

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

+

**STEADFAST
DEFENDER
UP-CLOSE**



**HARDER, BETTER, FASTER
STRONGER**

The mission to prep Gen Z officers for war

044
9 770038 100003
Barcode

£3.50

APRIL 2024

NOW YOU CAN

BUY DIAMONDS & BESPOKE JEWELLERY

AT WHOLESALE PRICES

DIRECT FROM THE MANUFACTURERS



Showrooms based in the heart of the diamond centre, Hatton Garden London and King Street Manchester, we supply retail shops with a vast range of exquisite diamond engagement rings, wedding bands and bespoke diamond jewellery.

We are delighted to offer the same trade prices of **50%** off retail prices to the **Armed forces staff and family including retired personnel**.

Enter discount code **BETHEBEST50** on our website and receive discounted prices across our entire range.

PROUD SPONSORS & PARTNERS OF



Round Brilliant 5 Stone
1.20ct Diamond Eternity Ring

Your price
£2,200 inc VAT

Retail value
£4,650



Round 1.00ct Centre Diamond
Platinum Engagement Ring

Your price
£6,840 inc VAT

Retail price
£14,500



Round Solitaire 0.70ct Diamond
Platinum Engagement Ring

Your price
£3,000 inc VAT

Retail price
£6,850



9ct Yellow Gold Laser
Engraved Signet Ring

Your price
£850 inc VAT

Retail value
£1,950

1% of all orders donated directly to charity

MANCHESTER
76 King Street
Manchester M2 4NH
t: 0161 823 5688
e: info@alanbick.co.uk

www.alanbick.co.uk



Est. 1968

ALAN BICK

LONDON | MANCHESTER

Serving the Trade for over 50 years

LONDON
Audrey House
16-20 Ely Place
(off Hatton Garden)
London EC1N 6SN
t: 020 7242 5831
e: sales@alanbick.co.uk

alanbickjewellery



CONTRIBUTE TO THE **DEFINING** **CONFLICT** OF OUR GENERATION

OP INTERFLEX. TRAINING UKRAINIAN TROOPS IN THE UK

- Many roles available for all levels of experience and cap badges
- Mobilised activity for 6 months – accruing leave
- Operate in a multinational environment and gain military qualifications

If you are interested in volunteering register your interest with your local G5/Ops chain to find a deployment date to suit.
FGen takes place May and Nov annually.



CONTENTS



Cover picture: Graeme Main

COVER
STORY

FEATURES

- 32 Enter the dragon**
Brits show their teeth in the east
- 40 'The Army's beating heart'**
Prepping Gen Z for officer life
- 47 Blast from the past**
Nato's familiar threat, 75 years on

REGULARS

- 7 The Informer**
Top stories from across the Service
- 22 Need to Know**
Essential tips for today's personnel
- 50 Talkback**
Ruminations from the ranks
- 52 Bullet Points**
Troops' intelligence asset
- 59 Reviews**
Books, movies, games and music to fill your downtime
- 74 Final Word**
Officer cadets' reasons for joining

SOLDIERSPORT

- 64 Biathlon**
Webb picks up Olympic pace
- 65 Tennis**
Season starts with indoor test
- 66 Ice sports**
Mixed results at St Moritz
- 69 Netball**
Army maintains court dominance
- 70 Boxing**
Fighters reach Forces summit
- 73 Football**
Double disappointment in Services clash





40

GLADIATORS GLORY

**Maj Finlay
Anderson
(Scots)**

*reveals what it took to be
crowned champion of the hit
TV reboot*

- p22



47



70

Rollercoaster ride of Army life

GOOD news – AT expeds are back on this month after being paused to save cash. On the flip side, however, is the frustrating discovery that repairs to some quarters have been hit by money drying up at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (page 17).

But hang on, there's more positive news – some of the Army's worst cookhouse food is being consigned to history (page 7). However, the Wider Service Medal – a new decoration recognising ops such as Cabrit – is causing some unease with its qualifying criteria (page 10).

In sport, gaming is set to become an official discipline (page 18), while Army footballers have suffered a double Inter-Services blow (page 73).

If you ever want to demonstrate the insane ups and downs of military life, just flick through a copy of *Soldier*. Each magazine underscores how the Army is in constant flux, adapting and improving at every turn. It's part of what makes this life so appealing to so many... cashflow issues aside.

This month we visit the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to see how that institution is adapting to new threats and a new generation (page 40). As one instructor told us, "if you can create good officers, they will in turn create a good environment for soldiers."

Read on to discover how that will help the Army tackle tomorrow's challenges.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

► Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the month.

► Facebook, X and Instagram

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

► Online

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

► Purchase

IF you're not in the Army you can buy *Soldier* from your high street magazine retailer or directly from us at subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk (£23 for 12 issues in the UK).

Kit & Personal Possessions Insurance



Kit & Personal Possessions Insurance gives you peace of mind knowing if your service kit is damaged or lost, whether home or away, it'll be taken care of.

What's available:

- Up to £40,000 worth of cover
- Licence to occupy cover as standard
- Protect your possessions
- Worldwide cover
- Option to include Home contents cover

Policy limits, exclusions and terms & conditions apply - please see policy documents at forcesmutual.org/kit for full details.

A monthly administration charge of £1 is payable to Forces Mutual. This charge is collected with your premium. Kit & Personal Possessions insurance is arranged by Motorplus Limited t/a Coplus and underwritten by Collinson Insurance Limited (a trading name of Astrenksa Insurance Limited).



To find out more scan the QR code or visit:

**Visit forcesmutual.org/kit
Call 0151 363 5290**

PMGI Limited, trading as Forces Mutual is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Financial Services Register No. 114942. Registered in England & Wales No.1073408. Registered office: Brookfield Court, Selby Road, Leeds, LS25 1NB.

ADVKIPD0009

Forces Mutual



Picture: Graeme Main



SOLDIER

Editor Sarah Goldthorpe
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk
sarah.goldthorpe100@mod.gov.uk

Assistant Editor/Sports Editor Richard Long
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk
richard.long839@mod.gov.uk

Assistant Editor Becky Clark
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk
rebecca.clark937@mod.gov.uk

Assistant Editor Cliff Caswell
ccaswell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Art Editor Tudor Morgan
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk
owen.morgan680@mod.gov.uk

Designer Martin Gannon
mgannon@soldiermagazine.co.uk
martin.gannon102@mod.gov.uk

Photographer Graeme Main
01252 787103 (94222 7103)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk
graeme.main536@mod.gov.uk

Advertising Heather Shekyls
07789 034748
advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions/Enquiries
07789 034748
subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

soldiermagazine.co.uk

Managing Editor Steve Muncey
smuncey@soldiermagazine.co.uk
steven.muncey100@mod.gov.uk



SOLDIER – Magazine of the British Army
Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by Walstead (Roche) Ltd.
Print contract managed by CDS.
© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2024

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily
those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.
We take every care to ensure details are correct. Soldier
magazine takes no responsibility for errors or omissions.
Prices or dates quoted are correct at the time of publication
and are subject to change. We do not endorse products
or services appearing in the directory, classified, editorial
or display advertising featured in the publication. We take
no responsibility for the content or security of third party
websites mentioned in this publication.



Picture: Shutterstock



'If they want lobster, they can have it'

Catering overhaul will give units more say over what their troops eat and the price they pay

A DEFENCE-WIDE catering shake-up will see soldiers at bases across the country enjoying better quality and value-for-money food in cookhouses, with units getting to decide what's on the menu.

A complete overhaul of meals inside the wire is taking place – partly drawing on the results from the recently concluded *Eats* pilot programme conducted at six military hubs, which looked at how to enhance the Service's dining experience.

The scheme is aiming to improve food and facilities, with more flexibility in dining times, wider choices and better quality grub.

A key element of the initiative is providing the meals at cost price, with no in-built profit on each item sold. And for the first time, these prices will be applicable to all customers dining at the base, be they soldiers, families, military and civilian contractors, visitors or civil servants.

Regional Command's food service warrant officer for bases, WO1 Colin Sinclair (RLC), told *Soldier*: "The operating model is changing from next month and the contractors will now receive a fixed fee from defence for their services at each location, rather than building in margins on food and drink – normally sold as a retail offer.

"This is vital for personnel to understand as it means there will be far more flexibility, potentially, around

what goes on their plates and there will be opportunity to address the quality and quantity of food currently set by the core meal requirements."

Under the new strategy, individual units will have representatives on a base dining committee alongside reps from the private contractor to decide what goes on menus so they can be tailored to their preferences.

"If the decision is their personnel would like steak or lobster added to the menu, then so be it," explained WO1 Sinclair. "But they will pay the cost price at the till for these foods, plus VAT and a small five per cent surcharge for wastage."

The plan also includes a radical £52m revamp of cookhouses and leisure and retail areas across UK bases that will take place over the next year or so.

Look out for an in-depth article in May's *Soldier* outlining all the planned changes and the timeline for redeveloped facilities.

There is more flexibility around what goes on their plates

GLOBAL SITREP



1. USA TESTING ONE, TWO

SOME 600 British personnel have returned from stateside drills focusing on battlefield information systems and interoperability.

Staged at Camp Pendleton and Fort Irwin in California, Project Convergence is an ongoing initiative to enhance the passage of data between six partner nations – with the ultimate aim of making the joint force more lethal.

As in previous years, the testing of new technology was a central element, with the Army's lead experimentation unit – 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment – part of the contingent headed up by the 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team.

Formation boss, Brig Neil Budd, said the exercise would ensure Britain was a "net contributor to a multinational fight".

"It is allowing us to adapt in step with the emerging threat," he added.

Meanwhile, members of The Ranger Regiment were embedded alongside the US Special Operations Forces at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.



Pictures: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

2. FALKLAND ISLANDS POLITICIANS PAY A VISIT

GRENADIER Guardsmen played host to some unusual guests on their South Atlantic tour as they greeted MPs and peers.

The soldiers, currently forming the Roulement Infantry Company, welcomed delegates on the Armed Forces parliamentary scheme – which provides the Westminster incumbents with a close-up look at military life.

Having flown 8,000 miles to the territory, the VIPs were also shown the Mount Pleasant Complex base.

Lord Stevens of Birmingham – a working peer – said the visitors had been impressed with the "can-do attitude" of those deployed far from home.

The trip would further help inform discussions in Parliament, he concluded.



2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

3. KENYA MICKS GO MULTINATIONAL

INFANTEERS responsible for training and advising African nations have been honing their skills in the plains surrounding Mount Kenya.

Exercise Justified Accord saw around 70 soldiers deploy from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards – part of the Army's partnering force, 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade.

The US package featured a field training exercise, where the Micks worked alongside counterparts from Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Djibouti and Tanzania.

An academic and command-post serial was also staged near to Nairobi, which lead planner Maj Steve McMichael (IG) described as "incredibly useful".

"It was good to strike that bond up with other nations and get to know people face-to-face," he said.

The battalion will return to Kenya for more drills before Christmas.

4. GIBRALTAR IN FROM THE COLD

SOLDIERS from the British Overseas Territory have been praised on a job well done after a tough winter tour in Estonia with the First Fusiliers Battlegroup.

Some 17 members of The Royal Gibraltar Regiment arrived home following the Op Cabrit outing as part of Nato's enhanced forward presence.

Normally accustomed to Mediterranean climes, they took on brutal Baltic sub-zero conditions while working alongside multinational allies.

"These personnel are testament to our commitment to support wider UK operations," said Commanding Officer Lt Col Matt Moore.

"Well done to all who deployed and welcome back."





5. NORWAY FORMATION FRIENDS

FORCE integration training with the Royal Netherlands Navy was a key focus for Apache crews from 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps as they conducted demanding drills around the mountains of Bardufoss.

The attack helicopter acted as an escort for Dutch pilots rehearsing formation landings in their NH90 platforms as part of an exercise that also featured the Merlins of 845 Naval Air Squadron.

Other eventualities covered included how to operate in bad weather in tight valleys and what to do if aircraft are attacked while approaching a landing site. It was the Dutch crews' first time flying ashore in the Arctic.

Picture: PO Photo Kyle Heller, RN

6. THE GAMBIA GIFT AIDERS

CHILDREN at an African military school have designs on joining the British Army after receiving new kit via a donation effort by British troops.

Gambian born Sgt Maxi Sumareh (AGC (SPS)) said youngsters at the site in the state's west coast region, remained euphoric after boxes packed with uniforms and sports kit arrived from the UK.

He helped send the haul, which was donated after the closure of Abberley School in Worcestershire. Lt Col Geoff Brocklehurst (Scots), whose children were pupils there, collected the items before asking the NCO for assistance in finding them a new home.

Sgt Sumareh, who works for the Personnel Directorate in Andover, said: "The kids were really happy – one said he wants to enlist in the British Army. Joining transformed me from a boy to a man, and taught me a lot about discipline."

**INTELLIGENCE
FOR THE ATLAS?**

Brief the team now:



Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Facebook: facebook.com/soldiermagazine
X (formerly Twitter): @soldiermagazine

“
We are
living in a
dangerous
age
”

Nato adapts to new
threats – page 47

7. GERMANY BLUE SKY THINKERS

OFFICER cadets from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst have overcome the final hurdle to commissioning after deploying to south-east Germany on Exercise Dynamic Victory.

The package, which was drawing to a close as this issue went to press, is hosted three times a year by the US Army at its state-of-the-art facilities in Hohenfels and Grafenwoehr.

As well as live firing, students faced off against American troops in simulated ambushes, patrols, attacks and other scenarios.

The challenging serial (pictured below during last summer's iteration) is set to become even more realistic in future as the Berkshire institution revamps its courses to better reflect modern warfare (page 40).



Picture: Spc Christian Carrillo, US Army



MCLAREN JOINS THE ARMY

■ ARMoured electric vehicle initiatives are set for a boost from a new MoD-wide partnership with elite motor racing team McLaren, it has been confirmed.

Defence chiefs said expertise from the track could deliver benefits to Project Lurker, which is looking to move the Army's fleet away from diesel power.

The deal – with McLaren's Accelerator arm – was marked at a display of an electric Land Rover and Neon e-race car at the Dorset-based BattleLab.

Matt Dennington, co-chief commercial officer at Surrey-based McLaren Racing, said motorsport tech would enhance the military's use of new engine options.

He added: "This partnership provides a great opportunity to stretch and apply our innovation with a view to improving operational efficiencies.

"Under the multi-year agreement, the MoD will collaborate through McLaren Accelerator to apply motorsport innovation to jointly selected projects."

“

The scale of the package has been a challenge

”

WAGONERS' CHALLENGE

■ THE obstacles faced by personnel delivering materiel to the First World War's front lines will be replicated at Sledmere House, East Riding of Yorkshire, on May 19.

Ex Wagoners' Challenge, organised by the Royal Logistic Corps, will see Regular and Reserve units compete using horse-drawn wagons in a variety of tasks inspired by the role of the Wagoners' Special Reserve, the formation that performed the task for real on battlefields more than 100 years ago.



Supply side hits a high

Support specialists make huge effort to keep troops on move

THE media's zoom lenses and the eyes of distinguished visitors have been firmly fixed on some impressive displays by troops and hardware during **Steadfast Defender** – Nato's largest training package since the Cold War.

But behind the scenes, a composite group of unsung logistics heroes have been quietly beavering away to ensure UK personnel and vehicles are fully fit for purpose.

Known as Enabling Group South, they include specialists from 521 Squadron, 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, who were in Emden to smoothly offload numerous vehicles

from ferries ready for their transfer to the Nato Forward Holding Base in Sennelager.

That facility was also used to supply British soldiers moving through to manoeuvres in other locations across Germany and Poland.

"The scale of the package has been a challenge in itself and required a huge supply effort," said Lt Jed Hazell from 32 Squadron, 6 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps.

"While we are well practised with delivering to our dependencies from regular exercises, we were less prepared for the handover of equipment through the long logistics

NEW MEDAL HIT OR MISS?

■ A NEW medal that recognises deployments on operations such as Cabrit is in danger of being loved and loathed in equal measure by personnel, thanks to its qualifying criteria.

The Wider Service Medal recognises 180 days' of aggregated service on certain qualifying missions that do not necessarily fall within the traditional medallic criteria of risk and rigour.

The MoD announced it will limit the

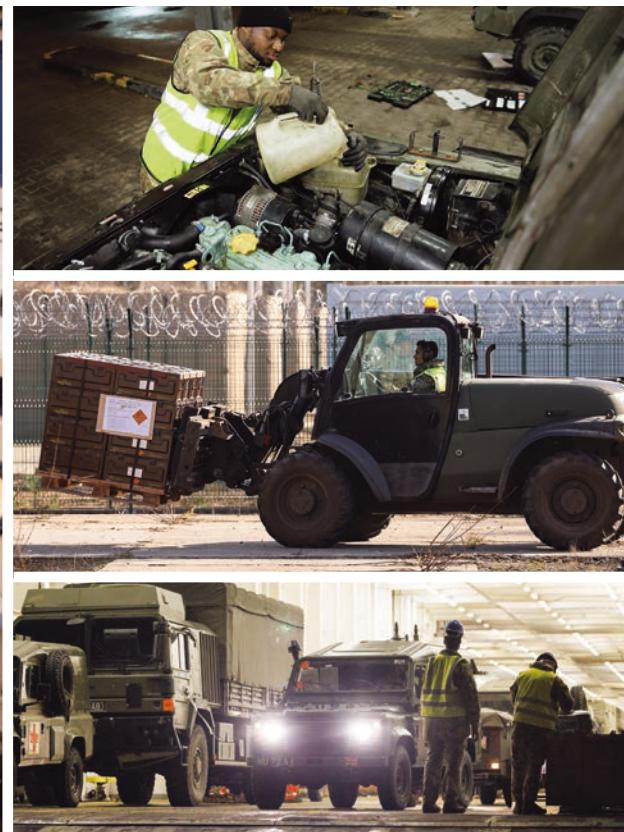
number of applicable operations to begin with but it will be expanded later.

However, eligibility will stretch back only to December 2018, when Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved the idea of the award. Op Cabrit began in 2017, leaving a substantial cohort of British soldiers who were deployed out in the cold.

"I understand there has been a different focus on Eastern Europe since the Russian invasion of Ukraine but we faced the same



Personnel have been refuelling nearly 100 vehicles a day (top right) to keep formations on the move on Ex Steadfast Defender



Pictures: Cpl Rebecca Brown and Ssgt Tim Evans, both RLC

chain and this was my first time conducting an exchange point."

A refuelling station that is capable of holding more than one million litres of fuel in above-ground collapsible bladders was established in a period of just 24 hours.

Up to six vehicles can refill at the same time and a large tanker can be brimmed in 20 minutes.

The deployable system was built by 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps and designed by 516 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (Bulk Petroleum), part of 170 Engineer Group.

Pte Daffydd Kitchining (RLC) of 66 Fuel and General Support Squadron said: "It's very hands-on, which I like. Last night we had 88 vehicles pass through here and tonight we are

expecting 90."

Meanwhile, hungry soldiers also need fuel and a team of just 18 military chefs and four civilians working around the clock have been dishing out up to 1,000 meals a day.

By the end of the exercise, it's estimated they will have cooked over 100,000 eggs and used nearly two tonnes of potatoes.

Lt Col John Anthistle (REME), commander of Enabling Group South, said: "We have managed to facilitate the movement of thousands of troops and literally hundreds of vehicles well over 1,000 kilometres across the whole of Germany.

"It's been a real test to make sure we got them to the exercise start line in good order." ■



Light Dragoons on Op Cabrit in 2017

threat and harsher conditions," Maj Nicholas Hedges (Rifles), who served on the first Cabrit tour, told *Soldier*.

"Clearly the medal is very welcome but in my view it should apply to the deployment from day one – it should be all or nothing."

WO2 Sam Coote (RLC), attached to 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, added: "I think it's a positive step forward as we face many different challenges and this will recognise ops below the usual threshold."

Lt Col Nick Zorab, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal

Regiment, also believes personnel will feel encouraged overall.

"I served on an earlier Estonia deployment as a company commander and was struck then by how important medallic recognition was to troops," he said.

"We were deployed for nearly eight months and it's right that sacrifices such as being away for long periods are recognised."

Lt Col Zorab said the qualifying criteria might prove divisive if soldiers on the first tours were ruled out, but he added: "You have to draw a line somewhere."

IN NUMBERS

75

Percentage of veterans who feel a lack of recognition for the sacrifices they made during their time in uniform, according to data compiled on 11,500 ex-military personnel by the Defence Discount Service

MUSEUM GIVES TRACK SUPPORT



EXHIBITS from the Tank Museum have been playing a part in supporting the war effort in Ukraine.

Following an urgent request for Soviet-era vehicle tracks from the MoD, William Cook Defence Ltd called on the Bovington-based attraction to collaborate on a project to reverse engineer parts for use on the front line.

Using incomplete drawings, specimen track links from Ukraine, then the inspection of vehicles, manuals and the loan of items from the museum, Cook produced tracks and drive sprockets for MTLB, BMP, and T72 vehicles.

Tank Museum curator David Willey said: "When we can help industry and our allies, of course we should. We are very pleased to hear the reproduced vehicle track is now arriving in Ukraine."

“Silence would descend when we walked into any room”



Picture: Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land

■ THE first pre-production Challenger 3 main battle tank has been deployed to Germany to be assessed under a range of operational conditions.

The tests will validate the vehicle's performance and make refinements before British-German company Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land starts its main manufacturing run of 148 platforms for the Army, with deliveries due to start next year.

The Challenger 3 is a complex beast that's fitted with several advanced features over the incumbent Challenger 2, including a 120mm smooth bore main gun capable of firing a greater variety of modern ammunition and digitised internal systems that can be integrated into battlefield networks.

Meanwhile, Household Cavalry Regiment troops became the first Field Army crew to fire the Ajax during cold weather trials in Sweden.

They used around 120 rounds during a series of tests, including firing on the move, which were carried out in temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees Celsius to ensure the platform's systems worked seamlessly in Arctic conditions as well as temperate regions.

The team also conducted a live crew clearance to prove the turret is safe to use, even in extremely low temperatures.

Nearly 600 Ajax vehicles, comprising six variants, will eventually be delivered to the Army by General Dynamics Land Systems (UK).



Picture: Paul Haley, Soldier

‘Men didn’t really want us there’

Females mark 40 years of being allowed to march up Sandhurst's steps

PIONEERING members of the Women's Royal Army Corps will turn the clock back 40 years at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's Sovereign's Parade this month.

In 1984, the officers (pictured) became the first females to march on the occasion, having completed the full commissioning course alongside men. Previously, there had only been limited integration, with women housed elsewhere and prevented from fully taking part in the graduating ceremony.

To mark the anniversary, veterans will attend the passing out parade on April 6, followed by a reunion dinner.

Sue Evans, who was 22 when she joined up and served in the Royal Army Educational Corps for eight years, recalled how the challenges of initial training had bonded her intake for life.

“They say the friendships you make in adversity you keep for ever,” she explained. “I’m very proud to be part of this group of ordinary women who did something extraordinary.”

“The men didn’t really want us there. Silence would descend when we walked into any room. There were no boots or

uniform to fit us.

“Our unofficial anthem was *I’m Still Standing* by Elton John. Every day I thought about leaving, so walking up those steps at the end was quite something – a minor miracle.”

Even then, the Servicewomen’s ceremonial skirts were too restrictive for them to keep step with the male cadets, so they marched separately during the pass-out parade – and once commissioned, they earned less as they did not qualify for the X factor payment.

While she credits officer training with instilling leadership skills that she draws on to this day, the frustrations made her a lifelong advocate of proper inclusion.

Her message to the new generation of female soldiers is to carry on the fight.

“The Army hasn’t quite understood that it’s not about making everything the same,” she continued. “It should be about equity, not equality.”

“We need to celebrate our differences, not shoehorn people into being something other than themselves.”

“There’s still a battle to be had.”

● Gen Z cadets step up – p40



Just before you go...

Picture: Graeme Main



Soldiers urged to fill out exit survey before leaving service

THE checklist of stuff to square away before exiting the Army can be daunting.

But leavers – Regular and Reserve – are being urged to take 20 minutes out of their busy days to tell the military why they are going.

The survey, which is anonymous, could be used to help the Service hang onto personnel better in the future.

And the experts in charge of it say taking part is also an opportunity to help serving friends who are staying.

"Filling this survey out might not directly benefit the individual, but it's really important data that can potentially help improve the lived experience for others," said Annabel Parkyn, a trainee occupational psychologist in Army HQ.

"Invariably, it's not one thing that makes people leave service; it's often a combination of different factors over

a few years.

"We want to hear about those experiences – so of course the people we are most interested in are those giving notice to terminate.

"Given current retention issues, this data may provide the opportunity to improve things."

Those working in resettlement-related roles, such as regimental career management officers, are urged to ensure the survey link below is inserted on their leavers' checklists.

Set up in 2021, the questionnaire has so far attracted a response rate of between eight and 13 per cent. But it is hoped future ones will be closer to the level of the continuous attitude surveys (between 20 and 30 per cent).

Find the Regular exit survey at surveys.mod.uk/index.php/186367 and access the Reserve document via surveys.mod.uk/index.php/256465

“
It's important data that can improve things
”

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

CYCLISTS HIT THE ROAD...

MEMBERS of the Bluelight Cycle Club – which includes police officers, firefighters, clinicians and Service personnel – braved demanding weather in their journey through the Shropshire countryside on the Tour de BT event. SSAFA chief exec Lt Gen Sir Andrew Gregory

said: "They deserve a special mention not just for the amount raised, but also for doing it in conditions that were less than ideal."



SHARPENING THE MIND

MENTAL resilience training is being rolled out across the Field Army from the end of this month.

The four-day course will be delivered by Pirbright's Staff Leadership School and will equip personnel to support the wellbeing of colleagues back at their units.

Adapted from the package currently attended by would-be phase one instructors, it will consist of classroom lessons, physical training and – for the first time – virtual reality sessions that replicate stressful situations.

The technology will place students in scenarios that tap into common phobias like fear of heights or spiders to help them manage their anxiety responses.

Explaining why mental resilience is important to all personnel, not just new recruits, Capt Vikki Sorrell (RLC), the officer in charge of the training, said: "We all use it on a daily basis, whether it's because you have to give a presentation and you don't like public speaking, or you are deploying on an op – or even if you have a difficult toddler at home who you want to do your best for."

"The course will teach people the factors that reduce or increase resilience so that they can better understand it in themselves and their friends."

More information and the course schedule can be found via the ARITC Staff Leadership School SharePoint page.





Working in partnership to deliver across UK Defence

**Enabled by technology.
Trusted for over 30 years.**

Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL) and its parent company Sopra Steria UK take great pride in working together to deliver a broad range of services to support UK Defence.

These services include the provision of digital services to support logistics, collaboration and secure messaging as well as critical IT and business services in HR, payroll and pensions for over 230,000 serving military personnel and reservists, and 2.4 million veterans.

As a long-standing signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant we are proud to be a Gold Employee Recognition Scheme holder in recognition of the support we provide to veterans and reservists who are a valued part of our workforce. Our partnerships with UK Defence are supported by our social value programmes that focus on military related charities, outreach and fund raising initiatives.

Ranked in the top 7 of trusted providers for UK Defence Software & IT Services (SITS) for 8 consecutive years by TechMarketView, SSCL and Sopra Steria are working in true partnership to support UK Defence.



sscl.com



UK MOD © Crown copyright 2023



Alon David Taylor / Shutterstock.com



UK MOD © Crown copyright 2023



British and French troops serving together on Op Cabrit last year

FRENCH CONNECTION

FRANCE'S Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Pierre Schill, is to visit Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as part of ceremonies marking 120 years of Entente Cordiale, the historic agreements strengthening relations between the two countries.

On April 8 – the date the original documents were signed – Gen Schill will join the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders for a meeting at the academy, where the commandants and officer cadets from both RMAS and its equivalent in France – the Ecole speciale militaire de Saint-Cyr – will take part in a commemorative step-lining ceremony.

During the day, they will

also visit New College's statue of Louis Napoleon, Prince Imperial – the son of French Emperor Napoleon III who fought for and died serving with the British Army in South Africa.

"We are working as closely as ever with our principal European ally towards the re-establishment of deterrence in Europe," commented Gen Sanders.

"This year will also see a French battlegroup operating within the 7th Light Mechanised Brigade Combat Team as part of our Allied Response Force, building on the spirit of interoperability that's integral to the Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force."



The long march

COMMONWEALTH soldiers from units across the UK marched 100km with 15kg loads, from Chattri Memorial near Brighton to a service in London marking the 75th anniversary of the Commonwealth of Nations and the 80th anniversary of the Battles of Kohima and Imphal. It took them three days, finishing on March 11 – Commonwealth Day.

Contact Paul on Defence Connect

Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, talks Service life...



“Inner grit doesn't just come, we need to bed it into our people”



AS THIS edition reaches you, I'll be preparing to leave for Morocco, where I'll be taking on the Marathon des Sables (shown) as part of team Rinder's Run.

Together with our namesake, TV judge Rob Rinder, I'll be running with Cpl Natalya Platonova (QARANC), Olympic gold medallist Maj Heather Stanning (RA) and MC recipient Col Mark Nooney in support of the Army Benevolent Fund.

I'm under no illusions that covering 250km in six days across some of the harshest terrain on Earth is going to be the challenge of a lifetime – as much a test of our mental grit as of our physical fitness.

I got some useful practice in recently on both counts when I visited a mental resilience course at the ARITC Staff Leadership School in Pirbright for a PT and assault course session.

These packages are a crucial element of what the Soldier Academy now delivers as part of phase one training, but they are also being rolled out Army-wide at the end of this month (page 13).

Very few other organisations offer their personnel anything like this and it's an

acknowledgement that society has changed.

Whereas my generation might have grown up with a level of in-built robustness – your mum not letting you in the house unless it was a force ten gale outside, walking everywhere because you didn't have a car, having to keep busy because we didn't have personal devices – that is no longer the norm.

Inner grit doesn't just come, we need to bed it into our people – and by teaching our instructors those skills, it will trickle down to new recruits.

I know I'll be having to harness every last ounce of determination during this race and no doubt there will be times I'll want to stop. But I feel confident that the resilience I've developed over 25 years in uniform, as well as my teammates, will see me through.

That belief in your own ability to crack on is so important to what we do as soldiers – I want everyone to be able to find it in themselves when it counts.

Thank you to all the units who have invited me on PT sessions over the last few months – it's been an invaluable part of my training and I've been blown away by people's support.

I hope I do you proud.





Picture: Graeme Main

AT turns a corner as expeds resume

THE Army's adventurous training community have welcomed the news that a ban on expeditions has been lifted.

As part of widespread savings measures introduced in October, trips that did not already have funding in place were shelved.

However, Service chiefs recently reversed the decision following concerns about its effect on retention.

Col Neil Wilson, commander of Adventurous Training Group (Army), said he was "overjoyed" to be back on track, but warned there would not be an immediate surge in activity.

"It takes about three months to plan an exped, to book facilities and organise equipment and instructors," he said.

"We have about 300 in the pipeline since the policy was reversed, which is very positive, but we don't expect to see a large upturn in trips actually taking place until May or June."

Ongoing restrictions on travel and subsistence, as well as Reserve training days, would also continue to hamper expeditions, he pointed out – the latter because it would reduce the pool of available instructors.

The officer and his team estimate that in comparison to last year, some 5,000 troops missed out on experiencing adventurous training while the ban was in place.

And he stressed that having the opportunity to develop leadership skills and mental resilience through such pursuits was key to the Army retaining its best soldiers.

"The kind of people who are prepared to push themselves out of their comfort zones and challenge

themselves a bit more are exactly the ones we risk losing through these savings measures," he warned.

Col Wilson also cautioned that a reinstatement of the suspension was not out of the question, since the budgetary situation would likely remain difficult in the coming financial year.

Business cases would therefore still be closely scrutinised, and units should not overlook cost-effective options at military facilities in the UK and Germany, he said.

CASH DRIES UP FOR SOME REPAIRS

SERVICE housing repairs are being hampered by a lack of cash.

Rumblings that housing contractors lacked funds for maintenance tasks circulated after a post on social media page *Fill Your Boots*.

A soldier claimed contractor Pinnacle had responded to a complaint with: "Your two repairs will not be actioned until the new financial year as we have run out of money".

A spokesperson for Pinnacle told *Soldier* budget issues were the responsibility of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO).

When contacted, a DIO spokesperson confirmed financial challenges were currently affecting the speed of repairs.

"There are significant demands on the defence budget... we will be concentrating on essential works to keep homes safe and compliant, including all urgent and emergency repairs and maintenance," they added.

"We are sorry that this means there are some jobs we are unable to deliver at the moment."

"The position will be reassessed in line with the budget for 2024/25 and communications will be sent to Service families in due course."

Picture: Shutterstock



SENDING A SIGNAL

■ HARDY signallers braved hail, wind and driving rain to complete the Lanyard Trophy endurance event on Dartmoor Training Area.

A total of 25 teams entered this year's race, setting off at 0400 to tab 40 miles while carrying 30lbs.

The winning outfit were 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron, with 37 Signal Regiment coming first in the Reserve and mixed category, and 30 Signal Regiment taking the top spot in the female contest.

Co-organiser Capt Joe Cripps said the event required competitors to push their bodies and minds.

"This year has easily been one of the best, but I might be biased," added the officer.



Picture: LCP Emma Hudson, R Signals

ELVISS IS CENTRE STAGE

■ LT GEN Mike Elviss has been appointed commander Field Army, replacing Lt Gen Sir Ralph Wooddisse.

He commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1995, joining 29th Commando Regiment, and then returned to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as an instructor before his initial selection for sub-unit command in 2002.

He then deployed to Iraq twice in 2003 in artillery and infantry roles.

Lt Gen Elviss (shown below) commanded 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade between July 2016 and July 2018, including a year as Nato's Very High Readiness Task Force (Land), and was appointed general officer commanding of 3rd (UK) Division in February 2020.



Q&A



Soldier grilled Maj James on esports issues...

How did you land in gaming?

I was at university and couldn't afford a TV – gaming on my PC was a lot cheaper and I never looked back.

Why are esports being recognised now?

The community is huge; most people play and many compete. Recognition is the best way to go.

Won't people get unfit?

You can play physical sports and esports – it's not about choosing one or the other. Soldiers also know they must stay in good physical shape.

Where will this lead in future?

Gaming is now a bigger business than the movie industry – it's still developing so these are exciting times.

How do you find out more?

Simple. Search "Army esports" on Defence Connect.

RALLYING CALL ON SURVEY

SOLDIERS' loved ones are being asked to fill out this year's families continuous attitude survey before the deadline on April 22.

The online questionnaire has been sent to 10,409 personnel, who are asked to quickly pass it onto their partner for completion. Last year just 20 per cent expressed their views.

However, it is hoped more will take part this time because the document is an avenue for families to communicate directly with senior leaders. Read **ABN 5/2024** for details.



Picture: Graeme Main

Army looks to the future as it recognises online gaming as official sport

“
We're seeing upwards of 600 people
”

DIE-HARD PlayStation enthusiasts have been urged to lend their talent to Army teams after top brass recognised video gaming as an official sport.

It has been confirmed that four titles – *Rocket League*, *League of Legends*, *Call of Duty* and *F1* – have been signed off as bona fide disciplines.

Personnel will be supported to play on Inter-Service and corps fixtures.

Maj Griff James (Coldrm Gds), who is leading the Army esports charge, is hoping to build the gaming community in the months ahead.

The Aldershot-based Reservist is taking part in events himself while hosting his own twice-weekly show on social media site Twitch.

Maj James told *Soldier*: "The fact is the scene is already very well subscribed and the military is represented in a number of teams.

"The recent decision by the Army Sport Control Board means that esports is now the 45th discipline to be officially recognised by the Service.

"I'm looking to build greater engagement – we're seeing upwards of 600 people at events while others are online watching in the margins.

"Although we only have four recognised titles to start us off, this doesn't mean that we cannot put forward more for approval."

The officer said players had skills that were highly prized by the military and with video games now a more popular genre than movies, Maj James was confident the Army's formal recognition would pay dividends.

"This is a mainstream pursuit – there is a game for everybody and most people play in one way or another," he concluded. "As a Service we must be fully involved." ■



Soldier death 'may have been avoidable'

THE death of a young soldier who collapsed during routine PT may have been avoided had correct protocols been followed, an investigation has found.

A Service inquiry report concluded that Spr Connor Morrison of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment did not receive treatment for heatstroke in the recommended time when he collapsed during a run on July 21, 2022. He was taken to hospital but died two days later.

A Defence Safety Authority panel said more

rapid treatment by military personnel and civilian medical crews may have saved him.

Their document, which makes 41 recommendations to prevent future incidents, criticised troops for failing to take water or comms on the run, with the emergency services called by a passing civilian nurse.

It also highlights several soldiers were out of date with heat illness-related training. In addition, Spr Morrison should have received a fitness assessment after joining his unit.

The military investigation found multiple contributory factors to his death but concluded, on the balance of probabilities, that the cause was exertional heatstroke.

The panel highlighted that the 20-year-

old from Renfrewshire, who was described in a tribute by CO Lt Col Jack Crossley as "a professional soldier with much promise", was seen to be struggling on several occasions on the run near Rock Barracks, Woodbridge.

The sapper was put in a slower group by his NCOs but nearing the end of the run began "weaving from side to side" before collapsing.

Ultimately, attempts to cool down the casualty by colleagues and civilian clinicians were not taken until some 31 minutes after his collapse – outside the recommended window for such action.

The report said there were "sufficient indicators" to suggest that Spr Morrison was suffering from heatstroke.

EXPERIENCE GIVES YOU THE EDGE!

WE'VE CLAIMED
OVER **£380 MILLION**
IN TAX REFUNDS.
THAT'S EXPERIENCE.



25
YEARS
IN TAX REFUNDS

CLAIM NOW

Call 01233 653 004

or visit RIFTrefunds.co.uk/soldier

★ Trustpilot ★★★★★



Tax refunds made easy
RIFT
TAX REFUNDS

THE BIG PICTURE

Europe

Steadfast Defender spreads its wings

APPRECIATING the sheer scale of Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024 is no mean feat. With ground-based ops dominating our pages, it's easy to forget the huge number of sea and air assets being deployed through a series of training packages across Europe.

More than 80 fast jets, helicopters and drones – and 50 major warships – have been employed on diverse tasks to form a cohesive Nato campaign defending its members' sovereign territory.

Stretching from the far north inside Norway's Arctic Circle down to Georgia in the south, manoeuvres are due to continue until June.

Turn to page 32 for a report on one of the most dynamic Steadfast Defender packages to date, Exercise Polish Dragon.

Pictures: LPhot Stuart Dickson, RN; Cpl Katrina Knox and AS1 Amber Mayall, both RAF; Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC; Lt Luke Ritchie, RM





NEED TO KNOW

7 QUESTIONS / OFF DUTY / RULES & REGS / SKILLS & DRILLS / WELFARE / EXPERIENCE

“

What won it for me was the strength and resilience you get from Army training

”



Winning edge

Maj Finlay Anderson (Scots), champion of the BBC's *Gladiators* reboot, reflects on his triumph on the Saturday night show...



1 What made you want to sign up?

A friend saw the application and thought I should give it a shot, so I did – just for the fun of it, really. I was probably around five years old when I last watched it in the 90s, so to be on it felt like a dream.

2 How did you prepare?

You can't really replicate the games in Gladiators in normal PT. But I always keep as fit as I can, so I think my background in military and functional fitness, boxing, rugby and just being an all-rounder is what set me up for success. My wife is a pilates instructor, and she has her own app, *Elevate*, so that helped keep me strong too. But what won it for me I think is the mental and physical resilience you get from Army training.

3 What was the most challenging part?

Although it's a game show, it's very physical, and with back-to-back filming days you get pretty battered and bruised. The ground is fairly solid and you're being tackled by professional rugby and NFL players, but you have to keep going day after day. I broke a rib in the quarter-final, which I don't recommend.

4 Did you have a favourite game?

Apart from the Eliminator, which was fun because it was just head-to-head with the other contender, I enjoyed Gauntlet the most. Minimum skill, maximum smash.



5 What are the Gladiators like?

All really nice – they put on a bit of a character in the arena but they're all great sportsmen and women. I weigh about 100kg and I'm 6ft tall, so I've never considered myself a small person but next to Giant and Bionic I looked like a little boy. They're upward of 120-130kg and pure muscle.

6 How did your colleagues react?

Very positively. Military banter will always have people taking the mick out of you, though. On my heats I messed up the rope climb and I think every physical training instructor in the Army messaged me the next day saying "boss, you need some remedial training". A bunch of my soldiers and officers came to watch me in the final, which was nice.

7 How do you reflect on your win?

Surreal doesn't even cut it. To have watched it as a child and then 30 or so years later, there I am in the arena for a week, then straight back to work on Monday morning... you think, "did that really happen?". It was pretty wild. I've got lots of fans now, all under the age of eight!



Name: Maj Finlay Anderson

Age: 35

Current role: OC Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Service history: Joined in 2010 and completed two tours of Afghanistan and two of Iraq

A soldier's things...

Tips on the art of militaria collecting

► ANTIQUES expert and television presenter Angus Ashworth (below right) has never forgotten how he first fell in love with militaria – combing shops for artefacts of the Napoleonic era as a youngster.

Later he combined his dual passions by taking a job at a local auctioneer while enlisting as a Reservist with The Green Howards, later The Royal Yorkshire Regiment.

Hanging up his boots just over a decade ago, the father-of-three invested in his own antiques sales room – and more recently became the focus of a popular TV show, *The Yorkshire Auction House*.

With the military spawning a healthy antiques trade, Ashworth believes collecting can be a satisfying hobby for troops. These are his top tips for getting in on the game...



1 Concentrate on an area that interests you – for example medals, kit or maybe items that are relevant to a certain regiment. Militaria is a vast sector encompassing many different facets.

2 Do your research and understand the era – and sector – you have chosen. Bury yourself in books and gen up. This will be invaluable when you are out and about making purchases.

3 Unearth a story. Clearly every object has a face value in its own right but origins can be as important as the object itself, particularly if – as is often the case with medals – thousands of them were issued.

4 Know the law – especially if your interest is in a specialist area such as antique weapons. As an auction house, we have all the relevant licences. But legislation changes, so don't fall foul of it.

5 Money isn't everything. Many items have no great financial value, but an important place in history. At the business, for example, we've seen sketchbooks kept by Royal Navy midshipmen on old sailing vessels – they are worth little but remain fascinating.



Profile

Angus Ashworth

Age: 40

Enlisted in: The Green Howards; later 4 R Yorks

Period of service: 2003-2011

Operational experience: Telic; Herrick

Current role: Owner of Ryedale Auctioneers; TV presenter



Video nasties

Why staying safe in the online world is critical

► GAMING was once a solitary pursuit, but thanks to rapid technological growth it is now an intensely social activity, often with people in far-flung parts of the world.

It's an exciting digital space, but with very real hazards. Soldiers can be prime targets for the likes of organised crime groups or state-sponsored hackers. The old Second World War poster line that "loose lips sink ships" has never been more apt in the esports age.

We asked Tim Mitchell – boss of internet advice site Get Safe Online – for his tips on keeping data and Army intel locked down...



Limit what you share

Keep info on a strictly need-to-know basis when dealing with others online. Don't include personal or work data that will compromise security in chats or on profiles

Tag carefully

Your gaming handle and username can give away more than you think about you – providing info useful to hackers. Choose your ID wisely

Lock down gateways

Strong passwords are important, so set them well. Ensure that the one you create is not used on other accounts, and that you don't reveal it to others

Keep current

Your system software must be kept fully up-to-date – stay on top of this and don't download unauthorised material relating to games you're playing

Don't cash out

Watch yourself with the likes of in-game loot boxes. If you're parting with money while playing online, set yourself limits and know when to stop

Take out trolls

Don't tolerate online abuse. If you become a victim, do not retaliate or engage with the person concerned. Instead, immediately block and report them

Maintain vigilance

Stay alert for scams and other dubious activity when you are playing. Keep tabs on trusted forums for reports of questionable activity online

Staying secure

Get Safe Online provides a range of info about all aspects of security and personal protection in the digital world. See getsafeonline.org for more

Recce in 5

Top attributes of the stealthy operators

► RECONNAISSANCE personnel are a vital cog in the battlefield intelligence-gathering machine. Trained to transport their heavy kit and amass lifesaving info by day and night, in any environment and through all weathers, these soldiers must meet some high standards to be effective.

Here, troops from the recce platoon of C (Essex) Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment give us a rundown of five attributes that each of its operators must possess to be successful.

1 ADAPTABILITY

Troops must adjust to any conditions, especially varying terrain. In the past few weeks our platoon has covered the UK, Cyprus, Kenya and Belize – and all these places have vastly different environments.

5 DISCIPLINE

Battlefield discipline is talked about widely in the Army, but this is particularly important to us. Everything we do must be to a rigorous standard so our commanders can count on us.

2 ROBUSTNESS

– both physical and mental. We carry very heavy kit for a very long time. This is a gear change from when we were a rifle company and generally got moved in by vehicle.

3 TRUST

This means allowing each other to take hard decisions on the ground as well as trusting the person giving you a particular course of action. It also means appreciating the fact our commanders trust us; our close-knit platoons can be sent off for up to six weeks at a time.

4 MENTAL SHARPNESS

Recce soldiers stay awake at night, often spending hours looking down sights and gathering intel. This can mean long periods without sleep or eating. Staying sharp in that scenario isn't easy.

Autism awareness

What neurodiverse personnel want their colleagues to know

► LAST February, Maj Paul Robinson (AGC (SPS)) spoke to *Soldier* about his efforts to destigmatise autism in the Army.

Recently diagnosed with the condition himself, he wanted to create a better working environment for others like him – and off the back of the article, several troops reached out to him for advice.

With April 2 designated World Autism Day, we caught up with him to find out how neurotypical personnel can show their support...

Remember, it's not all negative.

Most people hear “autism” and picture the likes of Dustin Hoffman’s character in *Rain Man*, but there are positives too, such as increased concentration. My current job is all about detail and I enjoy doing deep dives into topics and data that others might find really dull.

Consider reasonable adjustments,

for example issuing software to assist us in our work or allowing more short breaks. I find listening to music through my headphones helps me focus when the office is busy. Getting some fresh air or going out for a run are also useful for processing things. The little adaptations can make a difference.

Be clear and upfront. Everyone is different, but I like to know in advance why I’m being called into a meeting otherwise I overthink things. Some autistic people may have difficulty accepting when an order doesn’t seem to make sense. It’s not that they’re being insubordinate – they just like to understand the logic behind it.

Try not to misinterpret our reactions.

I can’t hide my expressions – whatever I’m thinking will show on my face so it may look like I’m being negative towards something during

a conversation, but actually I’m just trying to process how to resolve it.

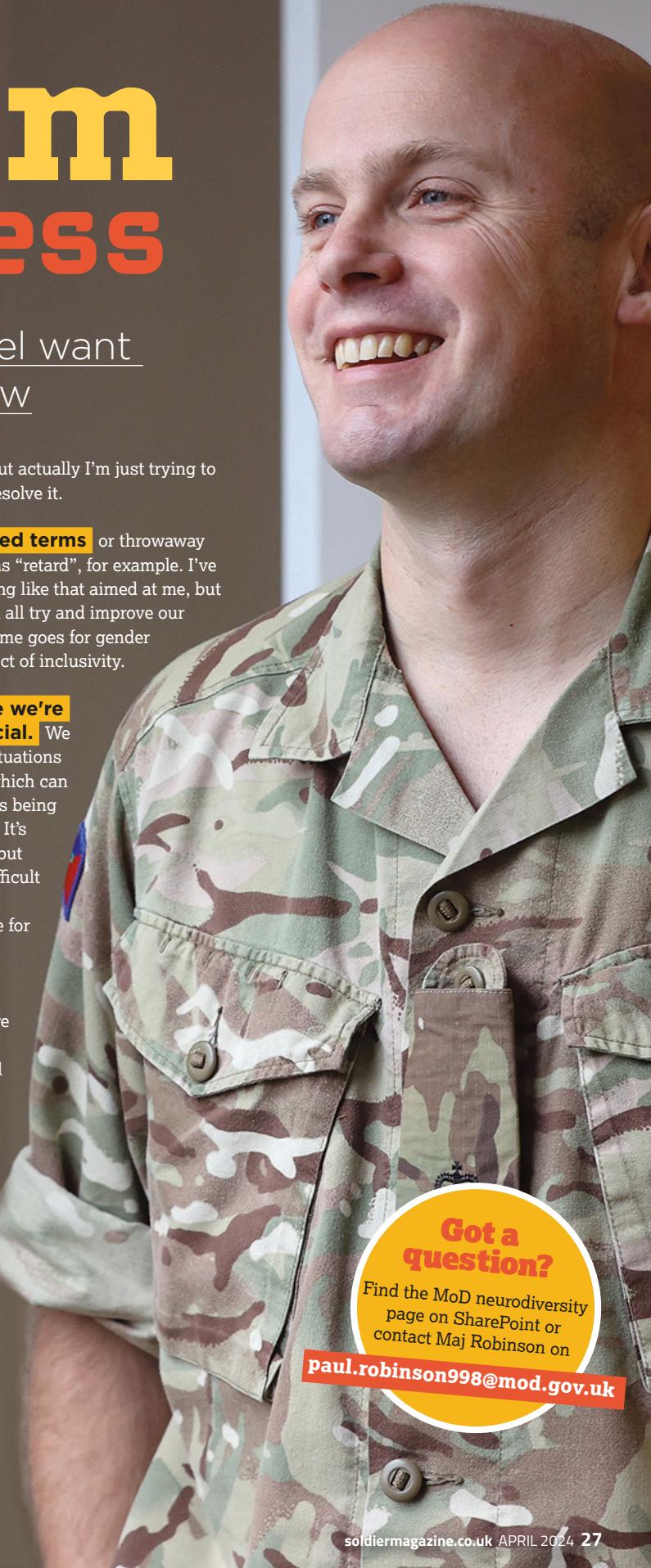
Avoid outdated terms or throwaway comments such as “retard”, for example. I’ve never had anything like that aimed at me, but I think we should all try and improve our language. The same goes for gender or any other aspect of inclusivity.

Don't assume we're being antisocial.

We may find some situations uncomfortable, which can come across as us being aloof or arrogant. It’s not intentional – but we may find it difficult to form the social bonds others take for granted.

Not sure?

Just ask. We’re not asking for favours or special treatment – it’s about starting a conversation, educating people and hopefully making the workplace better for everyone.



Got a question?

Find the MoD neurodiversity page on SharePoint or contact Maj Robinson on

paul.robinson998@mod.gov.uk

Going 2

Reservist's double whammy of endurance
feats ahead of starting Regular career



► **NEXT month, 2Lt Charlie Hubbard (Mercian) will arrive at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to embark on his Regular commissioning course.**

But before that he has the second of two epic challenges to tick off – the Marathon des Sables, which he will take on having only recently returned from a gruelling Arctic ultramarathon in Canada's Yukon territory.

The 23-year-old was among just five competitors to finish the race out of 12 starters, coming second over the 200km distance.

Here, he reveals his approach to two very different events...

“**WITH a race like the Yukon Arctic Ultra it very quickly becomes way more of a mental battle than just a physical one.**

In traditional road marathons fitness is the main component, but in extreme environments your ability to stay calm under pressure and on top of your admin is tested. That's what I enjoy about it.

Conditions this year were brutal. It's normally -25 to -35 degrees Celsius during the day and around -40 at night, but it stayed in the lower temperature bracket for most of the race.

The novelty of the landscape wears off fairly quickly. You're going for hours and hours without seeing anyone or hearing anything – much of it in the dark. It was beautiful but pretty sinister, too.

You are also moving slowly because you drag a pulk behind you weighing about 45kg. Within that you have everything you need to be self-sufficient, apart from water, which you get at checkpoints.

However, at those temperatures everything freezes – your flask, spare clothes, food – and you can't stop to take your gloves off and eat because you risk getting frostbite.

Sleep was also impossible because it's too cold to get comfortable – you're just shivering.

extremes

I kept going, more or less, for two-and-a-half days straight. In that time I burnt around 25,000 calories and only consumed about 5,000, so by the time I reached the half-way point I was pretty low on energy.

The race is 400km in total, but you have the option to do half the distance and still qualify for a result.

I hadn't been able to train with the sledge so my lower legs were struggling and I was also dealing with an infected toe, so I made the decision to stop there.

It was a difficult call and I like to think I've never quit on anything before, but being about to start my Regular career I couldn't take the risk of serious injury.

One person, an experienced endurance athlete, pushed on to complete the whole thing. I came second over the 200km distance and was awarded the "Likey" award, a new accolade given to the person who best embodies the spirit of the race.

The winner gets their name engraved on a golden set of antlers which are hung in the last hotel before the Arctic Circle.

Now it's a case of keeping my fitness ticking over before attempting the

Marathon des Sables.

The main positive of the desert is that it's hot, but you can stop to drink and eat so keeping your energy high should be easier.

It's also 250km spread across six days and once you've finished each stage you have the rest of the evening to chill out, sleep and refuel. And you are only carrying 7kg with you.

I feel fairly confident. As a soldier you have an advantage over civilians in extreme environments in terms of knowledge of heat and cold injuries. It's drilled into you annually as part of mandatory training.

You know how to look out for yourself and others, especially in places where it's not always possible to get immediate medical support.

Even having been through the Sandhurst short course as a Reservist, I think it instils that sense of resilience and self-reliance in you.

It's always 'your weapon, your kit, then yourself'. The rule is to square away your equipment before you sort yourself out. The military helps you build those good habits as well as providing invaluable knowledge.

“



Profile:

Name: 2Lt Charlie Hubbard

Age: 23

Military service: Joined the University Officers' Training Corps while studying politics and international relations at the University of Birmingham on an Army bursary. Later transferred to 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment.

● 2Lt Hubbard is raising money for The Mercian Benevolent Fund and testicular cancer charity The Oddballs Foundation. To support him follow the QR code...



HEAVY
WEAPONS

AIMPOINT FCS™

The Aimpoint Fire Control System (FCS) is a Dynamic Universal Reflex Sight (DURS) for use on Multiple Weapon Platforms. The Aimpoint FCS sighting system consists of an eye safe 1550 nm Laser Range Finder, a ballistic computer with the capability to store more than 50 different ballistic algorithms, and a parallax free optical channel (DVO, Direct View Optic) with unlimited eye relief making it easy to transition between different targets.

The Aimpoint TH60 Thermal Clip-On is an inline, afocal attachment designed to be used with, and provide thermal Long Wavelength Infrared (LWIR) capability to, the Aimpoint FCS13RE.

Aimpoint®

 **EDGAR
BROTHERS**

84mm Carl-Gustaf Mounted



SINCE 1947 

GMG & HMG Mountable



TH60 Thermal Clip-On



Contract number 703264453

PMD@EDGARBROTHERS.COM

River crossing of troops and vehicles from Nato's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)



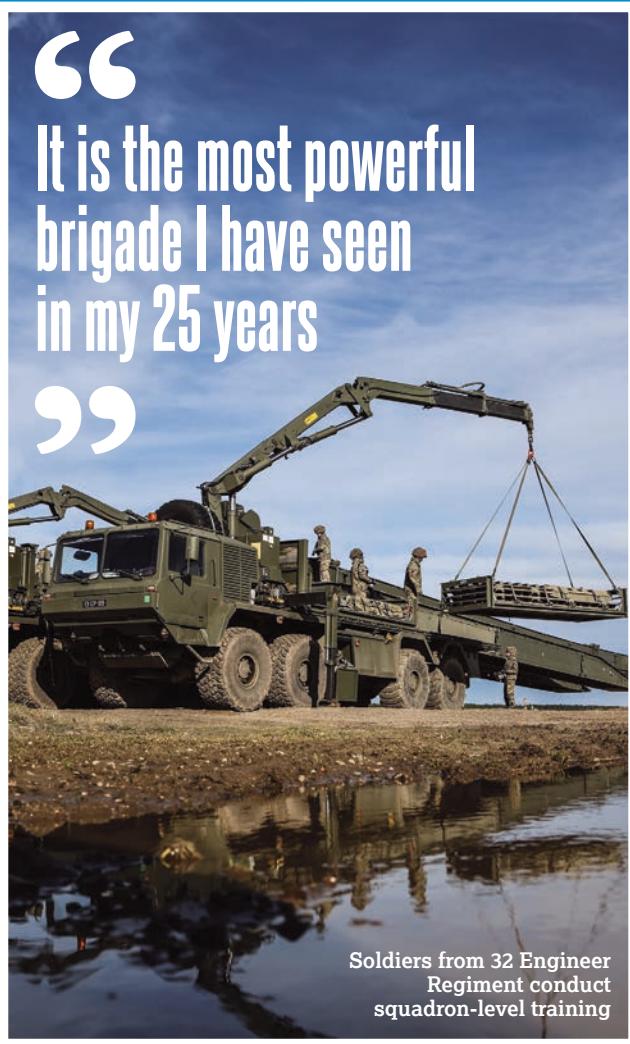
ENTER THE DRAGON

Latest test of Nato's high readiness forces in Eastern Europe allows British personnel to show their teeth





“
It is the most powerful
brigade I have seen
in my 25 years
”



Soldiers from 32 Engineer
Regiment conduct
squadron-level training



British Army vehicles and troops
in preparation at the Drawsko
Pomorskie training area in Poland

BRITISH troops have spearheaded the latest training package under the Steadfast Defender series of exercises, called Polish Dragon.

Designed to test and hone the ability of Nato's forces to respond to a military crisis in Poland – and in doing so strengthen the alliance's collective defensive capabilities – it involved more than 20,000 personnel and 3,500 pieces of hardware.

At the tip of the spear was the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), led by the UK's 7th Light Mechanised Brigade Combat Team – the Desert Rats.

The UK formation took command of Nato's vanguard force at the beginning of this year, with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment heading up a battle group consisting of 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and service and support capabilities such as drones and explosive ordinance disposal.

Personnel from eight other Nato

»

EXERCISE POLISH DRAGON IN NUMBERS

	GERMANY	FRANCE	UK	USA	SPAIN
Troops		1,300	684	1,300	500
Vehicles		4 Pionierpanzer Dachs armoured engineer platforms 18 Boxer armoured personnel carriers (APC) 10 Fenek reconnaissance vehicles 3 Bueffel armoured recovery platforms 80 support trucks	12 LeClerc main battle tanks (MBT) 24 VBCI infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) 20 Griffon APC 121 support vehicles	12 Jackals 72 Foxhounds 310 support vehicles	15 Abrams MBT 15 Bradley fighting vehicles 20 support vehicles 58 support vehicles





SLOVENIA	POLAND	LITHUANIA	TURKEY
			
110	15,789	30	51
10 Patria APC	48 Leopard 2 A4 MBT	10 Oskosh multi-purpose transporters	20 BMC Vuran reconnaissance assets
20 support vehicles	98 various IFV and APC		

TROOPS IN TOTAL



» allies also form part of the VJTF, which is designed and prepared to deploy within 48 hours.

The Desert Rats' commander, Brig Guy Foden, said: "With a significant quantity of main battle tanks, attack helicopters, infantry, artillery, air defence, drone capability, engineers and logistics, the brigade is a formidable fighting machine.

"It is the most powerful brigade I have seen in my 25 years in the Army."

The formation had already oiled its wheels on Exercise Brilliant Jump, staged immediately prior to Polish Dragon, which called for around 3,000 personnel as well as 700 vehicles to practise rapid deployment across Germany and Poland.

But Polish Dragon upped the ante considerably, both in troop numbers and especially vehicles – there were more than 1,000 platforms involved. It was a factor that highlighted, as the war in Ukraine has already shown, just how vital support services are to rapid response forces such as the VJTF.

"Supporting the magnitude of vehicles we had over such a large area of operations was a major challenge," recovery mechanic Sgt Joe Rockett (REME) told *Soldier*.

"Our recovery assets had to travel significant distances and without our ability to maintain freedom of movement along the main supply routes the formation would not have been able to progress east.

"This training package has been incredibly valuable, overall, as we've recently had an influx of new mechanics in from phase two training and this has been the first overseas deployment for many of them.

"It's been an excellent opportunity for our craftsmen to develop and hone their knowledge and it's helped push them outside of their comfort zone by conducting complex recovery tasks on our own vehicles and those of our partner nations."

Nato's wide wet gap crossing capability was another logistical factor »

RIGS IN NUMBERS

21

M3 Rigs

(11 British and 10 German)

4

EFA (French)

3

PP64 (Polish)

320

Vistula River crossing width in metres

2 TO 6

River depth in metres



VITAL GIG FOR M3 RIG

SINCE October 2014, around 150 Royal Engineers have been stationed in Germany operating amphibious M3 rigs.

In October 2021, the British and German capabilities were officially merged to form Nato's first bi-national unit, Amphibious Engineer Battalion 130, based in Minden.

And at Exercise Polish Dragon the unit received news it had been declared fully operational.

The announcement, made by Maj Gen Heiko Hübner, commander of 1st (German) Panzer Division, in the presence of Col Simon Hirst, military attache at the British Embassy in Berlin, was a milestone because this hybrid unit is the most potent of its type in Nato.

It operates a total of 50 platforms that ensure the alliance has the wide wet gap crossing capability it requires in order to move high numbers of troops and heavy armour across Europe's numerous rivers at short notice and at pace.

There are two ways these platforms can deliver a crossing – either as a ferry, which is tactically preferred and can be set up in as little as 12 minutes, or as a bridge. A floating pontoon of 100 metres in length is composed of eight M3 rigs and can be launched in less than 20 minutes.

And a ferry of just two M3 rigs can carry a main battle tank such as a Challenger 2 or M1 Abrams.

"It's a mighty capability and during Exercise Polish Dragon it more than proved its value," said Amphibious Engineer Battalion 130's 2iC, Maj Chris Button (RE).

"When the VJTF crossed the River Vistula some 427 vehicles were moved in total and 379 of them went on our M3 rigs.

"This is just vehicles and doesn't include trailers, or the 105 guns etc, so the actual number of platforms moved in total was probably around 750 – that's impressive considering the operation started at 0800 and finished at 1527."



» brought into sharp focus during the exercise (see panel).

Eastern Europe is splintered by thousands of rivers, canals and lakes so any move east to counter an attack on a Nato member would necessitate moving personnel and heavy armour across numerous stretches of water without relying on bridges, which are vulnerable to deep strike attacks.

Polish Dragon included a 300km tactical road move that incorporated a major river crossing near Korzeniewo in Poland – a first for the majority of personnel involved.

“The assault boat river crossing aspect was new, and the speed at which it occurred showed how adaptable this force can be,” said Cpl Max Delmonte (R Anglian).

“Exercises of this scale are very rare and it has shown soldiers and commanders how complex it can be to move a multinational force across hundreds of kilometres. It’s given us confidence in the planning procedure and the execution of large-scale vehicle movements.”

Polish and French specialists joined the unique British Army-Bundeswehr unit called Amphibious Engineer Battalion 130 that was only formed in October 2021 (see panel).

They demonstrated their proficiency by successfully moving the vast majority of main battle tanks and other fighting vehicles, artillery and »

Vehicles and personnel set out on a major cross-country move as part of Exercise Polish Dragon



Brig Guy Foden, commanding officer of the Desert Rats, briefing troops

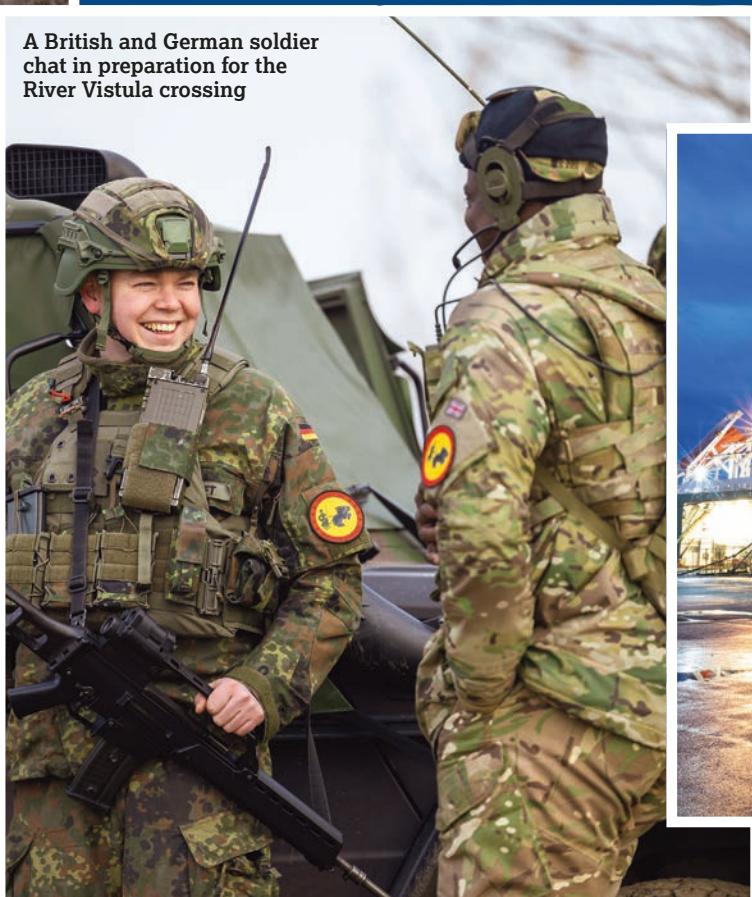


The Royal Anglian Regiment conduct a dawn attack (and on page 34)





Foxhound vehicles drive on German public roads to the Polish border from Normandy Barracks, Paderborn



A British and German soldier chat in preparation for the River Vistula crossing



Combat vehicles of 7th Light Mechanised Brigade Combat Team, also known as The Desert Rats, land at Emden Port, Germany

» more than 2,000 troops across a daunting span of the River Vistula in just a few hours.

"Exercises like this are absolutely key to allow us, as a bi-national battalion, to understand how other countries operate, look at their equipment and demonstrate the capabilities we bring," the hybrid unit's second in command, Maj Chris Button (RE), explained.

"Working with other nations that possess an amphibious capability means we can identify areas where we can better collaborate and synchronise our activity.

"It also enables us to spot where issues will be in working together and establish practices to allow us to deliver our best in a challenging multinational environment."

The sheer volume of military vehicles transported across this major European river in such a short space of time illustrates how cohesive, mobile and potentially lethal this Nato force would be in defending its member nations from attack.

This package was designed and executed to send a strong message to any would-be aggressors and, considering some of the impressive numbers involved, it has undoubtedly done just that. ■

“They are the
beating heart
of this Army”





A new-look commissioning course is set to turbocharge Gen z cadets into world-class war leaders

THE Royal Military Academy Sandhurst might not face the same recruitment woes as the rest of the Service at present (its commissioning course is currently running at a healthy 99 per cent capacity), but that doesn't mean it is without its challenges.

The institution – which this month marks 40 years since it first admitted women (page 12) – had some serious soul-searching to do in the wake of OCdt Olivia Perks' suicide back in 2019.

And with the Service now under firm instructions to prepare for war – and lessons from Ukraine's front lines coming thick and fast – an overhaul of sorts was inevitable.

Commandant Maj Gen Zac Stenning tells *Soldier* why the commissioning course that kicks off next month will look quite different to what has gone before.

"There were four main drivers for change," the senior officer explains.

"Firstly, the backdrop of war in Europe and the resulting emphasis on combined arms manoeuvre.

"Secondly, there was Gen Z who are more digitally aware, more intellectually curious and – like each generation – have different facets to them. So we needed to evolve the course to match that.

"Thirdly, the way people teach and learn is different.

"And then there was Future Soldier. The Army is going to change, with a big injection of money coming. That is exciting, and we need capable young leaders who can oversee that process."

The general repeatedly refers to a "reset" at RMAS – a likely reference to the difficult questions that have been asked of its culture since OCdt Perks and, more recently, instructor CSgt Alex Street (IG) died on its premises.

But some serious organisational work is being done alongside curriculum adjustments, the general says.

"Those tragedies were a jolt to us," he adds. "And we've accepted that jolt and responded to it."

Various revisions should improve things for cadets and instructors alike – not least a "critical mass trial" that is currently trying to ascertain whether having more females per platoon is better for psychological safety and resilience.

The male, infantry-dominated line-up of instructors is also set to be disrupted now that NCOs from a wider range of cap badges are being encouraged into the fold.

And while the timetabling of lessons is being rejigged to make them more manageable and avoid burnout for both cadets and instructors, the lessons themselves are actually set to get tougher.

"We've doubled our exercise lengths, with a 40 per cent increase in command appointments," Maj Gen Stenning says of the transformation, or Project Adair as it has been named. "We have also increased our instructor ratio and put soldiers under the cadets' command."

"It is somewhat ironic that in the past they did a year here but never saw a soldier. We went to other academies and they said 'give them soldiers', so that's what we've done."

What will all this change mean for the type of officer that arrives at battalion from next year onwards? Here is a flavour...

»

» MORE COMBINED ARMS KNOWLEDGE

"Previously, the vehicle for leadership development would have been dismounted close combat at company level," Maj Gen Stenning explains.

"But we've got a whole army that's good at that now, and spends a lot of time doing it."

"When we looked at Ukraine and spoke to the Field Army, the biggest change we were seeing was integration of assets to a much lower level.

"What our elite forces would have used ten years ago, corporals and lieutenants are using now; everything's being flushed so much lower."

"So we decided that teaching the basics of combined arms manoeuvre was vital."

Trials continue to include more simulated tech in exercises, while bringing in extra non-infantry instructors is set to benefit cadets too.

"It's no longer just infantry," the general adds. "It's guns, intelligence, med, logistics – so a young officer realises he or she is part of a massive army that's got all these different bits that come together to deliver."

MORE READY FOR WAR

In their final field training package, Exercise Dynamic Victory, cadets are being offered higher levels of realism over a longer period of time as they are put under pressure to integrate these varying capabilities.

"So for instance, they have to bring in surveillance assets, dogs, logistics," Maj Gen Stenning explains. "All their training culminates in a really tough 14 days in Germany, where they have a free-thinking and uncontrolled enemy."

"The opposition are let loose to fight and win. And that is quite a shock for them. They've got to incorporate anti-tank weapon systems, fire groups, drones, and bring all that together on a Nato training area with cadets integrated from West Point and some really high-end war fighting."

"It's about as complex and complicated as we can make this. And a crucial test."

"If you think about what this generation will face, on a good day that might be stabilisation in Europe. But on a bad one they will have to fight the war we've never done, so it's about getting them ready."

"The exercises are longer and tougher, and it's heavily focused on war fighting."

"That's definitely a mindset shift – I make no apologies for that. Everybody else in Europe is very focused on that and we need to get focused on it."

"Yes, it's important these people can lead in barracks. But being combat ready is vital."

"I was an officer when Bosnia was on and we were told we weren't going, we weren't going...and then we all went."

MORE CURIOUSITY

Much of the teaching at RMAS is as traditional as most people would expect – instructors and professors delivering lectures to pass on their expertise.



"But there's a shift now where younger generations want to be much more involved in their learning journey," the general continues. "So we're undertaking a couple of interesting initiatives – more self-directed study enhanced by a digital learning environment, so cadets can use their phones and iPads to get onto this stuff. And then, secondly, instead of traditional exams, they will do more group problem solving, which brings that diversity of thinking we need."

"It is important an officer understands that by unlocking collective ideas they will build the strongest solutions to the Army's problems."

Another initiative that will enhance this in future, he says, is better use of repetitions in simulation.

"The cadets currently work on the VBS4 system but over the next decade we could see a lot more of this stuff coming," he adds.

MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARMY

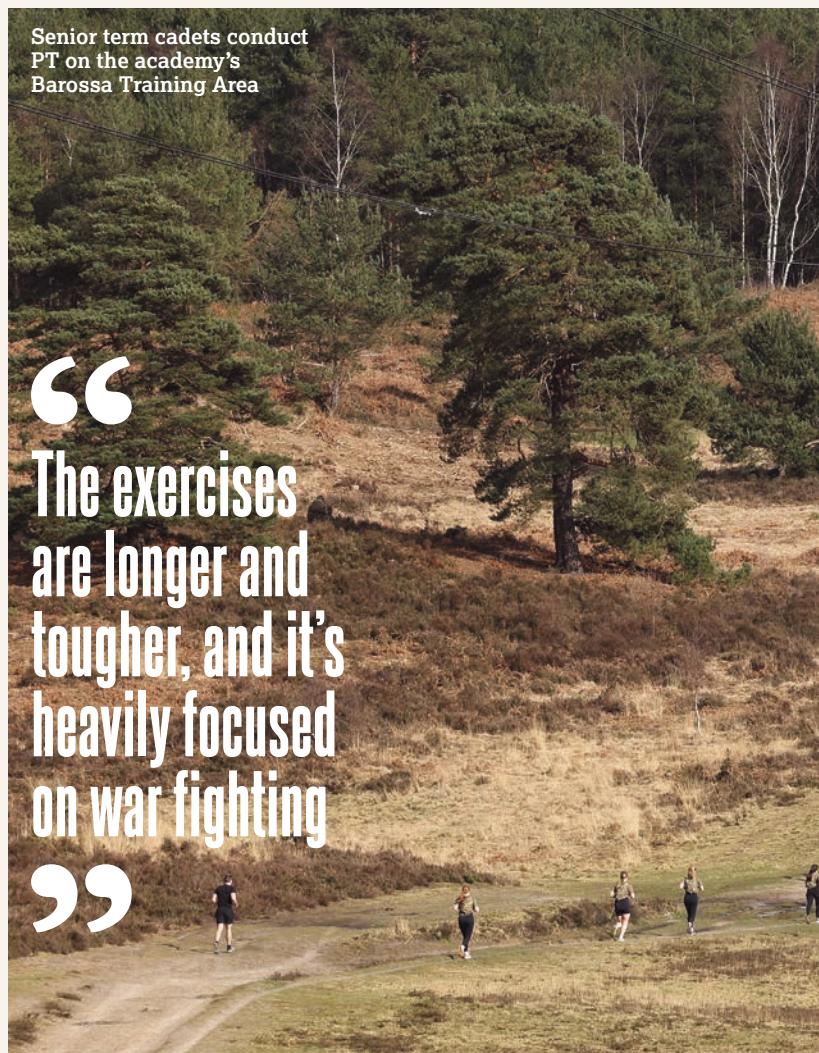
As well as a more diverse background among its instructors, three new "focus weeks" have been added to the commissioning course to allow cadets to get out across the Field Army and learn more about today's bigger picture of Service life.

"We are going to see more of Sandhurst around the Army, and more of the Army coming to Sandhurst," the general says.

"It's not that revolutionary, it's quite common sense, but they're going to get a real flavour for today's organisation."

"They're also going to do a week with industry and see some of the new kit that's coming."

Senior term cadets conduct PT on the academy's Barossa Training Area



The exercises are longer and tougher, and it's heavily focused on war fighting

He adds: "I wish I'd had all this. My memories of senior command were seeing Warrior turn up, but these cadets are going to get five or six new platforms over the next decade. That's exciting, but it demands more capable individuals who have seen more of the Army."

MORE WORLD-LEADING KNOWLEDGE

The last time RMAS significantly changed its commissioning course was 12 years ago. Much has happened in the world since then, but one of the ambitions of the new-look package is that fresh learning material can be woven in as required.

"The big idea of Project Adair is that we never stop changing," Maj Gen Stenning says.

"We want to make sure we continually upskill our next-generation leaders."

It may still be considered the reference academy, but he concedes that somewhere along the way RMAS stopped learning as an institution.

Project Adair aims to turn that around.

"Perhaps we stopped being as inquisitive and globally curious as we should be in such a fast-moving world," the general adds.

"But the professionalisation of leadership has been a massive accelerant, and we've got a brilliant team here who travel around to see how others do things.

"If we are to be the best, we must never stop adapting.

"Organisations should have the humility to accept that they're not the best at everything, and to look outside themselves at what others are doing."

Unlike some of his age, the commandant admires today's



Ex Dynamic Victory is the final test for officer cadets



INSTRUCTOR INSIGHT

SSgt Jamie Spall (RHA) has some words of wisdom for NCOs interested in an instructing gig on the new-look commissioning course...

"This job requires people who are passionate about instructing, and who want to make a difference. You're taking these cadets from civvy to officer, and if you can create good officers they will in turn create good soldiers and a good environment for them to work in. The impact you have is not just on individuals either, but the ops they go on to command. So the role is a very influential one – and something held in very high regard. Day to day, it is busy. Everyone in the Army will tell you they're busy, but the aptitude course, which I have run, is six days a week for four weeks. However, it's the right kind of busy – where you feel you're making an impact. Leaving this posting is going to be difficult. But I think being here creates a healthy respect for what the new officers turning up to regiment are put through. Sometimes people don't appreciate how arduous the training at RMAS is."

TOP TIP for anyone attending the Sandhurst instructors' aptitude course:

"Remember that your biggest selling point is you and your own experience. Be yourself and if you are passionate about leadership, coaching and mentoring, that will shine through."



“

We decided that teaching the basics of combined arms manoeuvre was vital

”

21ST CENTURY TRAITS

If the overhauled commissioning course has done its job, next year's freshest batch of leaders should be...

- Curious
- Self-motivated
- Combat ready
- Resilient
- Confident on long ops
- Exemplars of the Army's values and standards
- Innovative
- Brilliant problem-solvers
- Digitally aware
- Well versed on combined arms manoeuvre





Junior term hone their basic skills and drills at RMAS

» digitally savvy twenty-somethings.

“Leadership in the 21st century is challenging without a war-fighting situation,” he says.

“Today’s young officers go forward in a complex environment, where they are operating under constant social media scrutiny with their entire digital life exposed.

“Add to that misinformation, while still making good decisions under pressure, at reach and range, and that is challenging to say the least. Sandhurst has to give them excellent foundations so they can make the right calls.

“We generate young officers who, operating alongside the experienced NCO, are the beating heart of this Army.

“And if they’re beating strongly, resiliently, with good courage, the right ethics and morality, then we will be okay.”

Maj Gen Stenning says modernising the course will also help to keep officer training a desirable career choice.

“By making sure we offer the pinnacle leadership experience that’s relevant to events in Europe, and adaptable to the opportunities of technology, youngsters sitting in school, university, at home or in full-time employment will think, yeah, I want to be part of that.

“And I’m always humbled by the young men and women who come here wanting to serve.”

He also believes next year’s graduates will have a vital wider role to play across UK society.

“On average most officers leave after six to eight years,” he continues. “So going out into the world are these role-model leaders who can help our recruiting capability.

“We have a duty to help stay connected to society. And if you think 40,000-odd young men and women have marched up those steps since 1947, the vast majority are now leading in the public sector, private sector, charities, nationally and internationally.

“Sandhurst delivers leaders not only for the British Army, but for our entire nation.” ■

SOLDIER ASKS... WHAT SORT OF LEADERS WILL 2024 CADETS BE?

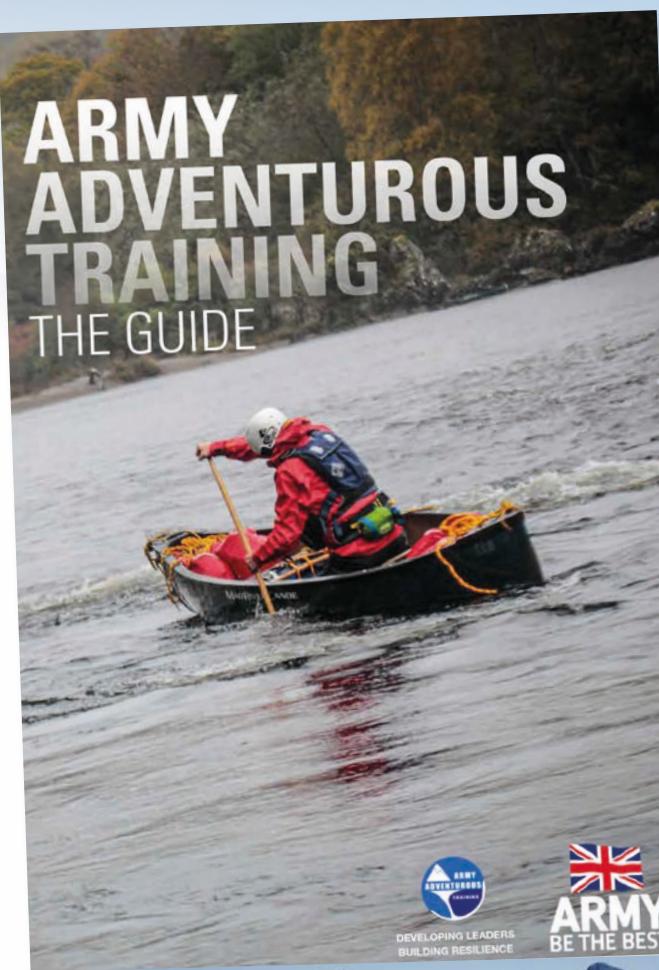
“I think they’re going to be more demanding – more demanding of change – and more capable. They can see there’s a big investment in the Army. You talk to young cadets and they know change is coming. They can also see a war in Europe. They all recognise that junior leadership fights and wins wars, so they understand they will be at the forefront of it.”

Maj Gen Zac Stenning
Commandant, RMAS



THE ARMY ADVENTUROUS TRAINING GUIDE IS NOW **LIVE!**

ARMY ADVENTUROUS TRAINING THE GUIDE



SCAN HERE TO VIEW AND DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE

Packed with information about the courses available, as well as the planning and conducting of Expeditions, this guide is for *everyone* regardless of experience or rank.

Scan the QR code below to see how you could benefit from all that Adventurous Training has to offer.

The Army AT Group look forward to welcoming you on a course soon!

ADR010238



DEVELOPING LEADERS
BUILDING RESILIENCE





BLAST FROM THE PAST

75 years after its formation, a familiar and chilling threat looming in the east has brought Nato full circle

Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: MoD, Nato; Shutterstock

ALAN Ferguson was under no illusion about the gravity of the task with which he was entrusted as he donned his helmet and the aircraft door closed. Carrying out the final checks for taxiing, the Royal Air Force pilot understood that the world he knew was potentially coming to a dreadful end. For if the klaxon that had shocked him and his crew from their night-time slumbers heralded a real strike rather than a drill, it would be minutes before the Soviet instruments of Armageddon began to fall. His delta-winged Vulcan bomber – part of a huge strike force operating under the Nato umbrella – was armed with a nuclear warhead to retaliate in kind.

“I’d had a fair amount of time to study my target although I still cannot disclose exactly where that would have been,” he recalls. “But on a strategic attack of that kind I knew that we would kill a million people or more.

“A full nuclear release would have meant mutually assured destruction for both sides – there would have been scores of aircraft from our allies launching weapons and our Soviet enemy would have been doing the same.”

It was an unthinkable situation that mercifully

never came to pass in the tense, four-decade stand-off between the Western democracies and the Russian-led communist bloc – a period now known to history as the Cold War.

Arguably, the mere threat of a nuclear apocalypse was instrumental in holding the peace between the opposing sides. But in his 30 years of flying front-line jets that finished in 1993, Ferguson (pictured right) was never off a conflict footing. Service life meant a state of permanent readiness for aggressive defence.

Now – as Nato marks its 75th anniversary this month – the former officer admits a sense of *deja vu* as personnel once again stand against a resurgent Russia that is currently invading neighbouring Ukraine.

With an Estonia-based British-led battlegroup one of many formations holding the line in Europe – and troops now engaged on a series of events under the Exercise Steadfast Defender banner that represent the largest training package since the fall of the Iron Curtain (page 32) – deterrence is again the order of the day.

It is years since an East-West standoff – and chilling threat of conventional war and nuclear confrontation – was last in the news. But while there are now generations that only associate



NATO FLASHBACK...

THEN

Dereck Hardman was a sapper based in what was then West Germany, during the 1980s and his time spent facing the Warsaw Pact still evokes vivid memories.

He recalled: "People describe it as the Cold War but we were operating for real – it was full-on.

"You were at readiness all the time. There were huge exercises during my era and we frequently lost people in training as we prepared for war. Troops suffered injuries too – one man I knew lost both hands in an explosion.

"I was with 35 Engineer Regiment in Hameln and we'd get alerts in the dead of night – you did not know whether you were going out on exercise or to war. And you wondered if you'd ever see your family again because losses were expected to be high if there had ever been fighting.

"The nuclear, chemical and biological threats were worrying too. It wasn't just the really big warheads on missiles – there were battlefield weapons that could be used. Some of the stuff that we saw in our training films was horrific."



Troops hone CBRN skills and drills while out on exercise

Troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh, work with allies in Nahr-e Saraj, Helmand at the height of Op Herrick in Afghanistan



» Nato with ops in Afghanistan and the Balkans, the current picture has more similarity to that of the alliance's beginnings.

Formed in 1949 by a dozen states led by the UK and America in a world still recovering from global conflict, Nato's key objective was the countering of Soviet expansion as well as promoting peace and cooperation.

Then – as today – the Kremlin had shown a willingness to impose its iron will on Europe. It had blockaded, and later divided, Berlin while establishing a network of puppet governments across the east of the continent. It also formed a potent defence collective called the Warsaw Pact.

The end of the stand-off in the late 1980s left an uncertain world, but Nato continued to prevail with an expanded membership. With old regimes falling in the wake of the Soviet Union's rapidly collapsing communist government, the alliance found itself at the forefront of major peacekeeping operations, notably with interventions in the former Yugoslavia.

A seismic change later came with Afghanistan – a deployment that followed al-Qaeda's attacks on the United States in 2001 and brought new challenges of rebuilding a country as well as counter-insurgency to the table.

But as the complex action prevailed, resurgent ambitions of potential nation state players were starting to show even before the alliance's hectic withdrawal three years ago – Russia's annexation of Crimea a case in point.

Is the new face-off with the Kremlin, then, the first frost of a second Cold War? Experts agree there are some striking similarities in the

“
Nations such as Russia, Iran and North Korea don't like the world as it stands and are prepared to take risks to challenge it

”

situation then and now but point out that the world has changed significantly.

Jamie Shea, a former Nato deputy assistant secretary general for emerging threats, says subversion – including misinformation and cyber attacks – are now becoming far more prevalent with advances in technology.

He believes this aggression, carried out in a new hinterland between peace and war, will present an increasingly complex set of challenges, potentially requiring many more corporate-minded IT experts in defence as well as military professionals.

“We are living in a dangerous age, in which we are experiencing a form of hybrid conflict,” he adds. “Nations such as Russia, Iran and North Korea don’t like the world as it stands and are prepared to take risks to challenge it.

“The media space has effectively been weaponised and the age of artificial intelligence is upon us – we are going to need a range of specialists to help.”

Meanwhile, military professionals believe hard power and sufficient boots on the ground remain the cornerstone of deterrence.

“In many respects, Nato has come full circle with the current situation,” says Laurence Roche, a retired military history instructor with the Educational and Training Services branch of the Adjutant General’s Corps, who now assists Nato on media issues.

“The Russian threat has re-emerged and – even with the digital battlespace of our era – heavy armour and infantry are still the core of a deterrence campaign.”

But Roche, who is also a Reservist captain with The Queen’s Own Yeomanry, is confident the British Army has a strong conventional warfighting capability having refocused its posture to meet the emerging threat.

The alliance has been evolving too.

“There are more countries now signed up and each has expertise – the Czechs are a case in point as leaders in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats,” he continues. “Sweden’s membership was the latest to be ratified and you could argue that diversity is perhaps the greatest weapon in terms of collective defence.”

With a depth of experience drawn from diverse operations matched with skilled diplomacy and the ability to strike hard if required, Nato has a proven reputation for making adversaries think twice.

The allies are back on familiar turf – and refusing to be intimidated by threats of force – while the Kremlin is discovering, as it did in 1949, that subversion, violence and outright military invasion will not go uncontested. ■



Members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets arrive in Pristina as Nato holds the line during a demanding winter in Kosovo

NATO FLASHBACK...

NOW

MAJ Nicholas Hedges (Rifles) deployed on Op Cabrit in 2017 as Nato looked to bolster its presence in the Baltics.

He said: “You are keenly aware of the possible threat when you are on this type of operation – being so close to the Russian border we knew that a potential opposing force could be upon us in minutes, so we had to be well prepared. Everything was rehearsed and we had all of our drills squared away.

“It was a harder deployment for some of the younger troops – I joined as a rifleman in 1991 so I’ve served on many different tours now. You have to give up your mobile phone so have less contact with people back home.

“On the plus side, you learn a lot from soldiers from other nations when you are part of a Nato force containing different tactics and protocols. We had a French company with us and Danish soldiers as well as our Estonian hosts.

“The country is also a good training environment – I’m currently executive officer with 7th Battalion, The Rifles, and we conducted Exercise Baltic Fist there last year. The soldiers gained a great deal from the experience.”



British personnel hone the urban skills and drills during a winter outing on Op Cabrit



Viking amphibious vehicles land in Norway as Nato’s latest Steadfast Defender manoeuvres gather pace

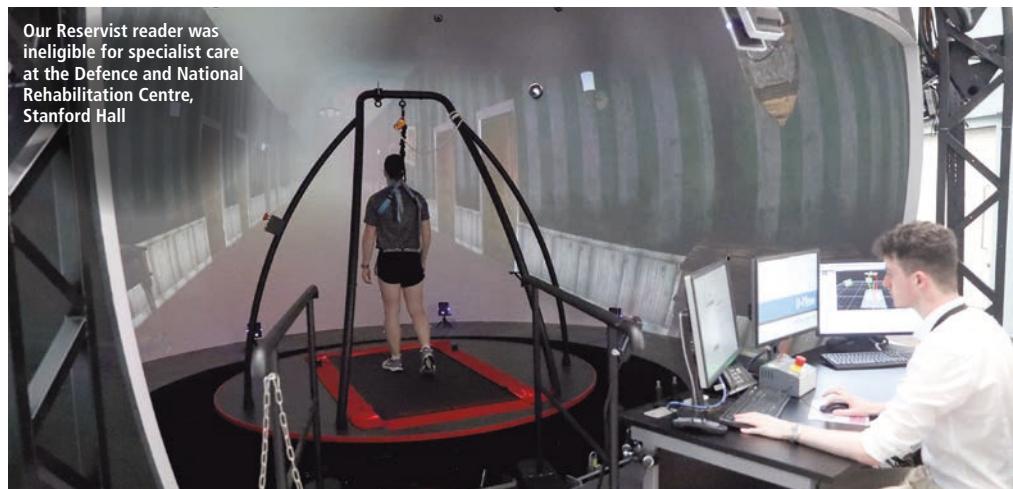


66 SOLDIER IN CARE

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style. Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
WHATSAPP 07973 614782

Our Reservist reader was ineligible for specialist care at the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre, Stanford Hall



Shocked at lack of cancer support

SERVING as an Army Reservist, with just two years left to go before mandatory dismissal, I was diagnosed with cancer.

I was shocked to find a lack of support from the Service, both locally and at the larger level.

Although I'm an ex-Regular, I discovered that even a few weeks in Stanford Hall, which would have offset many of the physical side effects of treatment while making me feel I counted in the military, was denied to me.

This implies there is a two-tier Army.

While we obviously receive primary care in the NHS, there are certain things the MoD could offer, the key one being the sense of solidarity, community and family.

This can be achieved by formally acknowledging that Reservists, in a crisis, are eligible for even limited help.

We have considerable obligation to the MoD outside the wire – fitness, associations, dress, behaviour in public, etc – but it is not reciprocated.

As defence's dependence on the Reserve grows, so the data on serious illnesses must be incorporated: mine is not an isolated case.

An algorithm could easily be produced, setting out formally (and limiting) the support that Reservists with serious health issues could have, which in turn would prevent local commanders having to turn their backs or behave discriminately. It could have, in my own case, prevented an ugly backlash from my unit.

Benefits would likely be personnel recovering faster – assisting operational effectiveness – as well as making them even more loyal. It would also be something to advertise to prospective recruits and therefore retention and recruitment positive. – **Name and address supplied**

Maj Amie Kelly, Reserves Workforce Policy Team, Army Headquarters, replies: We are sorry to hear of your cancer diagnosis and the support you felt you lacked as a Reservist.

It is not possible to comment on the specifics of your case, but the Army is committed to supporting the welfare of Regulars and Reservists.

Regimental operation support officers within Reserve units receive the same training as unit welfare staff in Regular ones, and Reservists are also provided with the same access as Regulars to second line and specialist support, such as the Army Welfare Service.

Defence Primary Health Care delivers a package of occupational health services to Reservists.

The Army has a legal obligation to ensure its people are fit for role and therefore all personnel are entitled to occupational health assessments to ensure the right medical grading is made and any subsequent employment decisions are correct.

Mobilised Reservists and those on full-time Reserve service (full commitment) also enjoy access to Defence Primary Healthcare.

More broadly, primary and secondary healthcare, which a cancer diagnosis usually requires, is provided by the NHS, not Defence Medical Services.

Regulars also depend upon the provision of medical care by the NHS, particularly for secondary health care services requiring specialist expertise and treatment. And rehabilitation services, such as those you described, are considered in some instances for Reservists injured on duty.

“This implies there is a two-tier Army”

Lifesaving work



● ABOUT a year ago I did an interview for the April 2023 issue of *Soldier* (above) about going from being homeless after leaving the Army to where I am today.

At the time I was hesitant.

Maybe I was ashamed of my past or embarrassed about my success, but I'm now so grateful I did it. When I look back on my entire journey, doing that article was one of the best parts.

Only a few days after it was published I received my first email from someone looking for help.

Some 12 months later I have received too many requests to count, from people living rough to those thinking about leaving the Service. Either way, I try to mentor them through the steps I outlined in the article to reach their goals.

It is the most rewarding work I've ever done – and I want to share with you a line from an email I received a few days ago (with the author's permission): "From a pocketful of sleeping pills, ready not to wake up, to a smile on my face, a job, a new flat and a great girlfriend – all because of your help. That post in *Soldier* saved my life, mate."

Can you imagine the joy and pride I felt reading this? The hairs on my arm were standing up. I had tears of joy running down my face.

I came so close to not doing the interview. Just imagine.

Unfortunately, I'm almost at the point where I now have too many people reaching out to me, so I have started searching for suitable mentors to help out. I need them from as many different backgrounds as possible.

If this is something you would like to be a part of then please contact me at nicholasortonwork@gmail.com or message me on LinkedIn. You will make a real difference, I promise.

Also, if you are reading this and now thinking I'm too busy to help you, I am not. I will make time, just send me a message. – **Nicholas Orton, ex-RAMC**



“
That post in *Soldier* saved my life, mate

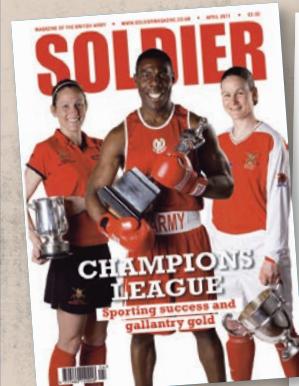
Time for broader shoulders

● I DON'T know why we cannot have more than one row to pin our medals on.

I have 14 decorations and, like most of my fellow soldiers who have this number, feel like Kenny Everett's Gen Cheeseburger when I wear them.

Surely we can get with the times and have multiple rows. I shouldn't feel uncomfortable when I wear my medals. I want to wear them with pride for the service I have done for my country. – **WO2 Scotty Hunter, RA**

Talkback in time -2011-



IT WAS the source of much entertainment in an article printed 13 years ago this month to mark April Fools' Day. But the idea of military ranks and titles being made gender neutral feels far from outrageous in 2024.

More than one member of this team can recall the deluge of angry emails and telephone calls that came through to *Soldier* headquarters in response to our fake news article stating that guardsmen could be renamed "Sentinels" and craftsmen "artisans".

The fictitious story even hit the national headlines.

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



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



Gingerbread clause prompts changing of the guard

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

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

Military chiefs believe that the UK's Armed Forces should act as a "pathfinder" with regards to discrimination issues and must work to protect the human rights of Service personnel.

The ranks of private soldier under the most scrutiny due to the numerous titles which could be deemed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is thought that some whose opinions count the most and one guardsman interviewed as part of our initial scoping study felt strongly about being pigeon-holed as performing a "man's job. He firmly believed that as his role was not gender specific he'd prefer it to have a neutral title."

COMPETITIONS

FEBRUARY 2024

HOAY winner (Surefire tactical flashlight): Jason Browning, Devon

RULES: Winners chosen at random from valid entries. Unless stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by our terms and conditions. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass your details to a third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families.

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own you can get confidential, free advice from your medical officer during routine hours, or your unit duty officer.

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline
0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or
mil 96770 4656
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside
the chain of command
0800 014 2381

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support
01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet.

Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

These can be a considerable burden, made worse by dealing with them alone. The following organisations can provide support.

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service
020 7820 9988

forcespensionsociety.org

[Joining Forces Credit Union](http://JoiningForcesCreditUnion)

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control
0808 808 4000

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice
0800 138 1111
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and
counselling for problem gamblers in
the UK
0808 8020 133

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

People who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding group
supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information
07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support
veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

These centres can be found across the United Kingdom. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence

Advertise in Soldier

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Connect or send an email to
rc-pers-arc-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation afvbc.world

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement
116 123 samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and

support services
0808 802 8080
britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. There are a number of charities and other organisations that can also provide support and they include...

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline
0800 138 1619

Headspace
All British Army personnel and

civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity
0300 123 3393
mind.org

NHS
General mental health support nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage
A specialist NHS service for Armed

Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on nhs.uk to find your local team.

Samaritans
116 123 samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans
0333 900 1028 theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously togetherall.com

> **continued overleaf**

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 983

WIN

...a goody bag of personal kit worth more than £500



TEN details have been changed in this image of the Sovereign's Parade for commissioning course 222 that took place a year ago this month and saw the 40,000th officer cadet graduate from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 983, *Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU* along with your contact details – including email address – by April 30. A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first correct entry

drawn after the closing date will win a superb goody bag of personal kit, courtesy of Edgar Brothers (edgarbrothers.com) – one of the most established and renowned suppliers of cutting-edge equipment for the UK Armed Forces and police services.

The winner will receive a collection of some of their latest equipment, including the impressive Surefire G2X tactical flashlight, Princeton Tec Charge helmet light, V-Lite lighting marker – an alternative to chemlights with multiple programme functions – Surefire aerospace aluminum pen and an Arc'teryx Leaf SMU 50-litre duffle pack.

The winner's name will appear in the June 2024 issue and all the usual competition rules apply (see details on the opposite page). Good luck!



BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

> continued from page 53

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816 aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims
01823 334244 mankind.org.uk

Relate

Relationship support relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The Artillery Clerks' Reunion and Association Dinner for all members and partners at Larkhill on June 21-23. Visit artyclerkassn.org to sign up and see who else is attending.



SEARCHLINE

Applications are open for the SSAFA short break scheme. The free trips to the Lake District and Exmoor are for serving (including Reservist) families with a child who has a developmental, emotional, behavioural or physical additional need. Activities include kayaking, rock climbing, horse riding and archery. For more details visit ssafa.org.uk

Syd Taylor is trying to track down

WHAT'S ON AT MILITARY MUSEUMS

Imperial War Museum North

The *Northern Ireland: Living with the Troubles* exhibition has moved from the organisation's London site to Manchester. Running until the end of September, the installation shines a light on the region's violent past and the 38-year Op Banner deployment while looking to the future. iwm.org

Imperial War Museum London

Storyteller: Photography by Tim Hetherington showcases the celebrated photojournalist, filmmaker and humanitarian's images and films. Running from April 20 until September 29. iwm.org

National Army Museum

How do soldiers keep fit while on ops? What do they eat, and what happens if they get sick, miles away from the nearest hospital? Visitors can find out at *Marching Orders: Survival*, a free interactive tour on April 27. nam.ac.uk

Norfolk Tank Museum

Fans of military vehicles are gearing up for Armourfest, a two-day festival on August 17-18. Find out more at norfolkanktmuseum.co.uk

Peter Snape, who served in The Staffordshire Regiment in the 1980s. Contact sydtaylor000@gmail.com

RESETTLEMENT

Last year the **Career Transition Partnership (CTP)** supported more than 310,000 Service leavers in its 25 years as the official provider of Armed Forces resettlement. Regardless of service, time served or reason for leaving, all members of the Armed Forces can benefit from CTP support. Here are **six top tips** to ensure you make a smooth transition to civvy street:

1. Prepare yourself and get engaged early. Too often the CTP hears from workshop attendees who wished they'd started sooner. Remember, regardless of your reason for leaving, you're entitled to CTP support – embrace it.

2. Make a plan. Confirm your timelines, set yourself "smart" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based), and identify what path you want to pursue. CTP career consultants can help you on a one-to-one basis to ensure you find the right option.

3. Avoid making snap decisions. Instead, research the sector you want to work in and people to talk to. The CTP team can support you by introducing you to a wide range of employers and providing detailed guides on various sectors as well as an ongoing supply of vacancies.

4. Identify what skills gaps you

might have and give yourself time to mitigate against these through some vocational training or a civilian work attachment. The CTP can advise and offer a wide range of qualifications and experience for you to add to your already considerable bank of transferable skills.

5. Explore and promote your brand. Who are you beyond the uniform? How are you going to let the world know you exist? The CTP will work with you to develop and hone your CV and LinkedIn profile to ensure you make a good first impression.

6. Perform well in interviews by practising with friends, family, your network and online digital tools. Let the CTP support you so you land the right outcome at the right time.

Where to start with resettlement

- Speak with your local unit resettlement information staff, who can offer advice on your entitlement.
- Contact your Service resettlement adviser (SRA) to discuss your resettlement package and available funding. You can find their details on ctp.org.uk/contact-us/sra-contact
- Register with the CTP via JPA and one of the team will contact you to book your first appointment.

CTP TRAINING COURSES 2023/24

- LCL L3 Certificate in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning & Heat Pump Systems
- Domestic Electrical Installation Full Scope
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations
- C&G 2391-52 Level 3 Award in Inspection and Testing
- C&G 2391-52 Inspection & Testing Resit
- EAL L3 Certificate in Traction and Rolling Stock Systems
- EAL L3 Award in Programmable Logic Controllers
- IMI L3 Certificate in Cycle Maintenance
- Hard Landscaping and Bricklaying
- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Property Maintenance
- Cisco Certified Network Associate

- CompTIA A+
- CompTIA Network+ and Security+
- CompTIA Cyber Security Analyst
- Strategic Finance for Non-Financial Managers
- Executive Mini MBA
- Director Development Programme
- QMS ISO 9001:2015 Lead Auditor Level 3
- Level 5 Certificate in Service Improvement (Lean Six Sigma – Green Belt)
- APMG Change Management
- Management of Risk
- IWFM L4 Certificate in Facilities Management
- CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management
- First Aid at Work Level 3 Award
- Managing Safely (IOSH)
- NEBOSH National General Certificate (SQA Level 6)
- NEBOSH Certificate in Fire Safety
- NEBOSH Health & Safety Management for Construction

Information about all courses can be found on ctp.org.uk and troops can attend any of the below employment fairs in 2024 across the UK. Book via ctpevents@ctp.org.uk



CTP provides support for up to two years post-discharge, during which time troops can access its full suite of support. After two years, you have life-long employment support through the Forces Employment Charity (forcesemployment.org.uk).

HEADSPACE IS STILL HERE

WHAT CAN HEADSPACE DO FOR ME?

HEADSPACE is a FREE wellbeing and mindfulness app. Using Headspace for just 10 days increases happiness by 16%. There are hundreds of exercises designed to help with:

- Stress and anxiety
- Sleep
- Financial Wellness
- Mental Fitness
- Grieving
- New parents
- Leave of absence



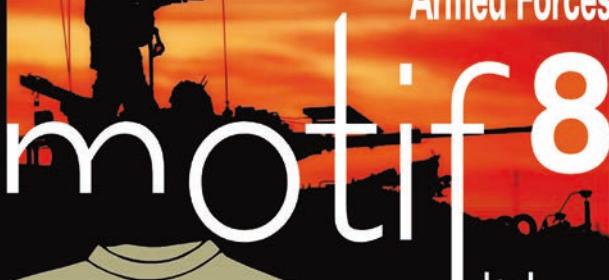
Access by
scanning
the QR code

Headspace is
FREE to all
Army personnel
and up to 5
family and
friends!



AC Design Studio ADR012013

The Official Licensed Supplier to HM Forces
Suppliers of high quality embroidered and
printed sports and leisurewear to the
Armed Forces



TOUR T-SHIRTS
SPORTSWEAR
SWEATSHIRTS
POLOSHIRTS
HOODIES
JACKETS
AND MUCH MORE

Motif8 Will Beat Any Price - Guaranteed

tel: 01642 601501
sales@motif8.co.uk
www.motif8.co.uk



By Appointment to
Her Majesty The Queen
Medallists
Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd
Bromsgrove

Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd
Specialists in Orders, Decorations and Medals

56 Broad Street, Sidemoor, Bromsgrove, B61 8LL

OFFICIALLY LICENSED MoD Manufacturer

Suppliers to the UK MoD Medal Office

Finest quality miniature and replica medals
manufactured in the UK in our own factory to the
highest standard and licensed by the MoD.



Medals mounted for wear and display
Miniature and full size replacement medals supplied, all
made in the UK to the highest standard.

See our web site where you can order securely on-line

www.worcmedals.com

or call 01527 835375 and our team will be pleased to help you.

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE!



Email: subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Subscription Rates

United Kingdom

12 Issues£23
24 Issues£40

Overseas

12 Issues£47
British Forces Post Office
12 Issues£13.80

Your details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Return to **SOLDIER**, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU

Start my subscription with the issue

I would like to subscribe for One year Two years

TL

Creative Music Making

Develop your practical music making skills

- 1 year - take it on its own or as part of an Open University degree
- Designed for instrumentalists and vocalists in any genre of music
- Delivered (online) with a residential at TL's World Heritage Site in Greenwich
- 5% fee discount for those in the armed forces

www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/course/creative-music-making-2/

 The Open University

|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

Join us on May 17 at

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey

An Evening at Brookwood

In aid of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation.



Join the D-Day Darlings, Colin Thackery and more for a special evening of music, remembrance and performance!



Don't miss out, scan here for more information!



LONDON SCOTTISH HOUSE
95 HORSEFERRY ROAD, LONDON, SW1P 2DX

A Grade 2 listed former Drill Hall of the London Scottish Regiment. The building contains the Regimental Museum with 3 VC's, and is home to the London Scottish Pipes and Drums. London Scottish House is a unique location for holding a variety of event types, and includes parking and accommodation.

An ideal Central London location for military groups and associations to meet and enjoy the unique facilities that can easily accommodate functions up to 200 persons.

- REGIMENTAL MUSEUM
- FORMER SERGEANTS' MESS BAR
- QUEEN ELIZABETH BAR
- MEETING ROOMS
- CONFERENCE FACILITIES
- DINING ROOMS
- ACCOMMODATION
- CENTRAL LONDON PARKING

CALL TO DISCUSS HOW WE CAN HELP
EMAIL: EVENTS@LONDONSCOTTISHHOUSE.ORG
FIND US AT: WWW.LONDONSCOTTISHHOUSE.ORG

+44 (0)20 804 94519    

MICHAEL JAY TAILORING

**Your Tailored Suit
Made to Measure
Especially for you**

Made in the UK
 **14 day Make or
48hr EXPRESS**
 Lowest prices
 Best Fit
 Highest quality
 Best payment terms

**Local agent to measure
in most areas**

01449 614602
www.suitUK.com

*As our customers say
The service is simply unbeatable*

5 Tomo Business Park STOWMARKET Suffolk IP14 5EP

Military Marketing International

Suppliers of commemorative and presentation pieces
Let us design your Regiment and Operational plaques
(minimum quantity 25)
Plaques £13.95 each + VAT



Contact us at:
Military Marketing International
82-84 Steward Street, Ladywood
Birmingham B18 7AF
TEL/FAX: 0121 454 5393
EMAIL: mmisales@militarymarketing.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.militarymarketing.co.uk

Notice to readers

The publishers of *Soldier* cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of any advertisement or for any losses suffered as a result. Readers are strongly recommended to make their own enquiries and seek appropriate commercial, legal and financial advice before sending any money or entering into any legally-binding agreement.

info@tolleybadges.co.uk
01384 878550
tolleybadges.co.uk

TOLLEY Badges



- ★ Embroidered, Woven, Printed and Metal Badges Epaulettes and Sliders
- ★ Woven & Printed labels
- ★ Metal Key rings & Medals / Coins

5 ★ RATING

"As always- excellent and helpful service and a fabulous badge produced! Wouldn't go anywhere else!" - Gill, March 2020

The Regimental Shop
www.regimentalshop.com

The top supplier of Regimental Accessories.
Ties, Berets, Badges, Belts, Socks, Watches and much more

Tel: 0845 459 1964



Scan the QR below to browse our online store.



Michael Jay Tailoring

Uniforms & Accessories
Civilian Suits
Tailored in Our UK Workshop
14 Working Day
or
2 Working Day Express Service

- Interest Free Terms
- Visit Our Workshop
Go To SuitUK.com
Or We Can Visit You

01449 614602
info@suituk.com
SuitUK.com

Michael Jay Tailoring
5 Tomo Business Park
Stowmarket
IP14 5EP

THE BESPOKE TIE COMPANY



Specialists in Regimental Accessories

0845 257 5710
sales@bespoketies.com

Advertise in Soldier

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PATHFINDERS

“FIRST IN”



PATHFINDERS are 16 Air Assault Brigade's advance force reconnaissance unit held at extreme high readiness, providing high altitude parachute insertion capability.

Applications are open to all service personnel, regular and reserve across the Military.

PF takes pride in its heritage, capabilities and high levels of professionalism.

For those seeking professional development, a broad range of skills and that have the desire for greater responsibility, book your place on the next PFSC.

The Pathfinder Selection Cadre (PFSC) is a demanding seven-week course, identifying applicants that display the attributes required for the role of advance force reconnaissance and enabling air manoeuvre.

Opportunities in **PATHFINDERS**

- Regular overseas deployments
- Broad range of skills acquired
- High Alt Para Pay £360 PM
- Unit ethos
- Forefront of capability development
- Stepping stone for UKSF Selection



Instagram:
british_pathfinders



Upcoming PFSCs

PFSC 2/24: 07 Sep to 24 Oct 24
PFSC 1/25: 08 Feb to 28 Mar 25
PFSC 2/25: 06 Sep to 24 Oct 25



REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

Running on Empty

Ex-officer's African road trip amid Parkinson's battle

► WHEN Guy Deacon (ex-QDG) left the Army in 2019 after 35 years' service, he had more reason than most to make every day of retirement count.

Having been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease some ten years earlier, he was conscious that opportunities to take on new adventures would eventually be limited.

So he set about realising a childhood dream – to drive across Africa – and within months had begun what would become an 18,000-mile, three-year odyssey down the continent's west coast.

That journey, with its many highs and lows, is now the subject of his new book *Running on Empty*, released on April 11 to coincide with World Parkinson's Day.

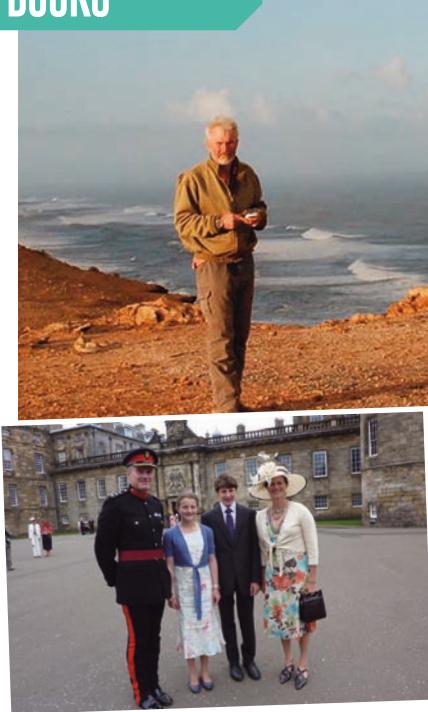
Speaking to *Soldier*, the former colonel explained how, as the adventure evolved, it became more than just a personal goal.

"To be honest, I started the trip on a slightly selfish basis as I was just doing it for my own purposes," he admitted.

"But having thought about it and met individuals with Parkinson's in Africa, I realised I could do some good as well and focus attention on other people's problems.



BOOKS



nicked, but by and large I was travelling by myself, very vulnerable in some ways, but never did I experience any threat or anything. I felt completely at ease."

Now back on home soil, Deacon continues to raise funds for several Parkinson's charities and is contemplating further trips – possibly a return journey from South Africa, this time up the east coast of the continent, or a circumnavigation of the Black Sea.

Despite knowing the march of time may rob him of the ability to tackle such challenges, his mantra – for himself and others – is to continue to strive for purpose.

"When I left the Army I had no real plan," Deacon continued. "I could have just lived on my pension, but then I would have been no good to anybody and I would have felt even more worthless.

"If you sit around doing nothing it all becomes rather meaningless – you become a consumer rather than a contributor.

"Having a reason to get up in the morning is what keeps you going." ■

» "Many are in a far worse position than I am."

Deacon got as far as Sierra Leone in 2020 before the Covid pandemic forced his return to the UK and he was unable to resume his journey for two years.

While hugely frustrating given the degenerative nature of his illness, it allowed him to refocus his mission on raising awareness and he restarted the road trip with a documentary maker in tow, as well as various media interviews in the pipeline.

Parkinson's care is non-existent in many parts of Africa and sufferers are often believed to be the victims of black magic.

"It's bad enough having the disease when your friends and family know you're not cursed," he continued.

"So if we can just stop a few people treating their mothers, fathers, uncles or aunts as pariahs, then we're doing a good thing because their lives are miserable as a result."

Having seen the darker side of humanity during a stint as a UN peacekeeper in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he is also keen to dispel Western generalisations about Africa as a whole.

Through numerous scrapes and mechanical breakdowns, the kindness of strangers is a recurring theme in his account.

"Most of the countries I went through had reasonable roads, good internet, banks and petrol stations," he said.

"More importantly, people were genuinely really friendly – I lost a few things that were

MORE TOP PICKS

MOVIES



The Shamrock Spitfire

Out now on digital platform

► THERE was a time when films such as this Battle of Britain-themed offering proliferated across the cinema world – tales of unlikely heroes and tragic wartime romances, which packed out the likes of matinees and early evening screenings.

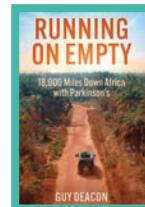
They're fewer and further between these days. But *The Shamrock Spitfire* delivers the goods on a couple of fronts. Firstly, the film is based on the true story of Irish fighter pilot Brendan "Paddy" Finucane, who left neutral Ireland to fly with the Royal Air Force.

And it secondly deals with a well-worn genre with some aplomb, delivering a good story, striking cinematography and a script that broadly manages to steer clear of cliche.

Performances are credible too, with **Shane O'Regan** solid in the lead role and **Bethany Billy** putting in an equally capable showing as his fiancee Jean Woolford. A soundtrack encompassing well-known songs from the 1940s era establishes a strong period atmosphere throughout. Definitely worth a look.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Running on Empty, by Guy Deacon, is published on April 11 and priced £9.99.

● To find out more and to support his charity – The Deacon Foundation – visit guydeacon.co.uk

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



Heavenly Bodies

Out now on Switch

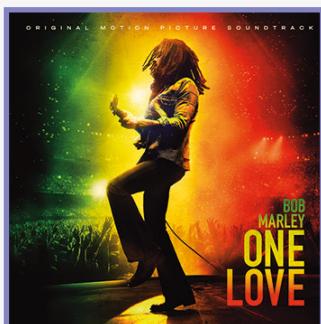
► THERE are occasions – every so often – when a title that lacks promise on paper turns into a surprising hit, and this little winner is one such example.

Heavenly Bodies gives aspiring Tim Peakes the opportunity to venture aboard a two-dimensional space station, either alone or with a crewmate, to carry out a range of tasks. Everything, however, must be managed in a weightless environment, making the outing a far-from-straightforward affair.

Real-life physics mean that wrong moves can send virtual astronauts bouncing off the walls, errantly tripping switches or – worse – spiralling off into the wilds of space. But thinking ahead pays dividends in a highly original offering where graphics and sound are simple but the gameplay compelling.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Bob Marley: One Love

MUSIC

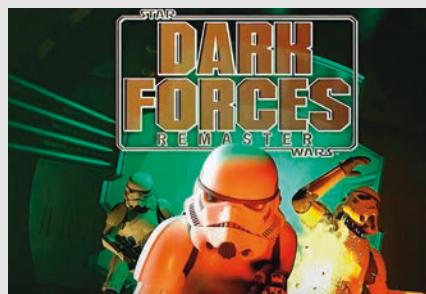
► THE recently released biopic may have been pulling mixed reviews – but the film's soundtrack of 17 timeless songs will provide a fitting backing to anyone wanting to instantly transport themselves to a beach in the Caribbean.

From *Jamming* to a 2020 remastered version of *No Woman, No Cry*, Marley's gritty vocals and the chilled vibe created by laid-back rhythms make the album a must as summer weather kicks in and barbecue season starts.

Also of note is a separate collection of cover versions inspired by the movie – these were chosen in collaboration with the artist's family and put a new spin on the classics while staying faithful to their original spirit.



Review: CSgt Liam Compson, *RCam*



Dark Forces Remaster

Out now on consoles

► THE original incarnation of this *Star Wars* title was released a long, long time ago and in a far-away galaxy where first-person shooters were still something of a novel concept.

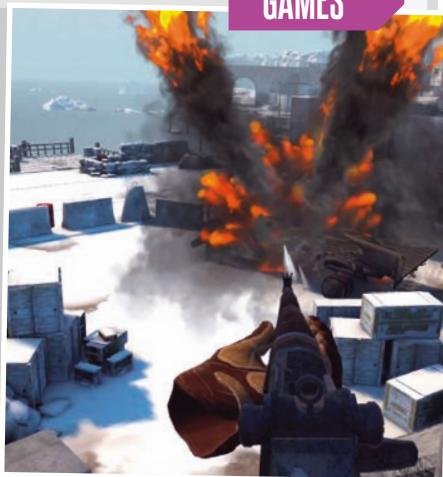
Dark Forces was, in part, a response to the *Doom* craze sweeping the PC gaming world in the 1990s, but rather than providing the opportunity to zap rampaging demons, Imperial Stormtroopers were the cannon fodder of choice.

It was a popular title of its era and this remaster for current consoles – *Soldier* sampled the Nintendo Switch version – has been cleaned up and transformed into a highly-playable outing that maintains the spirit of the original.

There are bad guys aplenty – from familiar white-armoured foes to the Emperor's elite officers – to strike down while extras including artwork provide a backstory to the title. Fans will not be disappointed.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



WIN:

Sniper Elite Winter Warrior VR

Out now on PC

► THE popular series putting players in the boots of sharpshooters charged with liberating Nazi-occupied Europe enters the VR dimension for this latest PC instalment – and it has once again been proving a hit with gamers.

Virtual troops are this time cast as an Italian resistance soldier known as the Partisan on a mission to deal with German forces fighting in his country.

Soldier has teamed up with developer Rebellion to offer our readers a code for a copy of the game, which can be played with the Metaquest hardware series.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us who played the lead as sniper Vassili Zaitzev in the 2001 film *Enemy at the Gates*. Send your answer by April 30 to **comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk** Usual rules apply.

Rotolight Pro Travelling and Studio Lighting Solutions



Rotolight Anova PRO3

SKU: 3144222

- Class-leading power of more than 22,000 LUX at 1 metre
- IP65 water-resistant, ideal for outdoor use

- Full-colour touchscreen display
- High-speed RGB flash
- Features CineSFX software for special effects

Rotolight Titan X1 - Standard Yoke

SKU: 1758029

- Powerful and versatile light source
- Colour Temperature from 3000-10,000K
- Large 13.4 x 11.8" panel surface
- A full-colour touchscreen display
- High Speed Sync RGB flash



Rotolight Titan X2

SKU: 1715626

- Includes Rotolight's standard yoke modifier
- Touchscreen display with quick-start icons
- RGBWW technology with 16.7million vivid colours
- Dimensions 379 mm x 141 mm x 82 mm
- Weighs only 3.7kg

Wex Photo Video is a trading name of Warehouse Express Limited. Registered Office: 13 Frensham Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 2BT. Registered company number: 03366976.

Contact us to place an order or to find out more:
0207 380 4509 | mod@wex.co.uk

Buying for yourself?
Visit us at:
wex.co.uk

SOLDIER SPORT



STARTING IN STYLE »

FEATHERWEIGHT Fus Matty Calderwood (RRF) won the opening men's bout as the Army made the ideal start at the Inter-Services Boxing Championships. However, their quest for honours proved far from plain sailing as the night progressed. Read a full report on pages 70-71...



Pictures: Grega Valancic/VOLGT and Josef Plickner

UPWARD TRAJECTORY IN WEBB'S OLYMPIC QUEST

BIATHLON ace Capt Marcus Bolin Webb (RA) has been reflecting on a positive season of international action as he continues his bid for Winter Olympic qualification.

The athlete has competed in both the IBU and World Cup series, however, the highlight came at the World Championships in the Czech Republic, where he finished 93rd in the sprint and 82nd in the individual 20-kilometre race.

While the results were some distance from the podium places, they formed an important stepping stone towards the 2026 Games and are more impressive given the fact Webb only started in the sport in 2019.

"I was ill the week before the World Championships, so I was not as good as I was hoping to be, but up until that point my racing had been pretty strong," he told *SoldierSport* as he prepared for the final trimester of

his campaign in Austria.

"You have to take these things as they come and then manage the situation – you are bound to lose a week at some point.

"The sprint became a session to get the body going again and I used it as build-up to the individual. I raced very well in that; I was 103rd last year so it was good to jump up 20 places.

"But the main aim is to get to the Olympics in 2026 and we are looking at results from season to season to make sure we're on the right path."

Qualification for the sporting showpiece sees the top 20 nations in the world allocated between four and six places. Athletes from countries outside that ranking are then left to compete for wildcard spots.

"Effectively, we are trying to beat the other nations outside the top 20," Webb continued. "So far, the trajectory is going well.

"The Olympic qualification



**"I WANT
TO
CLOSE
THE GAP
AS BEST
AS I
CAN"**

period has not started yet so we are experimenting with the intensity of training and its impact on my body.

"We are realistic – the goal is not to win gold medals, but it is to be competitive and close the gap as best as I can.

"I started in the sport at 24 years old, which is obviously not the same as those who were skiing at six and shooting at ten. But I am bridging the divide and it's exciting to see how far I can get each season. The steps are quite drastic; the best in the world look to improve by a couple of per cent each year, but I'm aiming for ten."

"I know there is a long way to go, but it would be incredible to fly the flag for Great Britain and the Army at the Olympics."

Biathlon has a history steeped in military tradition and the Service has produced an impressive 57 Winter Olympians in the Nordic disciplines.

Webb is indebted to that link after being introduced to the sport through the Royal Artillery and then going on to compete at the Army and British Championships.

"The Gunner team was looking for individuals to go into the Army season," he said.

"I went on that and was eventually picked up by the GB development squad.

"I'm now on the Army elite sport programme and being a full-time athlete is a great position to be in. The Service has been so supportive and I'm trying to give back as much as I can.

"It has allowed me to focus completely on my training and that is necessary if I am going to achieve what I want given how new I am to this.

"There is a bit of pressure in that I would like to return the favour, but the people supporting me understand that in sport sometimes things can be out of your control."

And Webb also spoke glowingly about the Service's biathlon offer and how it helps fellow personnel in the day job.

"If the Army wants robust soldiers, it needs them to be doing robust things," he continued. "This could be seen as the hardest Olympic discipline and personnel are learning it from scratch.

"They go from being complete novices to competing at World Cup venues at the Army and British Championships – it is a fantastic opportunity." ■



BIATHLON IN NUMBERS

YEARS SINCE AN ARMY MALE – LEE JACKSON – COMPETED AT THE WINTER OLYMPICS IN THE SPORT

10

OLYMPIC CAMPAIGNS FOR SGT AMANDA LIGHTFOOT (AGC (SPS)), WHO RETIRED FROM THE DISCIPLINE IN 2022

2

PLACE ACHIEVED BY WEBB IN THE 10KM SPRINT AT LAST MONTH'S IBU CUP EVENT IN AUSTRIA

48

SHOTS OUT OF 20 HIT AS HE THEN FINISHED 44TH IN THE PURSUIT

19



YEAR STARTS ON INDOOR HIGH

THE Army's tennis stars were stepping up preparations for the summer season at a training camp in La Manga, Spain, as this issue went to press.

It was the first overseas visit for the squad in some five years and follows hot on the heels of an oversubscribed Army Indoor Tennis Championships in Aldershot.

There was a familiar winner in the men's final as Maj Ben Rogers (RA) triumphed 7-6, 6-1 over Capt Reece Munnery (RTR, pictured).

Cpl Kiran Tamang (RE) beat Cpl Milan Garbuja (R Signals) to secure the men's plate crown, while there was a new name on the women's trophy as Sig Emma McMahon (R Signals) defeated Lt Col Madi Lewis (Int Corps) in straight sets in their respective final.

"Emma is a county player with Berkshire and won the doubles in last season's Play Your Way to Wimbledon event," Lt Col (Retd) Ian Haigs, secretary of the Army Tennis

Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"This was her first Army competition, and she will progress to our senior team. It is fantastic to have someone of that quality brand new to us.

"The competition was really good, and I hope the rest of our events continue in the same vein.

"We had 36 players but more than 60 entries – we physically couldn't fit them. If it was outdoors it wouldn't have been a problem."

The trip to Spain featured players from the senior, masters' and development squads and Haigs said it was ideal preparation for the challenges to come.

"We have not been able to do that since 2019," he added. "It is a great opportunity to bring cohesion to the team and that *esprit de corps*."

The Inter-Services Development Championships follow later this month, with the main competition on the courts of Wimbledon set for July 30 and 31. ■



NORDIC ENDEAVOUR

THE world's biggest cross-country ski race provided a thorough examination of the skills and endurance of winter sports athletes from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Sgt Jack Harrison, Sgt Samuel Haynes and Cpl Henry Oldham all travelled to Sweden to compete in the Oppet Spar stage of the Vasaloppet 90-kilometre Nordic ski race.

More than 10,000 competitors took to the start line and Harrison was the first of the Army contingent to finish in a time of 9hr 30min 49sec, with Haynes following him home six-and-a-half minutes later. Oldham clocked 10hr 59min 11sec.

"The Vasaloppet is renowned as one of the longest and most challenging races in the world," Harrison (pictured above) said.

"I taught Sam and Henry to ski at our annual biathlon camp, Ex Nordic Bluebell, and given their relative newness to the sport, it is truly remarkable that they both managed to complete the event with such limited experience.

"Their dedication to training, which primarily involved running and utilising the gymnasium's ski-ergs, is a testament to their determination and resilience."



Pictures: AS1 Emily Muir, RAF

ST MORITZ SERVES UP NATURAL TEST



**"WE
DIDN'T
KNOW
WHAT
TO
EXPECT"**

A CHANGE of location yielded mixed results for Army sliders as they squared off against their Forces rivals at the Inter-Services Ice Sports Championships.

The natural track at St Moritz offered a fresh challenge for the stars of luge, skeleton and bobsleigh – with speeds of up to 140kph clocked during the course of the competition.

Olympian LCpl Nick Gleeson (Para) and Rfn Tom Harris (Rifles) were victorious in the men's bobsleigh, but their efforts could not help the soldiers to the overall team title, which was won by the Royal Air Force.

However, the women's squad went one better to claim their respective trophy, with Pte Kelsea Montgomery (AGC (SPS)) and Sgt Dom Burge (QARANC) claiming second in the individual standings, ahead of Pte Chantel Brindle and Sgt Sally Barrett (both RAMC) in third.

Maj Lucy Wyatt (RE) triumphed in the women's luge, although the RAF were named combined team champions, and there was a second-place finish for Lt

Aaran Holmes (RE) in the men's skeleton. The RAF and Royal Navy secured the men's and women's collective honours.

"It was a completely new venue for everyone, so we didn't know what to expect," Maj Tim Haskell (RA), deputy director of Army Ice Sports, told *SoldierSport*. "It had its challenges straight away.

"The results were a little disappointing, and we did not do as well as we could have done.

"Nick Gleeson and Tom Harris were comfortable winners, but we had crashes elsewhere, which meant we lost the team title. Kelsea Montgomery had only been in the Field Army for four days before coming out; she used to compete as a youngster so is a great addition to the squad.

"The luge sliders did really well on a track that made them quite nervous. We are still in the process of reforming the sport and were missing two of our major performers.

"It is a similar story in skeleton, but Aaran Holmes finishing second was a great achievement considering he had been off the ice for a couple of years." ■

TITLE DROUGHT FINALLY ENDS



Picture: Lee Crabb/Allison Photography

THE dominance of the Royal Air Force men's team was finally broken at the Inter-Services Cross Country Championships as the Army surged to victory in the wet and mud of Cornwall.

Having last won the title in 2010, the soldiers saw Cpl Dean Williamson (REME, pictured at this season's Inter-Unit competition) head the field ahead of Capt Max Walker (RLC) and with teammates claiming places ten to 13, they were finally able to get their hands on the silverware.

"Since 2010 the RAF have been trying to break the record for consecutive wins, which stands at 23," Army team manager SSgt Jock Castle (R Signals) told *SoldierSport*. "We have been close over the years but haven't got over the line."

"So to finally get the win is a brilliant achievement. Dean Williamson was injured last year but is a fantastic athlete and is running the best I have ever seen."

"Max Walker was on exercise but met us in Cyprus at our training camp to build some fitness. But even if he was half fit, he would still finish in the top six. That is the standard we have got in the Army team."

"Our next runner finished tenth, and we took the following three positions – they paced it well. That is where this event is won or lost, and their efforts made the difference."

The Army enjoyed a near clean sweep of the titles as the women's senior and masters' teams won their respective trophies, as did the men's under-23s. The men's masters lost out to the RAF.

Capt Kate Olding (Int Corps) was runner-up to the Royal Navy's Cpl Chelsea Baker in the women's field, but the soldiers claimed places two to six to seal the overall win. ■



● BOXERS from the UK, French and United States militaries traded blows as the Nato Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup staged an exhibition of in-ring skill in Estonia.

Fighters from the First Fusiliers, 1st The Queen's Dragoons Guards, 1st and 3rd Regiments Royal Horse Artillery and The Queen's Royal Hussars represented the Army in the contest, which featured nine bouts.

"It was great to see the team come together in what was an exceptional event," said First Fusiliers' boxing officer Capt John McCowliff.

"WE
HAVE
BEEN
CLOSE
OVER
THE
YEARS"

SPORT SHORTS



Covenant commitment

■ MOTOSPORT UK has underlined its commitment to the military by signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Under the agreement, the national governing body will support the employment of veterans, while continuing to back the Race of Remembrance and offering troops the chance to join volunteer schemes such as marshalling and officiating at events.

"We are proud to sign the covenant and to commit to providing opportunities and demonstrating the importance of the Armed Forces," said Chief Executive Hugh Chambers.



Picture: Andrew Fosker/Allison Photography

Sappers on top again

■ THE Royal Engineers celebrated a third successive title in rugby union's Corps Championships after beating the Royal Artillery in the division one final.

A hat-trick of tries from Army hooker Bdr Pete Austin was not enough for the Gunners as a run of 22 unanswered points in the second half saw the defending champions win 37-27.

Elsewhere, the Infantry defeated the Royal Signals 24-16 in the division two showpiece, while the Royal Army Physical Training Corps lifted the division three trophy.

A Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers team boosted by players from the Sappers and Signals beat the Royal Logistic Corps in the women's final.



“ We left a gift in our
Wills to the ABF...
Will you? ”

After your family and friends, will you consider us?

Family comes first, and having a Will in place provides invaluable peace of mind for you and your family.

Many ABF supporters feel an enormous sense of pride in leaving a lasting legacy for those who have served their country.

We are the **Army's national charity**. Since 1944 we have been here to support soldiers, former soldiers and their families in times of need.

With no government funding, we rely on the gifts we receive from Wills to support more than a third of our work.



Scan here for
further information
on our free Will
making services

armybenevolentfund.org/gifts-in-wills
Alternatively please call Emma Hamilton,
Gifts in Wills Manager, on 020 7901 8909

For Soldiers. For Life.





SECOND-QUARTER SALVO UNDERPINS TITLE DEFENCE

AFIFTH successive clean sweep of the Inter-Services netball titles was secured on the courts of Aldershot as the Army overcame dogged opposition from the Royal Air Force to win the tournament final and end the campaign with a 100 per cent record.

Having seen the masters and development squads lift their respective trophies – as well as a victory for the men over the RAF – the pressure was on the senior team to follow suit and they duly delivered as a storming second-quarter performance laid the foundations for a 36-29 win.

A 49-18 success against the Royal Navy in their opening fixture saw the soldiers head into the clash in confident mood but it was their opponents who came out firing as fluent attacking moves allowed them to threaten the Army goal with regularity.

While their efforts saw them edge 7-4 ahead at the end of the first quarter, they failed to fully capitalise on their superiority,

with inconsistent shooting seeing the hosts stay in touch.

And they were punished after the interval as the defending champions impressively moved through the gears, combining a relentless defensive effort with ruthlessness at the net to turn the contest around.

Attacking duo Cpl Melissa Price (R Signals) and SSgt Ellie Nawale (AGC (SPS)) produced some superb interplay to score seven goals each, and with Sgt Dee Bolakoro (RE, pictured right) – together with Pte Amy Howell and Capt Katharine Chadwick (both RAMC) – keeping it tight at the other end, the Army led 18-11 at half-time.

The RAF edged the third period by ten goals to nine before Price added six goals to her tally in the final quarter, along with a further three for Nawale, as the soldiers won by seven points.

“It is such a relief,” skipper Nawale (main picture) told *SoldierSport*. “We made it hard for ourselves last season and did

that again this year.

“We knew the RAF would be strong, and they definitely stepped up a level.

“There were a few nerves to start with and they were up after the first quarter. We missed a few passes but managed to pick it up and were more clinical. We stayed calm and eventually ran away with it.

“Our defensive set-up is strong – Dee, Katharine and Amy win so many turnover balls, which is a huge advantage.

“We’ve now won five titles in a row but it doesn’t get any easier; the RAF and Navy are improving and that adds to the challenge.”

In the development tournament, the Army defeated the RAF 45-26 and downed the Navy 59-14, while the masters recorded 47-35 and 51-32 wins over their respective opponents.

A day after winning the Forces title, wing defence Howell helped Surrey Storm to a 63-56 triumph over Cardiff Dragons in the Netball Super League. ■

INTER-SERVICES NETBALL FINAL

ARMY

36

RAF

29





WALKOVER PROVIDES VITAL POINT IN TITLE DEFENCE

A WALKOVER victory for Sig Tobi Lawal (R Signals) proved crucial for the Army as they retained their Inter-Services boxing crown by the narrowest of margins.

With the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force failing to field a fighter at super heavyweight, the point awarded to Lawal tipped the contest in the Reds' favour after the in-ring action saw the teams triumph in three bouts apiece.

The defending champions dominated the first half of the bill, impressively winning all three men's contests – as well as the two women's matches staged outside the main competition.

But with a commanding victory in sight, the soldiers lost all six fights after the interval to end the night all square.

Cfn Niamh Brookes (REME) started proceedings in style with an accomplished display against the Navy's AB Chloe Jenkins at 54kg, using her reach advantage

to full effect and forcing a standing count from a strong left shot in the opening round. The punishment continued in the second before the referee stopped the contest in the third.

Fus Matty Calderwood (RRF) was on the front foot from the off in his 57kg clash with AR Jaydon Johnson (RAF), with the left jab proving an effective weapon. At the end of three rounds there was little to choose between the pair, but it was Calderwood who succeeded on a split decision.

It was the exact opposite at 60kg, where Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC) was in sublime form and outclassed AS1 Archie Pallister (RAF) to seal a unanimous verdict and claim a third successive Services belt.

Cpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME), a national champion in 2023, returned from England duty to fight at 63kg and was pushed all the way by a stubborn opponent in the shape of AB Billie



**"I HAVE
GONE
TO A
WHOLE
NEW
LEVEL"**

Matthews (RN), who went toe-to-toe with her experienced rival. However, it was Stuart who was victorious on a split decision.

"She definitely brought it and made me work really hard," the winner (pictured above) told *SoldierSport* afterwards. "I had to think about my tactics, look for the clean shots and try to benefit from my height advantage.

"Sometimes you have to dig deep to get the win. It doesn't always go to plan, and you just bite down on the gum shield and leave it all in there."

Stuart will look to defend her national title this month when she enters the tournament at the quarter-final stage.

"I will definitely have a target on my back, especially having been away with England," she added. "All my fights are recorded so everyone knows what I can do, which makes it harder. The level is so high – I need to bring my A game."

Cfn Leon Moulds (REME) brought his A game against Lt Ben Grant (RN) at 63.5kg, with a rousing performance in the second round paving the way for a unanimous verdict and progression to the senior national championships for the first time.

"He beat me a couple of years earlier, so I knew I had to put everything in," Moulds (pictured bottom left) said. "That second round gave me the confidence to get the job done – I didn't want to leave it to the judges."

"I'm buzzing for the national championships; it has been a class season so far and hopefully that can continue."

"Since being on the Army team, I have gone to a whole new level. I was in a good place coming from my civvy club, but being able to train every day has made such a difference."

Pte Jordan Shaw (AGC (SPS)) was another fighter looking for a third successive Services title but struggled for momentum against Mne Liam Bell (RM) and duly lost via a unanimous verdict.

Spr Marlie Devitt (RE) fell the wrong side of a split decision against AS1 Blaine Lambert (RAF) at 71 kg, while the impressive Sgt Cameron Lewis (RAF) forced two standing counts on his way to a convincing win over Fus Connor Moore (RRF).

The Mercian pairing of Pte Cody Pearson and LCpl Jack Lorja were defeated at 80kg and 86kg respectively, before the evening ended with a loss for Pte Kieran Cooper (RLC) at 92kg. ■



BOXING IN NUMBERS

SUCCESSIVE
TITLE WINS
FOR THE
ARMY,
WHO HAVE
LIFTED THE
TROPHY
70 TIMES
SINCE IT
WAS FIRST
COMPETED
FOR IN 1922

4

VICTORIES
FROM 34
BOUTS FOR
NATIONAL
CHAMPION
AND ENGLAND
BOXER CPL
TERRI-LEIGH
STUART

28

ARMY
FIGHTERS
WHO
COMPETED
IN LAST
SEASON'S
THREE
NATIONS
CHAMPS

5

DATE, THIS
MONTH, OF
THE 2024
NATIONAL
FINALS IN
DERBY

20



FROM PROMISE TO DESPAIR

A DAY of hope was followed by a day of disappointment as the Army missed out on senior honours at this season's Inter-Services Hockey Championships.

The opening round of fixtures against the Royal Navy yielded impressive goal returns for the soldiers, with the men – buoyed by their triumph in the indoor format in November – looking particularly sharp in an 8-2 victory that set up a winner-takes-all clash with the Royal Air Force.

"This is the culmination of 18 months' hard work," skipper Capt Will Sadler (RE) told *SoldierSport* following their success against the Senior Service.

"Our systems are starting to bear fruit – we stuck to the gameplan, kept it simple and had our foot on their throat all the way through."

"The RAF have been the dominant team for ten years now and it is about time someone broke that."

Unfortunately, the challenge posed by the airmen proved

a step too far as the Army crashed to a 4-1 defeat and it was a similar story in the women's competition.

A hat-trick from Lt Ella Bromley (RLC, pictured) paved the way for a 6-0 win over the Navy, with strikes from Sgt Hannah Kenyon (AGC (RMP)), Maj Steph Pollinger (RAMC) and Lt Col Nic George (R Signals) completing the rout.

With goal difference proving decisive last season, when the Army were pipped to the honours by the RAF, skipper SSgt Emily Lewis (AGC (SPS)) was pleased to see her team show a ruthless edge in attack.

"It was a really good game, and both teams fought to the end," she said.

"We knew we needed the goals and were determined not to concede. As a team we are slow starters, but we maintained our discipline and kept playing the one-twos, knowing the goals would eventually come."

However, their efforts were unrewarded as a 2-1 defeat to the RAF saw the title slip from their grasp. ■



PAIN OUT IN SPAIN

THE coastal town of Xabia, in Spain, was the setting for a gruelling camp for the men's Army Cycling road race team.

Ten athletes from an earlier selection weekend, along with members of the time trial team, were invited on the trip, which was divided into two training blocks that included sprint and endurance rides, a focus on skills and insight from professionals within the sport.

"It was a well-run pre-season training phase, and hopefully sets the team up to successfully retain the Inter-Services title later this year," said rider Maj Tom Reynolds (Rifles).



SPORT SHORTS

Peaking in Prague

INDOOR rowers produced a host of medal winning performances for the Army at the joint European and World Championships in Prague.

Capt Jim Berriman (RE) took gold in the men's 40-44 2,000-metre race, while Capt Kevin Sheppard (RLC) claimed European gold and world bronze in the 45-49 lightweight 2,000 metres.

There was a silver and bronze for LCpl Evan Coffey (RE) over 500 metres, along with a further bronze for Pte Daniel Biggs (RAMC).

In the women's events, Cpl Emma Simpson (R Signals) secured double bronze in the 23-39 age bracket at 500 metres, with WO2 Elizabeth Danckert (Int Corps) achieving the same medal in the 23-39 lightweight 2,000 metres.

ARMY CLAIM CRUNCH CROWN



Picture: Cedric Vlemmings/Allgan Photography

THE Army men's rugby union team gained the bragging rights over their French rivals as a successful crossing of the English Channel saw them triumph in the annual clash billed as 'Le Crunch'.

Having won last season's fixture on home turf the Reds resumed battle in the southwestern city of Pau, where they ran out 33-22 winners.

Trp Levi Roper (QDG) gave the visitors an ideal start with a try in the first two minutes, but they were pegged back by a succession of penalties as the French opened a 9-7 lead. However, a moment of magic from Spr Jack Johnson (RE) ensured his side led at the break, the fly half creating space to run in for a 14-9 advantage.

A brace from centre Lt Frank Kelly (AGC (SPS)) saw the soldiers assume greater control, before Rfn Vereimi Qorowale (Rifles) completed the scoring with a break on the left.

The Army were in action against Bedford Blues as this issue went to press and will face the Irish Defence Force in Aldershot on April 18 as preparations for the Inter-Services campaign continue.

The men's and women's Army-Navy games will be played at Twickenham on May 4. Tickets can be purchased at eticketing.co.uk/rfu. The soldiers face the Royal Air Force at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium a week later, visit gloucesterrugby.co.uk for tickets. ■

**"IT WAS
A WELL-
RUN
PHASE!"**



WING LBdr Jess McAuley (RA, pictured) crossed for two tries as the Army women's rugby union team were comfortable winners against the British Police. The Reds crossed for seven tries in a 41-5 victory. They were facing England Under-20s as this issue went to press, with Wales Under-20s to follow on April 20.

MONTH IN SPORT

April's key dates...



WHAT: Inter-Services Table Tennis
WHEN: April 9 to 10
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: Victory for the Army

men's A team by the narrowest of margins ended the Royal Air Force's dominance last season. Can they – and the women's squad – retain their titles?



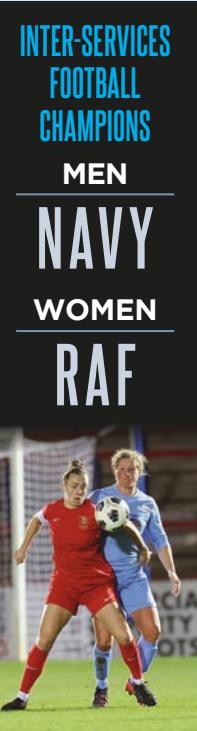
WHAT: Rugby league Inter-Unit Nav 9s
WHEN: April 24
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: A curtain raiser to the new season, this day-long competition sees unit teams from across the Army battle for supremacy in the game's shortened format



On May 16 the soldiers will be looking to hit the ground running in this season opener. But will the unpredictable spring weather help their cause?



SERVICES SETBACK FOR LOWLY REDS



THERE was a huge blow for the Army in this season's Inter-Services Football Championships as both the men's and women's teams finished last in their respective competitions.

The men appeared to be heading for victory in their opening day clash with defending champions the Royal Air Force as they surged into a 2-0 lead midway through the first-half in Aldershot.

One-time Manchester United youth prospect Cpl Jamie Turner (R Signals) was the first to strike as he caught Sgt Joe Thomas in possession and sprinted clear before coolly slotting past keeper Cpl Christian Paulat-Brigg.

AS1 Joe Spalding spurned a great chance to equalise as he fired wide after breaking free and the visitors suffered further damage as Pte Lewis Simmons (Para) converted at the back post following a flick-on from a corner.

Sgt Sean Thomson (REME) came close to adding a third but failed to fully connect with a low cross from the right

and Simmons then forced a parried save from Paulat-Brigg, who saw the ball cleared to safety before an attacker could pounce on the rebound.

And the Reds were made to rue those misses as the half progressed. When their defence failed to deal with a cross from Cpl Sam Dawson on the left, skipper Sgt Michael Campbell was on hand to bundle home, and then AS1 Jack Debnam was the quickest to react when keeper Cpl Luke Cairney (RE) spilled a low shot from the edge of the area – the midfielder tapping in to equalise on the stroke of half-time.

The RAF comeback was completed after the break as Cpl Philip Bright was given time to cross from out wide, with Campbell side footing home to seal a 3-2 win.

A 2-1 defeat against the Royal Navy in Portsmouth a week later saw the soldiers finish bottom of the pile, a fate matched by the women's team following a 2-0 defeat to the RAF and a 1-0 reverse against the Senior Service. ■



It's been a long journey for me. I didn't make it through my first board a few years ago so arrived via the potential officer development course after four years with the Regulars. My family has a history of serving with the British Army which I want to continue – I am the fifth generation. I'm hoping to join The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

OCdt Sidhartha Setling, 27



I wanted a job that was physically active; something where I was learning and doing lots of PT, out among nature. I was also keen to avoid the rat race for as long as possible. I enjoy that sense of working towards something bigger than yourself, and for the good of the country, too. There is a stable career here and a clear line of promotion. If you do well you will get promoted – it's that simple. It's not always like that in civvy street.

OCdt Max Nowers, 25

Pictures: Graeme Main
Interviews: Sarah Goldthorpe



My mates were diving into jobs after uni that they didn't seem particularly passionate about. I decided I wanted to do something different. As a kid aged eight or nine I wanted to be in the Army.

OCdt Benjamin Smith, 23



I worked a lot of jobs but wasn't getting much satisfaction from them. My brother is in the Army and suggested it to me, so I got in touch with others who serve to get an idea of what officership was like. It seemed a good fit.

OCdt Connor Eastwood, 27



I like being fit, sociable and part of a team, so this life seemed to work. Looking forwards, it is something I can be a real part of as well. I wanted to represent my country.

OCdt Dan Harding, 25

I came for adventure. I want to spend more time outdoors and not sitting in an office. Being part of a team was a big factor for me, as well, and that sense of patriotism.

OCdt Rupert Brooks, 24



New starters

As soldier recruitment stalls, officer cadets at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst explain what brought them into the British Army...

For me this was a good opportunity to combine new learning with my military background as an officer in Azerbaijan. The system back home is different, so it's great to be taking elements from both sides in order to develop. If you aren't learning new things, life isn't interesting.

OCdt Sanan Asadov, 26



LEVEL PEAKS



Always Delivering the Advantage

www.levelpeaks.com



OUR FUNDING SUPPORTS ARMY FAMILIES

The Clervaux Trust offers day and residential care places to young people and adults with complex learning and behavioural difficulties and supports them in gaining training and further education.

We proudly funded the Clervaux Fold, the charity's dedicated centre for Army families from the nearby Catterick Garrison.

To find out more about our work visit armybenevolentfund.org