Cpl Paul Tingle REME**. His wife is **Gutran** and they have two children. He was based in Germany in 1983. Please contact Linda Warren by email warrensat161@talktalk

A German writer is working on a novel on the social impact of the presence of the British Army in Germany. She is researching stories from people who are (or have been) part of the British/German culture around the military before and after reunification. The novel is called *Eine Strasse Weiter* (A Street Apart). The research is for inspiration, as well as historical correctness and will not be used elsewhere. Contact Miriam Stein by email mym@gmx.org

A brother is seeking a lost sibling. Where are you **Ian G Park** from Cleator Moor? Now probably a Sgt and last heard stationed in Germany. Please Ian, let's put the past behind us. Ring Stephen on 01946 694451 or email stevierapid@aol.com

James Ramsay Logan from Garstang Road, Preston, your daughter is trying to trace you. James was in the Army and based at Doniford Watchet, Somerset from 1960-63. Contact Miss Fiona Parsons (Logan) at 10 Mill Lane, Dunster Murchhead, Somerset TA24 6SW.

A reader is trying find the origin of a saying **"Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday, and all is well"**. This was written by a John T Tindsley, a Serviceman who was a PoW in Japan. Contact Mrs C Wiggins, Rye Lodge, Barley Lands, Aldeburgh, Suffolk IP15 5LW.

A Canadian lady is trying to trace a friend who she met in Edmonton, Alberta, by the name of **Matthew Coe** (also known as Sebastian). The soldier was based at the Calgary Station in 2007 and was involved in testing tanks. Contact Crystal Grendys by email kcpardys@hotmail.com

Were you stationed in Miri around 1965-66? An Australian lady is trying to find two friends, **Thomas Beckwith** (possibly RTR) and **Keith** (RJG or KRRC). Contact Dara Bacon (nee Noor) by email ninabo1@bigpond.com



Picture: Soldierarchive

Peacemakers: Soldiers from 58 (Eyes) Light Air Defence Battery carry out a patrol on the streets of Belfast during the height of Op Banner in March 1973

Troubles remembered

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne was among those leading tributes to soldiers who served in Northern Ireland at a special commemoration held in London's St Paul's Cathedral.

Joining veterans and their families, the minister honoured all those who took part in Op Banner, the longest-running British military deployment of modern times.

The service was held a year after the end of the 38-year campaign, which claimed the lives of around 800 Service personnel and injured 6,000 more.

Those attending the service included

former Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher, whose leadership ran through one of the most violent periods of the Troubles.

Mr Browne said all those who had served during the years of violence embodied the spirit of the Armed Forces.

He added: "They served with the characteristic determination, selflessness and professionalism that typify our Armed Forces. The nation's debt to them and to the loved ones who survive them is immeasurable and their sacrifice must never be forgotten."

A memorial candle, symbolising all

those killed in the campaign, was also lit by Mary Moreland, whose husband died as a result of terrorist action.

After the commemoration, several hundred veterans marched through the city to the London Guildhall.

Ending July 31 last year, Op Banner was superseded by Operation Helvetic, which encompasses a garrison of 5,000 military personnel in ten locations.

During the worst period of the campaign between 1972 and 1973 almost 30,000 military personnel were stationed in Northern Ireland.

Appointments

Maj Gen: C G S Hughes, late Staffords, to be GOC 3 (UK) Div, in Aug 09; N J Caplin, late AAC, to be GOC (UK) Sp Comd (G), in Sep 09.

Brig: T R Urch, late RE, to be Commander 1 Mech Bde, in Dec 08; R F P Felton, late AAC, to be Commander 4 Mech Bde, in Apr 09; N Welch, late RGBW/LI, to be Commander 7 Armd Bde, in Mar 09; N Marshall, late RA, to be Commander Arty HQ 3 (UK) Div, in Apr 09; IG Harrison, late RA, to be Chief Joint Fires & Influence Branch, HQ ACERRC, in Dec 08; R M B Nitsch, late REME, to be Commander 102 Log Bde, in Dec 08; S P Hodder, late RE, to be Commander 43 (Wx) Bde, in Jan 09; A T Davies, late RLC, to be Commander 104 Log Sp Bde, in Dec 08; J I S Stevenson, late RS, to be Comdt Sch of Inf, in Dec 08; A J Deas, late RLC, Comdt Defence College of Log and Personnel Admin, in Jan 09; M J Hallas, late Int Corps, to be Dir Int Corps/Comdt Defence Int and Sy Centre, in Jan 09; M A P Carleton-Smith, late IG, to be Director Army Resources and Plans, in Jan 09; J G Lorimer, late Para, to be Asst COS J3 PJHQ, in Jun 09; J T Jackson, late RGJ, to be Commander Recruiting Gp, in Jan 09; S L Porter, late R Anglian, to be Div Head (J5 Plans & Pol) SHAPE, in Jan 09; E O Foster-Knight, late AGC(RMP), to be Provost Marshal (A), in Mar 09; T P Evans, late LI, to be Chief Joint Force Ops PJHQ, in Dec 08;

P J Fabricius, late RAMC, to be Comdt & Defence Postgrad Medical Dean, in Dec 08; W N Aldridge, late RRF, to be Commander 42 (NW) Bde, in Sep 08; A T Davis, late RLC, to be Commander 104 Log Sp Bde, in Jan 09; M T Griffiths, late KORBR, to be DPS(A) HQLF, in Sep 08; D J Clements, late R Anglian, to be DAPS HQLF, in Oct 08; R E Nugee, late RA, to be DM(A) HQLF, in Dec 08; M P Maer, late PWRR, to be COS Fd Army HQLF, in Jan 09; J D Bevan, late RLC, to be Dep COS, Combat Svc Sp, in Dec 08; N P Moffat, late AGC(OPS), to be Director (SPS (Army)), in Apr 09; S G Vowles, late AGC(ALS), to be Brig Op Law Branch, in Oct 08; P

D McEvoy, late AGC(ALS), to be Brig Prosecutions, HQ Army Prosecution Authority, in Oct 08; J M R Henderson, late REME, to be Director Log HQLF, in Dec 08; M P Dodson, late Hldrs, to be Dep Mil Sec APC, in Aug 08; C L Wilks, late RE, to be Director Eng Battlefield Infrastructure Gp, Director Gen Land Eqpt, Defence Eqpt & Sp, in Nov 08; P J Davies, late R Signals, to be Defence Info Infrastructure Integrated Project Team Leader, Defence Eqpt & Sp, in Oct 08; J F Rowan, late RAMC, to be Commander 2 Med Bde, in Aug 09; J T Graham, late RAMC, to be Director Med Plans HQ AMD, in Aug 09.

Defence diary

Until further notice: **Helmand: The Soldiers' Story** – 16 Air Assault Brigade exhibition. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

Until October 12: Free **Military Pride** exhibition at the Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. Go to www.iwm.org.uk/north for details.

Launching October 25: **World on Fire** exhibition at the National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

November 29-30: The 20th Birmingham Tattoo. Go to www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk for details.

■ Email diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Roadshow dates

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and finishes with a finger buffet. Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

Oct: 1, Worthing; 14, Tonbridge; 15, Camberley; 28, Liverpool; 29, Blackpool; 30, Rochdale. **Nov:** 12, Chingford; 18, Croydon; 20, Camden. **Dec:** No presentations.

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Movies

OCTOBER REVIEW



Where did it go wrong?: Independent filmmaker Chris Waitt plumbs the depths of desperation to find his ex-girlfriends and ask why they callously dumped him after just a few dates



Sex lies on tape

Ex-files of Army brat Chris Waitt lay bare his crimes and misdemeanours

Interview: Karen Thomas

WHAT would you do if one of your ex-girlfriends looked into a TV camera and said she'd never had an orgasm with you and that sex was not a highlight of the relationship?

Chris Waitt kept filming, edited the sequence along with a string of other equally explicit interviews with his exes, and made a documentary about his life as possibly the worst boyfriend ever. But after being dumped every two months for two years, Waitt wanted to ask every woman he'd dated what was wrong with him.

It wasn't easy. One former partner sought legal advice and most of the others rudely refused to talk candidly on camera. But then, as you look at Waitt's matted hair, unshaven chin, unwashed look and generally grungy living conditions, it's even more difficult to see how he got these women into bed in the first place.

His gentleness and naivete might

be appealing to the fairer sex, but one look at his loo and you understand why his producer screams that he's "ambling around freaking people out". Waitt persists in tracking his exes down despite one exclaiming "I want to vomit" down the phone and another hurling expletives at him as he pleaded through her letterbox.

"All the girlfriends in the film are my real ex-girlfriends who, unfortunately for them, went out with me. Some of them are still angry about it," Waitt confirmed to *Soldier*.

"I think the one thing they all had in common was that they quite enjoyed seeing me making an idiot of myself or being made an idiot of. That was a kind of revenge for them.

"I probably come over as more of an idiot than I am in everyday life. You tend to pick all the bits where you look and sound the most stupid partly because it is more entertaining. But I'm guilty of the crimes in the film and hopefully I've paid my dues."

However, the only real crime that Waitt must own up to is one that many, male and female, commit. *A Complete History of My Sexual Failures* is more than a very funny warts-and-all exposure of his emotional and sexual faults. It's a love story with a sad ending because Waitt took the love of his life for granted until she got fed up and left.

"The truth is a lot of us get dumped and it's all quite amusing. There's a lot of humour to be had in it and we tried our best to put the film together in a way that kept it quite light and entertaining," he explained, adding that the pathos is felt more keenly because of the contrasting comedy.

"Everyone knows that splitting up can be pretty painful and when it really came down to the more serious things in my life, I had to face up to some of them. I just missed the boat on the big relationship and it's a shocking realisation. I think I only realised that because of the film."

Amid the chaos of Waitt's life, it's a



bit of a surprise to learn that his father ended a 15-year Service career as a sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Yet it was Alex, the 33-year-old's new woman, who straightened out the independent filmmaker.

"I have improved massively and I'm quite military in my tidiness. I think the men and women from the Army would be totally impressed with my new levels of self-discipline as a result of making the film. I did live somewhat like a pig.

"The one bit of advice I always dole out is please read the instructions on Viagra packets, as that can lead you astray. And also don't mix beer and Viagra – that's a bad one," Waitt added. You need to watch to find out why he resorted to the drug and found himself at the mercy of a dominatrix.

"As for the actual relationship with your partner, am I the man to give out advice? Probably not. All the things that I would normally say, which is don't be like me – be on time, be tidy, wash occasionally, shave – I'm sure they all do anyway because they're in the Army.

"Boyfriends have quite liked taking their girlfriends to see the film because they go along and say, 'you think I'm bad, look at him' and just by comparison they look quite good." ■



A Complete History of My Sexual Failures, out to own on DVD Oct 20

IT'S hard to know where to start reviewing this record of **Chris Waitt's** efforts to interview his ex-girlfriends as he tries to find out why he keeps getting dumped. There are moments of bizarre comedy but the overall tone is rather uncomfortable. The film is about love, insecurity, loss and hope of redemption. If you live life at all then you're going to experience at least one of these sooner or later. It isn't an easy watch but do yourself a favour and give this remarkable film a try. **Daniel King, MoD**



Blacula and Scream Blacula Scream, out to own on DVD now

MADE in the early 70s, the Blaxploitation classics strongly promote the black culture of the time. **William Marshall** stars as Blacula, an 18th century African prince turned into a vampire by Count Dracula. He's imprisoned until awoken in 1970s Los Angeles. The sequel tells of Blacula's return from the dead. Again. Crudely made and shockingly cheesy, both movies have moments of dark humour and are a must for Blaxploitation fans. Everyone else, don't bother. **LCpl Chris MacCallum, 242 MI Section, Int Corps**



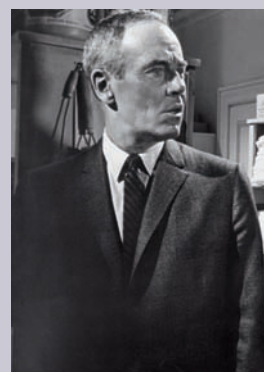
Incendiary, in cinemas October 24

BASED on a prophetic novel released on the same day as the 2005 London bombings, *Incendiary* probes the issues surrounding a terrorist attack. Focusing on a mum who loses her son and husband in a suicide strike, the film opens powerfully but quickly loses direction. The unnamed widow is caught in a love triangle, gets to know the son of one of the bombers and is embroiled in a police conspiracy. *Incendiary* fails to cover the many perspectives successfully but is redeemed by strong performances from both **Ewan McGregor** and **Matthew Macfadyen**.



The Graduate, out to own on DVD now

NOW a grand 25-years-old, has *The Graduate* aged well? From the opening title, catchy **Simon and Garfunkel** songs play in nostalgic succession, as **Ben (Dustin Hoffman)** struggles to find purpose in his privileged life. Mrs Robinson (**Katherine Ross**), Ben's temptress, plays her role with aristocratic class though she has aged the worst of the film's characters. Ben's character displays little emotion, but many of the cult scenes that have been imitated by other films are just as magical today. **LCpl Paul Thomas, 233 MI Section, Int Corps**



The Best Man, out to own on DVD from October 20

COINCIDING with US presidential elections is the reissue of this popular political drama. This intellectual film seeks to answer whether the best man goes to the White House. The 1964 original has lost none of its relevance to today's audience. The two party front runners have very different character traits, strengths and flaws. Viewers are kept guessing which of the excellently-played individuals will be the leader. Expect sharp exchanges of dialogue and many thought-provoking questions to be raised. **LCpl Paul Thomas, 233 MI Section, Int Corps**

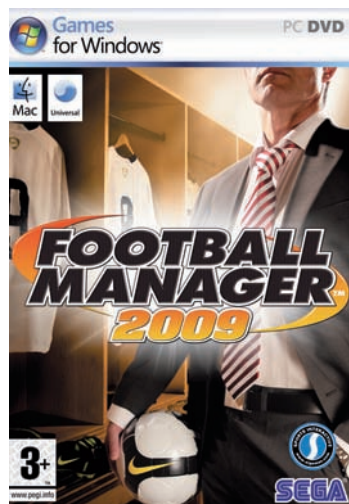


Killer Klowns from Outer Space, out on DVD now

KLOWNS killing? Whatever next? Sorry people, but this movie just doesn't cut the mustard for any genre. Apparently \$2 million was spent making this film and much of that went on production. Yet the Klowns, bless their little cotton socks, looked pretty low cost. Acid custard pies are just not funny, even in this movie. Personally speaking I hate clowns and this does nothing to endear them to me, nor will it you. Puerile B Movie comedy at its worst. Thankfully the **Chiodo** brothers never made anything else. **WO2 Andy Draper, AGC**

Games

OCTOBER REVIEW



Beautiful gaming: Would-be Army team supremos can try their hand at being the boss in *Football Manager 2009*



Dugout dreams

Players live out life on the bench in latest instalment of Sega's soccer series

Preview: Stephen Tyler

QUITE how Paul Jewell managed to fail so dramatically in last season's attempt to steer Derby County to Premier League safety is hard to fathom.

While the Rams struggled to a record low of just 11 points, conceding 89 goals and finishing last, *Soldier* breezed through its maiden term at the helm of League Two titans Peterborough United with an unbeaten championship campaign and a glorious run to the final of the FA Cup.

Talk of a job offer from the land's top teams inevitably followed, but Fergie and co can breathe a sigh of relief – *Soldier's* managerial masterclass was achieved while sat in front of a computer playing *Football Manager* for more hours than can possibly be deemed healthy.

This year's version of the game, due for release on November 14, looks to be every bit as addictive thanks to

the inclusion of a raft of new features designed to help keep you in a job much longer than Kevin Keegan.

Among the most drastic improvements is the introduction of a 3D match engine based on Sega Japan's *Virtua Striker* which allows players to watch their virtual charges' performances as matches progress.

Miles Jacobsen, managing director of *Football Manager 2009* creator Sports Interactive, told *Soldier* that the 3D view is one of more than 50 changes from last year's release.

"We have another couple of games in us based on the ideas for this version alone," he said. "We have been working on the match engine for some time and it's just gone from strength to strength.

"We are aiming incredibly high for what we are trying to do with it."

Since launching the revamped *Football Manager* series in 2005, Sports Interactive has developed the game's database to include an astonishing level of detail.

Managers with a burning desire to guide East Bengal to Indian Premier League glory or Ruch Chorzow to safety in Poland's Ekstraklasa can fulfil their fantasies with the game's 5,000 playable clubs.

The increasing pressure on managers from the media has been reflected with pre- and post-match press conferences in which players have to answer questions from journalists.

Relationships can be built up over time, but Jacobsen insists gamers will have to choose their answers carefully.

Behind every good manager is an able assistant and the game now offers pre-match and in-game feedback from the number two on performances.

One of the best features of *Football Manager* has always been its ability to predict which young players will become superstars and the 2009 version looks set to continue that trend.

Sports Interactive's network of researchers have previously singled out the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and



Picture: Graeme Main

Lionel Messi as potential world beaters and one fan has gone on to become a professional scout.

The statistics are so accurate that Jacobsen believes two Premiership clubs based their summer transfer activities on the game's database and even claims some players have contacted Sports Interactive to argue about their ratings.

"Footballers have told us that the three things they like to do after training are playing golf, going shopping with their WAGs and playing *Football Manager*," he explained. "We have also had players come in to complain that they should be rated higher."

With more English sides selling out to foreign owners, the game's transfer system allows super rich clubs to blow big bucks on players.

But whether gamers want to buy their way to the title or build a team on a budget, *Football Manager 2009* is versatile enough to cater for everyone. And with the title likely to fly off the shelves when it is released on PC, Mac and PSP, Jacobsen remains convinced that the series has lots of life left in it.

"We make the game for ourselves so hopefully we will carry on making it whatever happens," he concluded. "We will continue doing what we do and try to raise the bar each year." ■



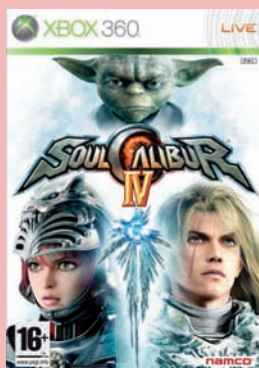
Tiger Woods PGA Tour, Xbox 360

AFTER a dire year in the *Tiger Woods* franchise, the wheels certainly appeared to have fallen off. But this year they are re-affixed with a polished offering from EA Sports. Refined controls, excellent graphics and a top-notch soundtrack are just some of the features included in the 09 edition of the game. Hank Haney, Tiger's coach, is at hand to help make those tweaks to your club selection. He also assesses your ability after every match. *Tiger* is a polished product and recommended. **WO2 Andy Draper, AGC**



Madden 09, Xbox 360

BRASH and overly confusing it may be, but there can be no denying the popularity of the smash-and-dash world of NFL American football. The sport has been a staple on games consoles for 20 years courtesy of Electronic Art's *John Madden* series – and the 2009 incarnation is the best-looking yet. The TV-style presentation is intuitive and a new difficulty system adjusts the computer's skill level to match your own. All in all, *Madden 09* is a good package, but one for gamers who have enough knowledge of the sport, and can work out their hook and laterals from their zone blitzes.



Soul Calibur 4, Xbox 360 & PS3

WHETHER or not you are a fan of fighting games, there can be no doubt that this is the best offering in the genre this year. Balancing a worthy character creation mode with some familiar veterans of the series, players get to do battle in style. Gamers can even assign attributes to their fighters to compensate for any personal weaknesses they might have in combat. Special guest appearances from two *Star Wars* stalwarts, Jedi Master Yoda on Xbox 360 and Darth Vader, the Dark Lord of the Sith, on PS3, add to the fun. **Maj Neil Powell, AGC**



Mercenaries 2, Xbox 360

RETURNING for another excursion, this third-person shooter puts players back in the grubby world of the hired gun and killing for cash. After choosing your character, players embark on a series of missions with enough weaponry to zap enemy troops by the truckload. Having not been acquainted with the series before, *Soldier* found *Mercenaries 2* to be an entertaining blaster, although the third-person perspective is certainly an acquired taste. If you want a better title where you are pitted against a legion of bad guys, seek out *Far Cry Instincts: Predator* – still one of the best in its genre.



Tom Clancy's End War, Xbox 360

SOLDIER has been carefully watching the progress of this voice-controlled real-time strategy game and has now managed to get some hands-on time. And there is no doubt that *End War* looks extremely promising. The voice control of units, which include armoured personnel carriers and helicopter gunships, worked virtually flawlessly on the demo version we sampled while graphics and sound were beyond reproach. The action is also unfailingly slick, and players must keep their cool in sticky situations if they are to avoid their orders becoming jumbled. Good stuff.



WIN: Five copies of Fracture, PS3

SET in a world where a series of earthquakes has split the USA in two, this shooter puts players in the middle of a titanic war. Placed in the boots of soldier Jet Brody, you get to slug it out using high-powered weaponry matched with cybernetics technology. *Fracture* looks promising and we have five copies on PS3 to give away. To stand a chance of winning, tell us which major US city was devastated by an earthquake in 1906. Answers by postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by October 31. All the usual rules apply.

Music

OCTOBER REVIEW



Fun-loving five: From left, gorgeous Rochelle, Mollie, Una, Vanessa and Frankie will set the weekend party on fire with their debut album *Chasing Lights*, which is released on October 20



Saturday best

Pop princesses get hot under the collar for well-groomed men in uniform

Interview: Karen Thomas

If you're a bloke who's just flicked onto the music pages after having a good laugh at Chris Waitt's expense in the movie reviews, you will know never to underestimate a woman.

Tempting though it might be to dismiss the quintet of gorgeous babes known as The Saturdays as the latest batch of models who can't hold a note, you will do so at your peril. The fivesome are quality musicians and talented singers with brains enough to more than match their beauty.

But it's rude not to introduce the femme fatales who are about to set the Army party alight. Meet Irish guitarist Una, who is a classy homebody with a naughty sense of humour. Mollie is a girlie girl who is searching for a long-haired surfer. Rochelle falls for the traditional tall, dark, handsome man with muscles.

Modest Vanessa has a feisty streak

and likes getting into trouble with Frankie, who is looking for her perfect but scruffy musician. It seemed highly unlikely that the country's knights in shining green armour were going to get a look in until *Soldier* confronted Frankie about her taste in messy men.

"I never said I was against guys in uniform," she exclaimed in chorus with her Saturdays' band mates crammed in the back of a car. "I know that soldiers are well-groomed but they fight for the good of the country so how can you not find that hot?"

"They do such a good job but I can't imagine how they do it. They're so brave and we're so lucky that we have people who are willing to do it because without them we'd be screwed. I just think well done and thank you."

The Saturdays blasted off with a tour supporting Girls Aloud before finding their own fame with debut UK top ten chart hit, *If This Is Love*. Their first album, *Chasing Lights*, follows this

month, and Frankie revealed a sneak preview of what we can expect.

"I think it's very good to dance to, especially for girls and even for the guys. But there are ballads on there and we're not singing about a load of rubbish, we're singing about feelings that everyone's gone through. It's something you can cry and have a good time to, which makes the perfect album and we're really happy with it."

Young, gifted and pretty, The Saturdays were drawn together for their different backgrounds as much as for their musical talent. Una had already made a name for herself in her native Ireland as a singer-songwriter and was the first member signed up to the band when she moved to London.

Theatre school graduate Vanessa was performing in West End musical *The Lion King* and already managed by The Saturdays' backers. Mollie was spotted when she auditioned in a girl band for ITV series *X-Factor*, and Rochelle



and Frankie had their first taste of fame in S Club Juniors.

The 19-year-old admitted the five of them were together for quite some time before they came up with the band's name. As fun-loving party girls, they all liked Saturday as the day of the week when schools are closed and people have finished work. They are pure pop and unashamed of it.

"We are a girl band, we're young and doing pop music so everyone assumes we're not very talented or we can't sing," Frankie added.

"But when people watch us perform and sing live they always say, 'oh, you're really good because you can all sing and dance'.

"Once people know what we've all done individually, everyone realises that we're not messing around and we know what we're doing. But everyone's been really positive anyway."

As the radio and TV stations sit up and take notice, The Saturdays are grabbing more airplay with their second single, *Up*, and more attention as they continue their live tour of the UK. Pop queens Girls Aloud and the Minogue sisters need to look to their Sunday mornings to check if they are as breezy and innovative as these five breath-of-fresh-air girls who have set the music scene on fire. ■



Glasvegas (Glasvegas)

THE debut album from these 20-something Glaswegian rockers is not bad at all. It's received a lot of attention from music critics and a growing fan base. The band's UK tour this year sold out at most venues proving that they are on the up and up. The album features many heartfelt songs, as they sing about life in Glasgow and other social issues. The music is deep and meaningful and very much guitar-based, but features refreshing piano work. The lyrics are clear and strong, almost narrating some rather depressing stories at times. It is not a "feel good" album, but a very soulful one.

Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt,
5 Regt, RA



Alive on the Other Side (My Ruin)

THIS live album and DVD was recorded in Leeds while the band was on the *Tell Your God Tour*. Lead singer Miss B demonstrates a raw and savage sound throughout. Tracks such as *Burn the Witch* and *The Devil Walks* are the backbone of this collection and, as the song titles suggest, this album is not something you would consider getting for Mother's Day. Their music fits into a very specific genre and there is a main vein of catharsis that will appeal to a certain emotional, gothic group. Coupled with a behind-the-scenes DVD, this is a must for the most ardent of fans.

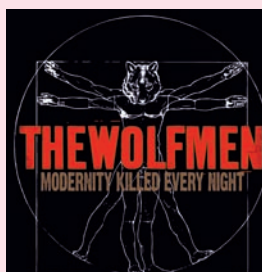
Cpl Ray Kalaker,
RETDU (B)



3 Doors Down (3 Doors Down)

SINCE topping the charts back home, American rockers **3 Doors Down** are preparing to conquer the UK with their eponymous fourth studio release. The music is occasionally **Nickleback**-esque as the band has filled this album with the popular mix of heavy guitar and drums, twinned with acoustic finger-style guitar and strings. Although building on a tried and tested recipe, the backing vocals can be distracting and some tracks outstay their welcome. That said, this is an energetic offering and is bound to chart this side of the pond.

Cpl Tom Robinson,
151 Tpt Regt, RLC



Modernity Killed Every Night (The Wolfmen)

THE Wolfmen have a pedigree line-up – Marco Pirroni, who worked with **Sinead O'Connor**, and Chris Constantinou (**ex-Adam Ant**). The duo has a **Strokes-Libertines** sound and strength gained from decades of experience. The album has all the energy of the explosion of 90s BritPop. Opening with the *Mojo* number one *Needle In The Camel's Eye*, the CD progresses to some vigorous – and sometimes psychedelic – tracks later on, but *Jackie Says* is my top tune. If you've not already discovered **The Wolfmen**, then buy this album. These guys are ones to watch.

Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



One of the Boys (Katy Perry)

BEST known for her recent achievements, **Katy Perry**, like most singer-songwriters, has been working on the periphery of the music business since 2004. The American's meteoric rise to fame has been on the back of the single *I Kissed A Girl* that caused such a stir and controversy, so her debut album, *One of the Boys*, has been anticipated by many in the industry for some time. I'm not sure there's another song on this album that's going to match her first success, but I could be wrong. If you liked her UK number one debut single, the album is worth a buy because I found every one of the other 11 tracks much the same.

Capt David Greaves, REME



Forth (The Verve)

THE Verve were riding high back in 1997 when they imploded. Band politics left wounds and it appeared they would never be healed. Until now. Last year they honed their sound and gathered momentum with gigs, including a festival performance at Glastonbury, which have been simply astounding. This album – ten tracks lasting a glorious 66 minutes – has a progressive rock style where time and space is granted to develop ideas. It suits the band and brings the best out of the songs. Whether the volatile band members can maintain a harmonious relationship is questionable but there's no doubt this is special.

Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC

Books

OCTOBER REVIEW



Killing fields: The mountain passes of Afghanistan, described by Gen Sir David Richards as a “beautiful but blighted country”, were death traps for the British Army in the 1841 retreat



Clear warning

Tale of military and political failure in Afghanistan is pertinent today

Crimson Snow: Britain's First Disaster in Afghanistan by Jules Stewart (Sutton Publishing, 241pp hardback, £19.99).

Review: John Elliott

JULES Stewart's fresh analysis of Britain's ill-conceived and costly expedition in Afghanistan 165 years ago is singularly relevant today.

But what made this reviewer snatch it up is the foreword by Gen Sir David Richards. Might the soldier who led Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) to “this beautiful but blighted country” in 2006 and who now commands Britain's field army, draw parallels between current operations and the disastrous campaign of the 1840s, which gave Britain a reputation for political duplicity and cost the lives of 16,000 soldiers and their followers?

Absolutely he does, starting with a declaration that the lessons arising

from this “sorry tale in British military and political history” are as pertinent and timeless for the international community's effort in Afghanistan today as they were in the mid-19th century.

Gen Richards wishes he could have read *Crimson Snow* before his Isaf tour. He writes: “I found myself chuckling in recognition of an event, tactic or person and thinking ‘nothing's changed’. Even knowing the country as well as I now do, the book sheds fresh and authoritative light on what makes Afghanistan and its people tick.”

Given the C-in-C's endorsement of his efforts, the author will not mind if this reviewer focuses on the two-page foreword rather than the 241 pages that follow. Gen Richards observes that his historical predecessors repeatedly misjudged Afghanistan's leaders and underestimated their fierce resolve to run their own country. Nor did they understand the ruthless nature of their

opponents or the effect of tribal loyalties and customs.

“While certainly trying to do much better in 2008, in the event today's diplomats and soldiers too frequently make the same errors.”

Gen Richards believes that in many respects the lessons of the First Afghan War stand today. Confused aims, petty squabbling between vain people, an inability to act with urgency and in a manner appropriate to the psyche of the Afghans remain common threads. The warning from history is clear.

Quoting a letter to *The Times* of the day on the prospects for the Second Afghan War – “although military disasters might be avoided, an advance now, however successful in a military point of view, would not fail to turn out politically useless” – Gen Richards observes: “Resolving this conundrum remains the biggest issue for today's policy makers, one aggravated by the



inherently disunited nature of a multinational campaign.

"While military gains are made daily, in the absence of well-resourced, coherent and timely political and economic measures, they may count for nothing."

However, he says, there are differences between then and now. This is not a British-only affair and it is being fought at the behest of the Afghan government with a UN mandate. There is now a greater sense of urgency and the huge amounts of money entering the country are having real effect. Polls indicate that 80 per cent of the Afghan people want democracy and the international commitment to succeed.

But the final word should go to Jules Stewart. The justification – "discredited as nonsense" – for the First Afghan War was based on the doctrine that Russia would threaten India if Britain did not act to hold the line in Afghanistan. He writes: "... the parallels with the doctrine of Weapons of Mass Destruction, used to justify the use of military force in a nearby theatre of war, cannot escape notice." ■

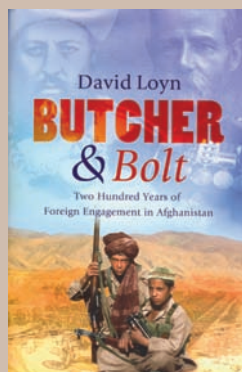
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3 Commando Brigade

by Ewen Southby-Tailyour

THIS is a stirring account of a tour (October 2006) which saw some of the fiercest fighting by British troops since the Korean War. Large sections are given over to describing outstanding bravery and character in the face of a tenacious enemy, and the book is a refreshingly honest account of camaraderie and fortitude. The drama and atmosphere conveyed by the writing is superb. There have been several accounts of combat in Helmand but this one is particularly hard to put down. **LCpl Chris MacCallum, 242 MI Section, Int Corps**

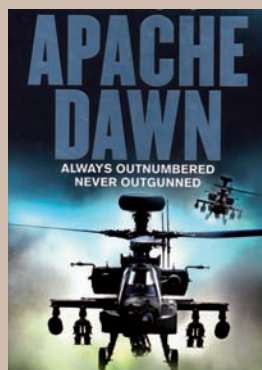


Butcher & Bolt

by David Loyn

THIS second literary outing for ex-BBC foreign correspondent **David Loyn** chronicles the past 200 years of life in Afghanistan and takes an unflinching look at the major turning points in its history. It also details the role Afghanistan has played in the past of the major global powers. Loyn clearly has both respect and an innate understanding of the region and its people. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a well-rounded, no-nonsense overview of Afghanistan. A brilliant read.

Cpl Dan Jones, Int Corps



Apache Dawn

by Damien Lewis

MANY *Soldier* readers will cite the intervention of the Apache as being the decisive factor in their own ground battles in Helmand. This book views those actions from the cockpit. Although the narrative follows an individual AH Flight, the author has gone to great lengths to highlight the contribution of all those involved in keeping the iconic weapon system of the war airborne. This is a well written and informed look inside the insular and high-tempo world of an AH squadron at war.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



Dirty Combat

by David Tomkins

ONE man's security operative is another man's mercenary and this book is a colourful journey into the world of the latter. The author is a self-confessed safe-breaker and arms trader who has spent much of his life in jail or involved in the planning and execution of clandestine operations, working for whoever was willing to pay. *Dirty Combat* takes the reader from the Angolan civil war of the seventies to the feuds of the Colombian drug barons of the late eighties and beyond.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC

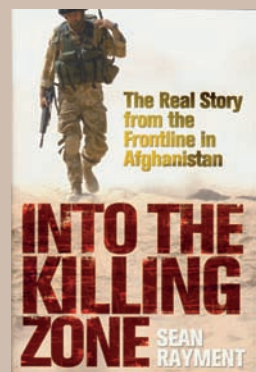


Firefight

by Chris Ryan

THE author has become something of an institution in the all-action genre that he and other ex-SAS soldiers dominate. Full of his trademark violence and emotion, *Firefight* follows the story of an ex-Regiment captain who finds himself in the hands of the Taliban following a botched hostage rescue. How he got there, how he gets out and what he's going to do to stop a rogue CIA agent from blowing up London, carries you through the pages of this pacy **Ryan** novel. Great stuff for on the beach during decompression or for the departure lounges in Kandahar or Al Udeid.

Capt David Greaves, REME



Into the Killing Zone

by Sean Rayment

WRITTEN by a former member of The Parachute Regiment and current national newspaper defence correspondent, *Into the Killing Zone* provides a fascinating snapshot of the Army's involvement in Afghanistan. After setting the wider picture in context by looking at the rise of the Taliban, **Rayment** explores the planning and preparation for the British deployment before focusing on the Herrick campaign itself. The author's personal accounts of action are powerfully delivered with plenty of colour while the background makes for fascinating reading.

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Having a ball: Former England and Wasps captain Lawrence Dallaglio skippered his star-studded team to victory against an International Select XV in a charity match at Twickenham that raised £1.1 million for Services charity Help for Heroes

Picture: Graeme Main



Cash converters

Rugby legends return to the pitch to raise £1.1 million for Services charity

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

FIFTY minutes into last month's Help for Heroes challenge match, Army Rugby Union star Capt Rob Sugden did well to keep his focus on the game.

It was not the grand stage of Twickenham or the 52,254 crowd that tested the Coldstream Guard's attention – Sugden had experienced it all before during his Inter-Services tussles with the Royal Navy.

The difference on this occasion came in the company the Army man was keeping. The 28-year-old found himself driving a scrum for his Help for Heroes

XV alongside World Cup winners and former England captains Martin Johnson and Lawrence Dallaglio.

Sugden was not the only military man mixing it up with some of the game's greats for the fund-raising match-up against an International Select XV.

SSgt Mal Roberts (RLC) swapped passes with wing wizard Jason Robinson, while on the opposing side Pte Joe Kava (RLC) was supported by Wales legend Scott Gibbs.

The wealth of talent helped the match organisers raise £1.1 million for Help for Heroes and Dallaglio was pleased to have played his part.

"Today was about the Servicemen and women who put their lives on the

line to protect our country," the former Wasps man said after the final whistle. "We are very proud of what they do."

Although many of the big names on show at Twickenham have retired from playing top-level rugby, all those involved promised to make it a competitive encounter.

Just in case ageing bodies proved less willing than minds, a smattering of Services players – Reds skipper Capt Mark Lee (AGC (ALS)) completing an Army quartet – and several up-and-coming Premiership stars offered the necessary stamina and pace.

It was one of the new breed in 18-year-old Ospreys wing Kristian Phillips that chalked up the afternoon's



Talent show: Rugby Union's biggest names celebrate raising more than a million pounds for Help for Heroes following an exciting challenge match at Twickenham. For more photos, visit www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/sport

first points. Gibbs spotted his fellow Welshman making a break down the right flank and his perfectly-timed pass allowed Phillips to cross in the corner.

The Help for Heroes XV's World Cup-winning contingent, including Dallaglio, Robinson, Richard Hill, Will Greenwood, Dan Luger and Mark Regan, looked a little rusty and only a well-executed tackle on Dafydd Jones from Army full-back Roberts kept them from conceding a second try after 10 minutes.

Dallaglio's final competitive game of rugby came in last season's Premiership final, but the number eight put in some big hits as his team finally grew into the game.

Powerful work from Sugden had official Sean Davey calling for the video referee on 17 minutes, but Scott Hobson was adjudged not to have grounded the ball for a Help for Heroes XV try.

Dallaglio's team then tried unlocking the opposition defence by using the

pace and trickery of Robinson. The former Sale man's running set Roberts free down the left, but his charge to the line was halted by a tackle from Phillips.

The Help for Heroes XV's first points came from the boot of Alex Goode after half-an-hour and the team took the lead five minutes later through Hill.

The imposing flanker charged over despite the best efforts of Scotland's Kenny Logan and Goode added a further two points.

A second close-range try in the space of five minutes ended an exciting first half as 20-year-old Bath prop Nathan Catt stormed over to stretch his side's lead to ten.

A Logan try got the second half off to an explosive start and the largest cheer of the day came on 48 minutes as England coach Johnson entered the fray, followed shortly after by Lee.

The Army skipper came closest to claiming the game's next points, but his effort was ruled out by the referee.

There were no arguments moments

later as Greenwood collected a clever pass from Dallaglio to canter through for five points.

Robinson's elusive runs continued to torment the International Select XV and Rugby League legend Martin Offiah reminded Twickenham of his electrifying pace as he sprinted after a low kick, eventually touching down agonisingly over the dead ball line.

There was still time for Wasps' scrum half Joe Simpson to skip through and score under the posts and Dallaglio stepped up to take the conversion and bring the final score to 29-10 in his side's favour.

The match more than lived up to its billing, but for the vociferous crowd inside the stadium the day will be remembered for more than the 80 minutes of action on the pitch.

Videos showing the bravery and resilience of wounded Service personnel undergoing rehabilitation at Headley Court brought tears and applause in equal measure and the event's enthusiastic support highlighted the growing esteem in which Britain holds its military men and women. ■

'Today was about the Servicemen and women who put their lives on the line to protect our country'

FIXTURES

ANGLING

October 8 – Army v Civil Service v RAF v Royal Navy (Banbury); 10-12 – Army autumn match (Grantham); 20-24 – Inter-Services shore competition (Folkstone); 22-24 – Inter-Services carp angling championships (Lechlade).

ATHLETICS

October 15 – Cross country relays (Tweseldown); 19 – Marathon (Abingdon).

BASKETBALL

October 10-11 – Combined Services v Milton Keynes (Grantham).

BOXING

October 2 – Army v Southern Counties (Aldershot); 17 – Army v Tyne Tees (Catterick); 24 – Army v Wales select (Cardiff); 29 – Combined Services Boxing Association novice box-offs (Aldershot); 30 – Combined Serviced Boxing Association novice championships (Richmond).

CANOEING

October 4-5 – Inter-Services slalom championships (Llandysul).

CYCLING

October 4-5 – Team enduro event (tbc); 5 – National Trophy cyclo-cross (Budleigh Salterton); 11 – Dragon downhill round five (tbc); 11-12 – Time trial series six (tbc); 26 – National hill climb championships (tbc); National Trophy series round three (Ipswich).

EQUITATION

October 26 – Inter-Services team chase (Andoversford).

FOOTBALL

October 4 – Crusaders v RMAS (Sandhurst); 6 – Army v HM Prison Service (Holmes Park); 6-10 – Women's team trials (Aldershot); 9 – Army women v AFA (Aldershot); 11 – Crusaders v Wandsworth Borough (Roehampton); 13 – Army U23 v Sandhurst Devils (Aldershot); 13-17 – U23 team trials (Aldershot); 15 – Army U23 v Middlesex (Aldershot); 20 – Crusaders v AMS (Aldershot); 22 – Army v Middlesex (Aldershot); 23 – Army women v Middlesex (Aldershot); 26 – Crusaders v Milk Marketing Board (Sandhurst).

GOLF

October 4-5 – Army v Cornish Piskey (Newquay); 6 – Army women's open medal competition (Army GC); 8 – Army officials' tournament (Temple GC); 14 – Army past v Army present (The Berkshire GC).

HOCKEY

October 5 – Women's team trials (Aldershot); 6 – Women's indoor league (Aldershot); 16 – Army Veterans v Hustlers (Winchester); 18 – Army v RMAS (Sandhurst).

JUDO

October 25 – Scottish Open (Meadow Bank).

Dead end

No way through for Reds against resilient Navy

Report: Stephen Tyler

Picture: Graeme Main

AN error-strewn display left the Army Rugby League side's Inter-Services dreams in tatters as the Reds slumped to a heavy defeat against the Royal Navy at Aldershot.

Going down 18-40 at home to their fiercest rivals was a bitter pill to swallow, but it was the manner of the Army's defeat that left the sourest taste in the mouths of the home fans.

As undeniably strong as their opponents looked throughout, the Reds' poor handling and narrow play allowed the Navy to canter to victory.

The defeat means the Reds will miss out on the trophy if the Navy beat the Royal Air Force in the tournament's final match, which was due to be played as this issue went to press.

Army manager Capt Rich Naivalurua (REME) told *Soldiersport* that although his side had not played to their potential, the Navy fully deserved to win the match.

"We are all bitterly disappointed with the result, but I make no bones about it – the best team won.

"Their forwards were on top form and stopped us from gaining the hard yards in the middle and some of our core skills were poor.

"If you knock the ball on or put it into touch from a kick-off then you are putting extra pressure on yourself and that killed our momentum."

After a stunning season in which the Army reached the third round of the Challenge Cup and impressed in an international nines tournament in Leeds (see Northern stars, right), hopes were high that the Reds could complete an Inter-Services clean sweep.

Despite losing LCpl Marc Donnelly (RE) to a broken ankle and LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE) to a broken jaw in the 14-10 win against the Royal Air Force, the Army still fielded an experienced line-up including WO2 Stewart Silvester and Sgt Sean Fanning (both RAMC).

It was another familiar face in Cpl Lee Innes (RE) who notched the game's first points with a penalty. CPO James Wagstaffe responded with two kicks of his own before Innes slotted home again.

The game's first try followed as the Navy clawed their way towards the line with a sustained period of pressure, eventually crossing in the corner.

A clearly unsettled Army side began to lose composure in defence, conceding another penalty and failing to stop a Navy attack that ended with LPT Jim Barnes diving over for his side's second try.

The home team continued to struggle and it was only a moment of inspiration from LCpl Mosese Matau (RE) that lifted the Reds' dwindling spirits. The sapper spotted a gap in the Navy defence and darted through for a try which Innes duly converted.

Trailing 10-18 going into the final 40 minutes, the Army were again their own worst enemies as they lost the ball in an attacking position. The Navy broke down the right and scored a third try through Barnes.

With their attacking game faltering because of sloppy passing, it took the elusive running and quick thinking of Pte Max Vave (RLC) to keep the Reds within touching distance.

The loggie twice broke through the Navy line for solo tries, but Army indiscipline allowed the Blues to rebuild their buffer through two penalty kicks.

With time running out and the Army probing for a way back into the game, their opponents secured the win when Wagstaffe completed his hat-trick. The Navy man chased a high kick, gathered in mid-air and dived over the line.

A tired Army defence was put to the sword once more in the closing moments as AET Lewis Taylor's jinking run ended with another four points. Naivalurua described the final match of this year's campaign as the "end of an era" with some of the team's senior players likely to drop out of the starting 13 next season.

But with huge strides being taken off the pitch to develop the academy side, the future looks bright for the Reds.

"We've got some very good young players who I have no doubt will make the step up next year," he said.

"They are good lads who are gagging for a chance to play for the Army.

"I think that, as a team, we have learned some hard lessons and will use that to our advantage next year." ■

'I make no bones about it – the best team won'



All wrapped up: The Royal Navy's sturdy defensive line thwarted the Army's Inter-Services ambitions

Northern stars

Nines squad shines in international tournament

SUPER League side Hull FC almost fell foul of an exuberant Army nines side during a pulsating tournament at Leeds Carnegie's Headingley Stadium.

The Reds came within minutes of embarrassing the northerners in the quarter finals of the competition, leading 14-12 before a late double-try salvo gave Hull a largely undeserved win.

The Army were invited to the tournament after impressing in nines events in York and Cheltenham, where the Reds beat the Royal Navy to lift the trophy.

As one of just four non-Super League sides involved – Fiji UK, Cumbria and

Leeds Metropolitan University completing the amateur contingent – the Army were up against some of the best short game players in Britain.

After struggling to click into gear during a laboured 10-8 qualifying round win over Leeds Met, the Reds were on fire against Hull and took an early lead through a Cpl Rob Smart (RAMC) try.

The Service side remained in touch with their illustrious opponents until the final flurry of tries five minutes from time.

● See www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/sport for pictures from the tournament

FIXTURES

MARTIAL ARTS

October 18 – Army Martial Arts Association competition (Aldershot).

MODERN PENTATHLON

October 4-5 – Sealion's competition (Kings Langley); 13-17 – Army team trials (Sandhurst); 18-19 – Army competition (Sandhurst).

NETBALL

October 26 – Army v SR League select (tbc).

REAL TENNIS

October 12 – Army v Cranford (Cranford); 19 – Army v Holyport (Holyport).

ROWING

October 8 – Army autumn regatta (Abingdon); 11 – Pairs head (London); 19 – Army head of the river race (Dorney); 26 – Upper Thames fours (Henley).

RUGBY UNION

October 11 – Army U23 v Richmond (Aldershot); 12 – Army U20 v Havant Colts (Aldershot); 13 – Army U23 v Worcester Academy (Worcester); 19 – Army women v Old Albanian Saints (St Albans); 22 – Combined Services v Plymouth Albion (Plymouth).

SAILING

October 1, 4, 11 and 25 – *British Soldier* training (Solent); 5 – Hamble one (Solent); 11-12 – Inter-Services asymmetric dinghy championships (Thorney Island); Hamble two (Solent); *British Soldier* winter series (Solent); 18-19 – Laser 2000 dinghy event (Rutland); 19 – Hamble three (Solent); 26 – Hamble four (Solent); *British Soldier* winter series (Solent).

November 1 – *British Soldier* training (Solent).

SHOOTING

October 13-14 – National air gun grand prix (Bisley); 13-15 – Army clay target championships (Bisley); 15 – Army target rifle v City Shooting Club (Bisley); 25-26 – Inter-corps target rifle match (Bisley); 28 – Army target rifle v London and Middlesex Rifle Association (Bisley).

SQUASH

October 21 – Army v RAC Club (London); 22 – Army v Jesters (Aldershot); 31-Nov 1 – Combined Services individual championships (Aldershot).

SURFING

October 11-17 – Army championships (Penhale); 18-21 – Inter-Services championships (Sennen Cove).

WINDSURFING

October 4-10 – Joint Services speed championships (Weymouth); 25-26 – Joint Services team and individual championships (Hayling Island); Inter-corps series event (Hayling Island); 29 – Inter-corps series event (Hayling Island).



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Take off: Capt Kerry Gospel (RLC) goes head-over-heels during the cable wakeboarding final at WMSki

Picture: Graeme Main



Board meeting

Airmen's water-borne challenge not enough to dent Army dominance

Report: Stephen Tyler

STUNT-FILLED performances propelled the Army's top wakeboarders and water skiers to Inter-Services glory at Gloucestershire's WMSki facility.

Hosting both competitions for the first time, the Army expected a closely-fought contest with the Royal Air Force.

But star trio Sgt Gaz Groves (RA), Sgt Mark Tillett (REME) and Capt Kerry Gospel (RLC) took the top three spots in the wakeboarding contest and water skiers Maj Mark Winterton-Davis (Rifles) and Capt Rory Smith (AAC) beat the RAF's JT Phil Symonds into third place.

Army water skiing and wakeboarding association chairman Lt Col Ian Marlow explained that the home competitors'

skills in both the cable and boat wakeboarding disciplines swung the contest in their favour.

"It was an excellent competition. The turnout was really good from the Army and RAF, and the Royal Navy had more guys than usual as well," he told *Soldiersport*.

"It was the first time we have managed to have a proper water skiing competition and it shows the emphasis we are trying to build.

"We didn't expect to do so well because the RAF have some very good wakeboarders, but we have been concentrating on both events and I think that is why we managed to pip them to it.

"We have also managed to hold onto people for the Inter-Services competition where in the past they have had to return to their units."

The Inter-Services competition was held one week after the Army riders had battled each other at the Army championships where Groves, Gospel and Tillett again occupied the top three places.

The Army event also featured intermediate and novice competitions and Marlow hopes to see more newcomers giving the sport a try at next year's finals.

"We have set a new benchmark with this year's competition," he explained. "At the top end there were some amazing tricks being performed, but some of the new guys were good as well.

"We cater for all levels, so if somebody who has never been out on the water before wants to give it a go we can make that happen. There are obvious similarities with snowboarding and skiing and we have a few guys who do both." ■



Pulling power: Members of the Army tug-of-war team hope to showcase their skills on the international stage at the 2010 world championships in South Africa

SPORT SHORTS

FORMER world champion Lloyd Honeyghan helped London District Boxing Club mark a successful first year.

The welterweight legend was the guest of honour at the club's Grove Park Territorial Army Centre home as founders Capt Andy Haines, Capt Tom Roach and Capt Robbie Wilmont celebrated raising £33,348 for Help for Heroes during their inaugural season on London's amateur boxing circuit.

The club is open to all serving members of the TA and regular Army. For more information, call Wilmont on 0208 860 1461 or 07920 548491.

Sharp shooters

MARKSMEN from 30 Signal Regiment battled strong winds and driving rain to claim a third successive Army Operational Shooting Competition title.

The eight-man squad won a total of 17 events to secure the memorable hat trick during the championships, which were held at Bisley, Pirbright and Ash.

With the wind forcing competitors to adjust their aim and constantly clean their sights, scoring was inconsistent throughout the event and 30 Sig Regt faced competition from strong 22 Sig Regt and 36 Engr Regt squads for the coveted award.

But unerring performances from the five-man team – made up of WO2 Bharat Shrestha, Sgt Devprakash Gurung, Cpl Sachin Thapa, Sig Balbahadur Gurung and Sig Narayan Rai – and individual shooters Maj Yamkumar Gurung, Capt Nirmal Gurung and Cpl Lilasing Gurung ensured that the signallers held on to their title for another year.

All eight 30 Sig Regt shooters celebrated further success after being ranked in the Army 100, including top ten finishes for Shrestha (third), Yamkumar Gurung (fifth) and Devprakash Gurung (ninth). ■

Rope and glory

Strongmen pull together to topple tug-of-war's unfounded sporting status

Interview: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Steve Dock

WITH a reputation for attracting overweight men at country fetes, you could be forgiven for questioning why anyone should take tug-of-war as a serious sport.

Pulling on a rope until one line of heavyweights is unceremoniously toppled is not the kind of spectacle that would stir a great deal of excitement in even the most committed of spectators watching from the pub beer garden.

But for the soldiers who compete in the event at its top level, tug-of-war is far removed from the stereotype of bitter-swilling men using nothing more than brute force. It is a team sport requiring tactics, stamina, strength and, above all, discipline.

"To compete you have to be able to take on physical demands as an individual and then come together as part of the squad," Army team manager Maj Rob Holland (RA) told *SoldierSport*. "The sport encourages commitment and discipline."

"It is also worth remembering that this was once an Olympic sport, and we are now trying to get it run again as an exhibition event at London 2012."

Tug-of-war actually has its origins a long way from rural England. It is believed to have sprung up in early

China, where villages competed against each other.

But the sport has been firmly rooted in the British Forces for generations and remains a highly popular way for troops to let off steam and rival units to out-pull one another.

Despite being canned from the Olympics in 1920 – not long after the axe was brought down on golf – it has retained a strong following in the United Kingdom, with several police forces and the Civil Service among the organisations fielding teams.

With a full squad of around a dozen men or women, eight of which are picked for the team, the modern outdoor competition revolves around a contest of three pulls, with each time on the rope lasting up to 45 minutes.

With such agonisingly protracted bouts, anyone wishing to take part at the highest levels must be willing to put in long hours of training to get in shape.

The gruelling regime includes battling with the infamous gantry, where teams must haul terrifying loads on a pulley. Participants must also deal with pulling a heavy sledge along the ground to beef up stamina.

But while the heavier man might have the advantage in village fete tug-of-war, being overweight can cost you the competition at top level. The Army

teams compete in categories of 560, 600, 640 and 680kg – and the whole team must strip to their boxers and step on the scales before competing.

If all eight members are collectively over the limit they are aiming for, it is up to them to shed the extra pounds before the event starts or face disqualification. Therefore each individual must stay in shape.

"Even if you are a kilo over on the day, you must lose it," said Army team assistant manager WO2 Tim Tatler (RLC). "You only have three attempts to make your weight, so you have to get along as a team and keep in check."

"When you are competing it is all about mental and physical strength. But you must also have the right attitude."

These are qualities the Army team certainly has in abundance. With a proven record on the rope, they have been pulling in the trophies, with soldiers playing a key role in the recent success of the Combined Services team.

But despite their form, Maj Holland insists that his squad will continue striving for further glory.

"We've put together a three-year plan," he said. "This year it was our aim to win the Inter-Services competition, which we achieved."

"Next year we are going to compete in the European championships. Then the world championships in South Africa are in 2010 – we are looking forward to achieving future success." ■

"The sport encourages commitment and discipline"

AAC launch cup defence

REIGNING champions 9 Regt AAC will begin their defence of the Army FA Challenge Cup with a trip to 1 Lancs.

The team became the first Army Air Corps side to lift the trophy in the competition's 107-year history with a 3-0 win against 3 Yorks and will be hoping SSgt Wally Wallbrook's goals can propel them to a second successive victory.

A tough tie against 2006-07 winners 3 (UK) Div HQ & Sig Regt awaits the winners of the first round match between 3 RSME and 10 Sig Regt.

First round ties will be played by Friday, October 3 with second round matches concluded by Friday, November 7.

Draw in full: First round: Household Cavalry v 2 RRF; 36 Engr Regt v 1 RSME; 30 Sig Regt or 3 Para v 33 Engr Regt; Hereford Garrison v 3 Regt AAC; 10 Tpt Regt RLC v 32 Regt RA; 1 IG v Defence Academy UK; 2 R Welsh v 3 Mercian; 23 Pnr Regt RLC v 1 Coldm Gds; 4 CS Bn REME v The Kings Royal Hussars; 14 Regt RA or 4 LS Regt RLC v 9 Sup Regt RLC; 3 RSME v 10 Sig Regt; ITC Catterick or 2 Rifles v 21 Engr Regt; 3 Scots v 1 CS Bn REME; 5 GS Med Regt v 1 R Welsh.

Second round: Household Cavalry or 2 RRF v 7 Para RHA; 36 Engr Regt or 1 RSME v 12 Air Sp Engr Gp; 7 Air Asslt Bn REME v 30 Sig Regt, 3 Para or 33 Engr Regt; ATR Pirbright v 10 Tpt

Regt RLC or 32 Regt RA; SEAE v 1 IG or Defence Academy; 2 R Welsh or 3 Mercian v 22 Engr Regt; 23 Pnr Regt RLC or 1 Coldm Gds v 17 Port & Maritime Regt; 12 LS Regt RLC v 4 CS Bn REME or The Kings Royal Hussars; 4 Rifles v 14 Regt RA; 4 LS Regt RLC or 9 Sup Regt RLC; 3 RSME or 10 Sig Regt v 3 (UK) Div HQ & Sig Regt; 12 Regt RA v RMA (PS); 25 Trg & Sp Regt RLC v 29 PC & Mov Regt RLC; SEME v 1 R Anglian; Land Warfare Centre v 21 Sig Regt; RMA (Cadets) v 11 Sig Regt; 47 Regt RA v 19 Regt RA; 2 Scots v ITC Catterick; 2 Rifles v 21 Engr Regt; Royal Dragoon Guards v 3 Scots or 1 CS Bn REME; 5 GS Med Regt or 1 R Welsh v 2 Sig Regt; 39 Regt RA v 5 Regt RA; 1 Lancs v 9 Regt AAC; 1 Scots v 3 Rifles; 4 Regt RA v 2 Yorks. ■

Media circus

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

We asked soldiers if they thought the media coverage of Op Herrick 8 accurately reflected the reality of operations to those back at home

Pte Louis Smit, 2 Para

For Queen and Country and Ross Kemp in Afghanistan have opened people's eyes,

and in that respect coverage is good. I would like to see our hardships and not trivia reported. A drunken footballer arrested at a night club gets headlines above a soldier's death.



Cpl Stephen Quinn, 2 Scots

Sky News are quite accurate in what they describe. Scottish TV did a day in the life of a soldier and of their family back home. I wrote a small piece on my view of Afghanistan that was published in a larger article in the *Telegraph*. People back home can see how we live in the forward operating bases and what we do out here.



Sgt Gary Wilkins, 2 R Irish (V)

It's a shame people know we're doing a good job but they only hear about the deaths and not the non-fatal casualties. And on the day the 1 R Irish casualty was reported, the BBC interviewed two Royal Marines about to come out but did not mention the death.



Pte Matthew Manly, 2 Para

When we came out here the media went wild. There's always something about us in the papers and on TV. The media concentrates on big events and not on what soldiers go through on a daily basis. *The Sun* is everyone's favourite as it doesn't pull any punches and gives maximum support to the troops.



SSgt Jonny Walker, RLC

We had Sky News doing live feeds from our super kitchen and Channel Four and Five filming documentaries on military catering. I let them film as much as they wanted. The guys liked it and it was a bit of fun. Sky News was pretty accurate and obviously they can't go into too much detail because of the security on ops.



Rgr Neil Hughes, 2 R Irish (V)

People back home know what's going on. Family and friends tell me what they've heard and read about. The local paper came on a patrol around Camp Bastion. My mum and wife kept the clippings and it's definitely good for morale.



LCpl Paul Akum, AGC

We get newspapers but a few days late and if you get time you can skim through. Reporting will never reflect the reality in the way soldiers see it but the press do the best they can. People are aware soldiers are dying but they are not always aware of the injured.



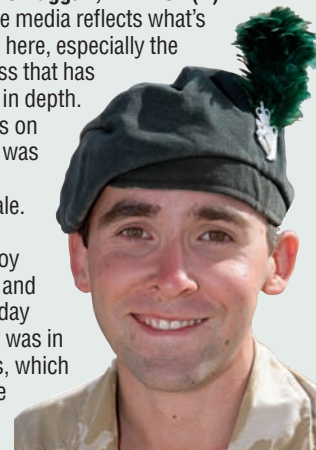
Sgt Steve Firth, RLC

My brush with the media was meeting Ross Kemp when he came through the hotplate for his food. I watched his programme on Afghanistan and thought it was brilliant. You can tell he's actually spending time with the squaddies because his language gets worse and worse. It's no-holds-barred reporting and I think that's a good thing.



LCpl Chris Haggan, 2 R Irish (V)

I think the media reflects what's going on here, especially the local press that has reported in depth. The focus on our lives was good for our morale. I was on the convoy to Kajaki and the next day the story was in the press, which was quite exciting.



Interviews: Karen Thomas Pictures: Steve Dock

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