

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

ARMED WITH AMBITION

CIVVY STREET SPECIAL

JIHAD SCHOOL DROPOUT

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FIGHT AGAINST
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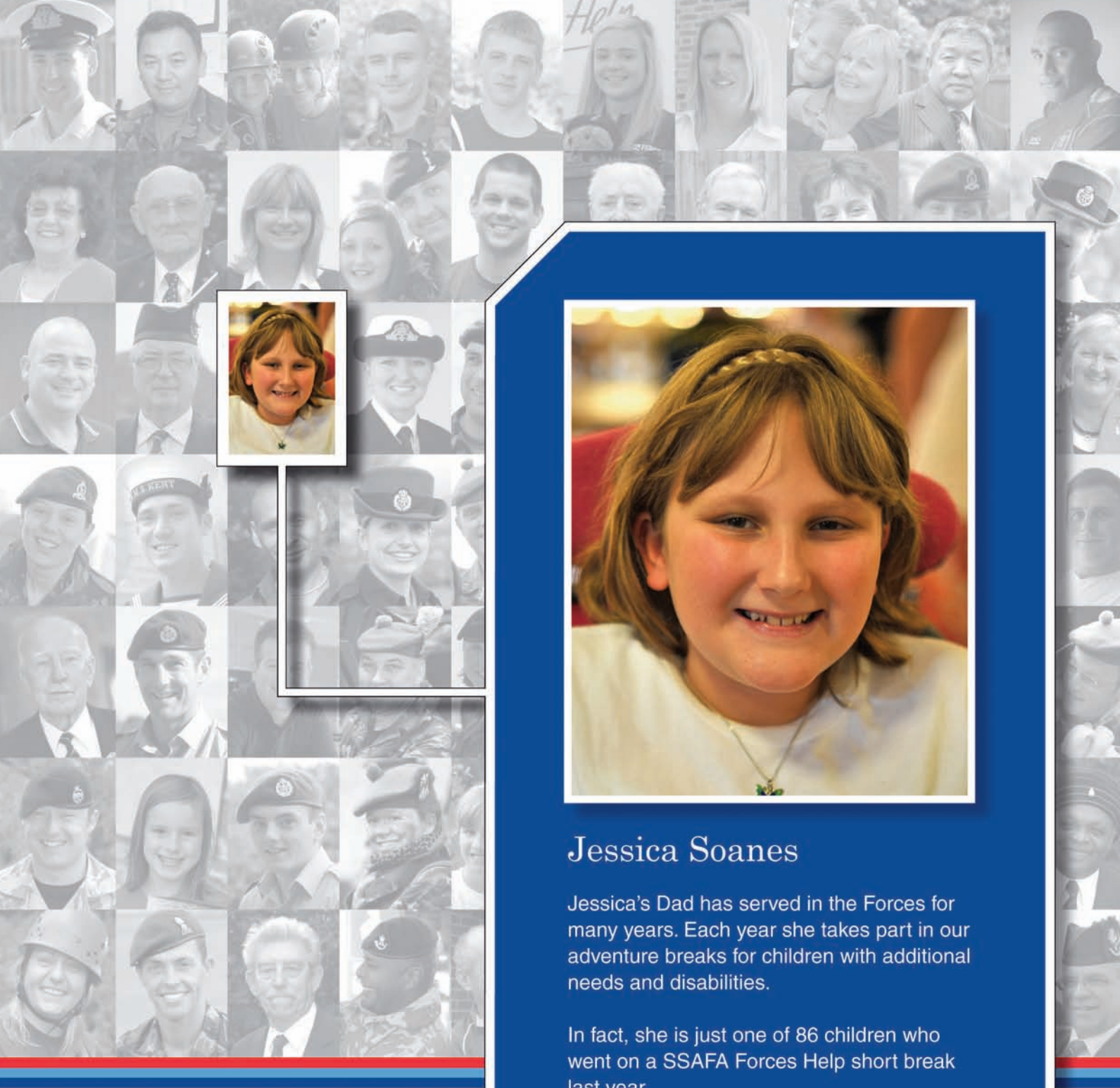


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ARMY

Adopting a civvy street state of mind

AS emails about the impact of manning reductions continue to roll into *Soldier* HQ, we thought it an apt time to explore what is on the minds of many Service personnel: what will I do next?

Whether retirement beckons, the threat of redundancy looms or injury has forced you in a new direction, this issue is for you.

Inside, we quiz ex-soldiers whose civvy street careers have led them on to new and brilliant things (pages 31-37).

From the private-turned-millionaire to the former sapper editing *Superbike* magazine, our interviewees show how it is possible for every mould to be broken when it comes to life after the Army.

In addition to these inspiring stories, pages 38-40 contain expert tips and a handy cut-out contacts list.

I hope this information helps those of you feeling lost in the tidal wave of information that can hit when you take on the intimidating title "Service leaver".

For those of you with no desire to think so far forward, you will be pleased to find that October's issue doesn't skimp on the usual assortment of news, features, sport updates and letters.

Turn to page 22 for a fascinating interview with a former soldier who has revealed details of his terrifying past at the hands of Muslim extremists to the community he claims saved him.

As this brave individual's words confirm, there are not many careers that can match life in the British Army.

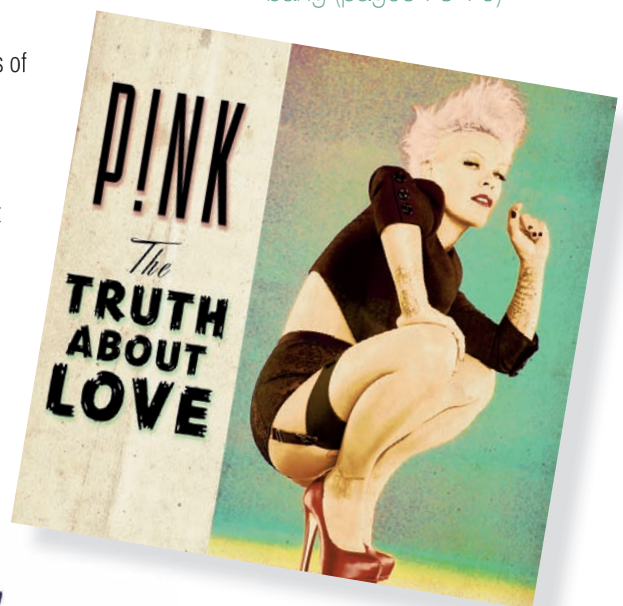
Nevertheless, I hope this civvy street special demonstrates that, armed with ambition, the ones that do can be yours for the taking. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

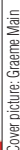
“Motherhood has done little to dent her raw and almost punkish approach”

– Pop princess back with a bang (pages 78-79)



S. Goldthorpe.

OCTOBER 2012 VOLUME 68/10

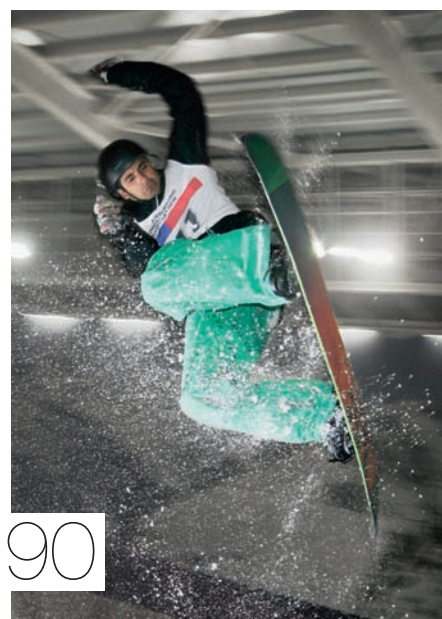


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THE **informer**...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture: Steve Dock

Ready to roll: Brig Bob Bruce believes 4th Mechanized Brigade will be the best trained task force ever to deploy to Helmand province

Confidence soars ahead of tour

AS members of 4th Mechanized Brigade prepare to deploy on Op Herrick 17, the formation's commander has spoken of his confidence that his troops will secure conditions for the planned reduction of British personnel in Afghanistan.

Brig Bob Bruce will assume responsibility for Task Force Helmand on October 10 and will oversee the withdrawal of some 500 soldiers by the end of the year.

"We will be the first formation to see our numbers reduce during the course of our tour; it is a big challenge but one we will embrace," he explained.

"First and foremost remains the importance of developing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). As they grow in their capability and capacity their confidence will grow and so will that of the Afghan people.

"And that leads into the second thing we have to do, which is, as that Afghan lead takes hold, reduce our profile and ultimately send some personnel and equipment back home.

"I firmly believe we'll be the best

trained and best equipped task force ever to deploy and that assurance is enormously important to our soldiers and their families."

With Nahr-e Saraj district due to enter the first phase of transition as the tour begins, Brig Bruce said the "shoulder to shoulder" concept would be crucial to the mission's success.

"The closer we work with ANSF the safer we get," he added. "We increase the risk to ourselves if we try and push them away."

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond met with senior Afghan figures in Kabul ahead of an announcement by the International Security Assistance Force that joint patrols would be temporarily scaled back (page 9).

As part of wide-ranging dialogue about the UK's role in the country, the minister sought and received assurances that the Afghan government and military are working hard to tackle the problem of "green on blue" attacks.

LSgt Scott Small (SG) is one of many soldiers who will be deploying to Helmand province for the first time

and the section commander feels well prepared for the challenges ahead.

"We've been training that long and that hard that everyone's qualified up to the max. We know exactly what's expected and what we need to do," he said.

Although it is not yet clear which units will be affected by the reduction in numbers, the 33-year-old said he would be keen to remain in theatre.

"If some of my guys get the chance to come back I'll be in the group volunteering to stay on," he explained. "I've got a duty of care to the soldiers under me and they deserve to get back before I do."

Reservist Cpl Jonathan Plumley (AGC (RMP)) is another Serviceman looking forward to the deployment.

"I'm feeling quite excited about my first tour," he said. "In my civilian life I worked in IT but sitting in an office wasn't really for me so I thought I'd try the Territorial Army. I've sort of lost my life to it since, but in a good way.

"We've had the chance to practise scenarios over and over again. I feel prepared and well integrated."



“PARALYMPIC SPORT HELPS TO REHABILITATE SOLDIERS TO GET BACK TO NORMAL LIFE AGAIN”

– PTE DEREK DERENALAGI REFLECTS ON 2012, PAGE 89



V2 rocket drops in on Medway

AT the height of the Second World War, German high command would have been delighted to land this munition in the heart of Medway's military estate.

But the pleasure was all Britain's when the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham welcomed the rare V2 rocket into its collection.

Measuring more than 14 metres in length and three-and-a-half metres in width, the weapon killed an estimated 2,754 civilians in London during the conflict. This particular device has undergone a £100,000 restoration.

Bastion's unexpected arrival

A SERVICEWOMAN has given birth to a baby boy while deployed on Op Herrick.

The Royal Artillery soldier gave doctors at the Camp Bastion Field Hospital a surprise after complaining about stomach pains. It is thought she is the first member of the British Army to give birth in an operational theatre.



"Mother and baby are both in a stable condition and are receiving the best possible care," an MoD spokesman confirmed after the story hit headlines as *Soldier* went to press.

Regulations dictate that women are not allowed to deploy during pregnancy or for at least six months afterwards.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
£60,000	GADGET GIVEAWAY Blackpool-based business Prize Promotions sold draw tickets to win top-notch televisions and digital cameras and called in comedy legend Bobby Ball to pick out the winners	Afghan Heroes
£2,670	SUPER SCUBATHON Members of the Cyprus-based Dhekelia Garrison Sub-Aqua Club completed a 24-hour sponsored "scubathon", with two divers underwater at any given time. Additional cash was raised through a barbecue, cake stand and bar, as well as offering try dives to the sport's newcomers	SSAFA Forces Help and Multiple Sclerosis Society
£145	BLING BENEVOLENCE Military wife Michelle Smithson has pledged to make regular donations to Forces charities from the proceeds of her online jewellery boutique Totally Cherished (www.totallycherished.com). Launched in April, the website sells sterling silver gifts for troops serving overseas to send to their loved ones	Help for Heroes



KEEPING THE FAITH

■ BRITISH soldiers have attended the sixth Armed Forces Muslim Conference.

Held at Amport House in Andover, the event brings together serving members of the Islamic faith to discuss their beliefs and values and offer support.

Capt Naveed Muhammad, a Royal Signals volunteer, said: "In most units you will only have a small handful of Muslim soldiers or an individual.

"As with any minority there are always challenges but by coming together, those who have had good experiences can advise others on the correct process to follow."

GIFT OPPORTUNITY

■ SOLDIERS wishing to receive goodwill parcels during operational tours are being invited to register on a website.



Operation Shoebox comprises a team of coordinators who collect gifts and distribute them to military personnel via the British Forces Post Office.

To sign up for donations visit www.operationshobox.co.uk and click on the Forces page or call 01545 570619.

CIVVY STREET SURGERY

■ A SERIES of regional fairs are being planned to help Servicemen and women settle into civilian life.

The move is part of a new Army transition capability, which will ensure support is consistent across brigades.

The events will be open to all leavers, including those not eligible for assistance from the Career Transition Partnership.

The development follows Lord Ashcroft's appointment as special representative for veterans' transition.

In the unpaid role, the adviser will work with government departments, Service charities and industry to review what opportunities are available to ex-military personnel.

● Armed with ambition
– pages 31-39

ORCHESTRA AUCTION

A SELECTION of 50 musical instruments from the Orchestra of the Corps of Royal Engineers will go under the hammer at Bonhams this month.

The auctioneers are selling the lots to help raise money for The Royal Engineer Central Charitable Trust, which funds welfare and benevolence for soldiers injured on operations and their families.

Among the interesting items to go on sale on October 31 is a French cello by Joseph Hel that dates back to 1888.

The instrument is expected to fetch between £8,000 and £12,000.



“PEOPLE DON'T NEED ARTILLERY MEN IN CIVVY STREET BUT THE CONFIDENCE THEY HAVE IS USEFUL FOR SO MANY THINGS”
— FORMER SOLDIERS SHARE CAREER WISDOM WITH RANKS, PAGES 31-37



Picture: Sgt Andy Reddy, RLC

'Not treading water': Ministers have stressed that neither Britain's mission nor its tactics have been halted by the Isaf announcement

No change of policy in Afghanistan

DEFENCE Secretary Philip Hammond has insisted that government policy on Afghanistan has not been altered, despite an announcement by the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) that the partnering of troops with local forces would come under greater scrutiny.

A temporary reduction in joint patrols was ordered following a rise in attacks on British and American personnel by rogue soldiers and violent protests over an anti-Islamic film made in the US.

In a statement on September 18, Isaf said the decision had been taken to “reduce our profile and vulnerability to civil disturbances or insider attacks”.

It added: “Most partnering and advising will now be at the kandak (battalion) level and above.

“This does not mean there will be no partnering below that.

“The need for that will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and approved by regional commanders.”

Responding to an urgent question in the House of Commons, Mr Hammond explained: “There has been no change of policy. We have always kept the level at which we mentor the Afghan National Security Forces under review and will continue to do so through the process of security transition.

“Partnering occurs at all levels and this has not changed.”

The announcement came as the number of international troops killed in “green on blue” attacks reached 51.

Nine UK military personnel have died in such incidents this year, with a total of

18 deaths since 2008.

Reacting to media reports, Foreign Secretary William Hague emphasised that it was not a change in tactics for British soldiers but rather “a change in Isaf processes”.

Lt Col Charlie Maconochie, commanding officer of 3/215 Brigade Advisory Group and 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, told the *Daily Telegraph*: “The catalyst for the majority of insider attacks appears to be a mix of personal grievances, cultural disparities and psychological distress.

“There is simply no evidence of any widespread insurgent infiltration of the Afghan forces.

“Our work with the locals enhances our security and dwarfs the actions of the few rogue elements.”



...a £50 grocery voucher

THE clues to last month's spine lines competition stemmed from our biking-inspired banter with Olympic star Mark Cavendish.

(Miao) Zhang, (Zafeirios) Volikakis, (Robert) Forstemann and (Jason) Kenny were all track cyclists at the

unforgettable 2012 Games.

This month we have two £50 vouchers for expat grocery store British Corner Shop (www.britishcornershop.co.uk) up for grabs.

To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers, plus your postal address, to the usual place or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by October 31.





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HIGHBROW BANTER

■ **FORMER** officer cadet Jonathan Lewis has revealed how “merciless ribbing” at the hands of British troops inspired him to write a West End play.

Our Boys, starring Laurence Fox and Arthur Darvill (pictured below), opened at London’s Duchess Theatre last month.

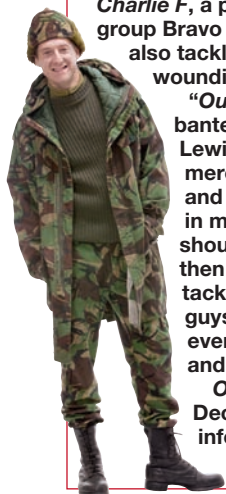
Based on the experiences of the *Soldier*, *Soldier* and *London’s Burning* actor, it tells the story of a group of Servicemen recovering from injury.

“I wrote the play as a response to two operations I had at the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in Woolwich in the 1980s,” the playwright told *Soldier*. “As I embarked on training at Sandhurst I hurt my back. But the guys I spent time with there had been seriously hurt. They had the medals, T-shirts, scars and stories and meeting them changed the course of my life.”

The new show comes hot on the heels of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F*, a play by touring theatre group Bravo 22 Company that also tackled the subject of wounding.

“*Our Boys* is full of the banter you would expect,” Lewis added. “I was ribbed mercilessly by the guys and I’ve tried to do what in my opinion a good play should, make you laugh then cry. It attempts to tackle what happens to guys who have given everything for the military and their mates.”

Our Boys runs until December 15. For more information visit www.ourboystheplay.com



Picture: Graeme Main

Going places: The patrol vehicle combines manoeuvrability with top blast protection

Further Foxhounds for Herrick

THE Ministry of Defence has confirmed that it will spend around £30 million on 25 extra Foxhound patrol vehicles.

As troops deploying on Herrick 17 become the first to use the asset in theatre, the additional investment will bring the total fleet to 325.

Peter Luff, minister for defence equipment, support and technology at the time of the announcement, told *Soldier* the new platform represented a significant advancement.

“Often to get manoeuvrability you have to have lighter weight and lower levels of protection, while high levels of protection take away this capability,” the politician explained.

“Foxhound is a very good blend of the two. It will enable the Army to go places it wouldn’t otherwise be able to go with confidence and certainty and it’s also less menacing, so in terms of the partnering operation in Afghanistan that’s very important.”

Robust enough to withstand a blast from an improvised explosive device, the vehicle has a top speed of 70mph and can be driven away from an ambush on three wheels. In addition, three screens inside the cab offer a 360-degree view.

An MoD spokesman said that a date had not yet been set for the additional platforms to hit theatre.

● **The ruling class – pages 82-83**

Athletes toasted by troops at the top



THE Army’s top soldier has hosted a reception to celebrate the achievements of Service personnel who competed at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Gen Sir Peter Wall welcomed 120 athletes and representatives of Army sports, including gold medallist Capt Heather Stanning (RA, pictured right), to the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London.

Praising the men and women for their performances, the Chief of the General Staff said: “The Games turned out to be an immense success for the Army in many guises and I want to say thank you to the athletes who are an inspiration to Service personnel.

“There is a huge enthusiasm for sports

in the military and we must foster that. Athletes need to know that they can count on support from the very top.”

Other senior officers have also expressed their appreciation for the wider contribution made by troops.

In a letter to Servicemen and women, Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir David Richards, said: “Despite some long hours and late-notice deployments, your discipline and dedication shone through whether you were on duty in the Olympic Stadium or working in the depths of the Ministry of Defence.

“You have, once again, showcased Her Majesty’s Armed Forces to the world in an exemplary manner. Thank you and well done.”

Reflecting on the event’s legacy, Lt Gen Sir Nick Parker added: “The bond between the public and the Services has been strengthened, the Armed Forces’

contribution to homeland operations recognised and the value of our service and a military career reinforced.

“This experience should leave all of us walking just a little bit taller than before.”

A total of 18,200 members of the UK military were involved in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, with many more contributing behind the scenes.





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Picture: Graeme Main

Pulling together: Ministers say British troops are weathering the worst of tough times

Survey shows strain

MORALE in the British Army is dropping and troops are increasingly dissatisfied with their pay, according to feedback from the latest Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey.

The 2012 questionnaire found that the number of soldiers content with Service life had decreased by ten per cent over two years to 52 per cent.

In addition, nearly half of the 12,880 troops who responded from across the military said they “didn’t know anything” about the United Kingdom’s Armed Forces Covenant.

The findings follow two rounds of Army redundancies and an announcement that the number of Regular soldiers will reduce by 20,000 over the next eight years.

Responding to the statistics before being replaced in last month’s reshuffle, defence minister Peter Luff commented: “While morale on operations remains high, we have had to make tough decisions to get the defence budget back into balance.

“Any change like this is bound

to create uncertainty. However, the resilience of our military personnel should not be underestimated.

“We are nearing the end of a very difficult period in defence and hope to see morale slowly recovering over the next couple of years.”

Asked about their basic pay, 40 per cent of Army respondents said they were satisfied – a decrease of 13 per cent since 2010 – while contentment with specialist pay remained unchanged at 33.

Overall, 84 per cent of soldiers said they were proud to be in the military and 75 per cent thought they offered an important service to the country.

But a decline in satisfaction with Herrick training was identified.

Responses from across the three Services showed that 70 per cent were happy with pre-deployment exercises for their current or last tour – a drop of four per cent since 2011.

When asked if they would consider becoming Reserves, 52 per cent of Forces respondents said no.

For more details read [ABN 83/12](#).

GOOD DRILLS

SIGNALLER SUCCESS

A SERVICEMAN whose expertise helped to improve communications for British troops in Afghanistan has won the coveted Churchill Medal. Sgt Simon Nurse of 15th Signal Regiment (Information Support) received the award following his work to develop the Cortez network, a system that uses sensors and cameras to protect troops deployed in Helmand.



OPERATION ICE CREAM

AN ice cream van has covered 2,500 miles and given out more than 4,500 free cones to troops working at the Olympics over the last two months. The British Forces Broadcasting Service vehicle continues to visit events organised for the families of those deployed on Op Herrick.



SECURITY SHORTFALL

SECURITY at the headquarters of 16 Air Assault Brigade has been breached 13 times in five years, it has been revealed. Intruders used false ID, jumped fences and hid in car boots to get into Merville Barracks in Colchester. The unsanctioned entries came to light after a Freedom of Information request by the *East Anglian Daily Times*.



GOODLUCK GONE BAD

A FAKE officer has been arrested in Nigeria after being caught offering positions in the country’s army in return for cash. Goodluck Furupagha admitted posing as a lieutenant and duping several members of the public out of an estimated £800 each.

BAD DRILLS

58

**THE PERCENTAGE OF BRITISH SOLDIERS
WHO SAY THEY ARE SATISFIED WITH THE
STANDARD OF PERSONAL EQUIPMENT**

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

“IT’S ALL WELL AND GOOD FOR POLITICIANS TO STAND UP AT HEADLEY COURT AND SAY ‘THIS IS WHAT WE ARE PROVIDING’ BUT WHAT ABOUT THE INVISIBLE WOUNDED?”

– TV HARD MAN TAKES ON TOUGH SUBJECT MATTER IN TWO NEW SHOWS, PAGES 45-46



Picture: Sgt Russ Nolan, RLC



Calculated risk: The captain's Apache tasking makes him less exposed than previously

MoD reveals royal's role

THE Ministry of Defence has defended its decision to tell the world's media that Prince Harry has deployed to Afghanistan.

On the day Capt Wales arrived in Helmand province last month, the department informed the press of his role as an Apache co-pilot gunner within the Joint Aviation Group.

It follows the royal soldier's first Herrick deployment in 2008, which was cut short after a news blackout designed to protect him fell apart.

Explaining the logic behind the announcement, an MoD spokesman said: "This deployment differs in many ways to his last.

"Last time he was a forward air controller, exposed, with other guys around him and the assessment was that public knowledge of this would be putting him and others in danger.

"Now he is in a different role

operating from Camp Bastion and flying an extremely sophisticated and well-protected aircraft under improved circumstances on the ground.

"We constantly review the risks to all our Forces and this process will continue throughout his tour."

During his time in Helmand province Capt Wales will support the International Security Assistance Force and Afghan troops operating throughout Regional Command South West.

Serving with 662 Squadron, 3 Regiment, Army Air Corps, his team will provide surveillance, deterrence and close-combat attack capabilities as well as escort duties for other aircraft.

The 28-year-old, who is third in-line to the throne, qualified as an Apache pilot after undertaking his conversion to role course earlier this year. He has been described as a valuable target by members of the Taliban.

DEPTH OF THE DESERT

■ SAPPERS have undertaken a rare stint of adventurous training in Helmand.

Ten members of 26 Engineer Regiment took to the Royal Engineers' training tank in Camp Bastion to complete the first phase of the British Sub-Aqua Club's ocean divers' course.

The 70,000-litre facility exists to help military divers retain their skills during deployment in the land-locked country.

But instructor Capt Mick Stewart seized the chance to introduce some newcomers to its depths.

"I saw the opportunity to give the guys something different to focus on and provide a qualification they can use both in and outside the Army," he explained.

"Many people think that scuba diving is floating around effortlessly in tropical reefs but there are other benefits. It teaches teamwork, navigation, planning and briefing skills, all of which are key to good soldiering."

Having carried out basic drills, the troops will complete additional training on their return to the UK.



G4S PUTS A BIT BACK

■ PRIVATE firm G4S has donated £2.5 million to the Ministry of Defence after Service personnel stepped in to assist with security at the London Olympic Games.

The money will be used to support Armed Forces sporting and welfare organisations.

DNA KIT DIRECTIVE

■ UNITS are being urged to ensure they are using the correct DNA sampling kits.

Tissue archiving is carried out on the rare occasions when such testing is the only certain means of identifying a casualty. But some personnel are wrongly using forensic examination sampling kits for this, which are designed to protect donor information.

The correct equipment displays these details clearly. For more information read **ABN 81/12**

IN MEMORIAM



GDSM KARL WHITTLE (22)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADEER GUARDS
DIED SEPTEMBER 7

A YOUNG soldier who died in hospital three weeks after being shot at a checkpoint in Helmand province has been described as a "shining light".

Gdsm Karl Whittle of The Queen's Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards was wounded by gunfire from insurgents in Nahr-e Saraj on August 14.

After being treated at Camp Bastion, the 22-year-old was flown to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham where he died on September 7.

Gdsm Whittle joined the Army in 2009 and later moved to Nijmegen Company, Grenadier Guards, where he conducted public duties at the royal palaces and proudly participated in state ceremonial tasks.

In August 2011 he joined 3 Platoon in The Queen's Company before deploying on operations in southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col James Bowder, CO of 1 Gren Gds, said: "Gdsm Whittle was one of our very best. A great soldier and a young man of rare character, he was destined to go a very long way in the Army.

"Big, strong and full of fight, he battled hard against his injuries right to the very end."

Lt Alexander Budge, commander of 3 Platoon, added: "He was a mountain of a man with an extremely bright future."

In a statement about the father-of-one, his family said: "He was a proud and caring man who took pride in whatever he did. Karl was the light of many lives and touched all who knew him."

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Picture: Steve Dock

Home from home: Sgt Andrew Rolfe (AAC) returned to the UK to train with his TA unit during their annual exercise on Salisbury Plain

Reservist's inter-continental commute

A TERRITORIAL Army soldier has spoken of his commitment to serving with the UK Reserve forces, while at the same time volunteering as a fireman in his adopted home of the United States.

Sgt Andrew Rolfe (AAC, pictured right) moved to Washington State with his American wife in 2001 but decided that the long commute wasn't going to stop him fulfilling his duties in either country.

Speaking to *Soldier* during his unit's annual training exercise, the 45-year-old described how he has completed more than half of his TA service from the other side of the world.

"For ten plus years I've been based in America and have travelled back and forth, making sure I get all my mandatory training in," he said.

"At home I work in construction, but I also volunteer as a firefighter and emergency medical technician as part of Fire District 13 in Grant County.

"They're really good guys. They do a fantastic job and save a lot of lives so it's a good thing to be part of."

The Serviceman explained how the rewards of military and voluntary service have far outweighed the difficult logistics and even helped him to cope with moving so far from home.

"I always wanted to be a soldier and it's been a fantastic thing for me," Sgt Rolfe added. "I've done and seen so much and had good life experiences.

"It's been hard because I am close to my family and friends in the UK.

"Firefighting hasn't replaced what I have here in the Army – it's helped but the Army has always been my first love."

In addition to an earlier role in Bosnia,

Sgt Rolfe has completed tours of Iraq and Afghanistan since his move to the States.

Despite deployments, a full-time job, two part-time roles on different continents and a brood of ten children to look after, the senior NCO insisted he has no intention of scaling back any of his commitments.

"I like to be busy," he said. "When I sit still I get bored. The TA gives you so many new skills and I've still got more to give – there's life in the old dog yet."



● **Feline force – pages 27-29**

FOR MORE NEWS...

Log onto Army.net, visit army.mod.uk or follow the Territorial and Reserves link on the intranet

● **UP to 76 posts for regimental operational support warrant officers are to be created within major units of the Territorial Army.**

Intended to support the growth of the Reserves, the positions will be in the rank of WO2 and manned on a full-time Reserve service home commitment basis. Incumbents will support recruiting, retention, employer liaison and welfare within units. The appointment process is under way and the roles are set to be established in two phases.

Medics pass Cypriot test

FRONT-line combat medics have been put to the test during an overseas training exercise to ensure their infantry skills are as sharp as their needles.

Reservists from 253 (North Irish)

Medical Regiment were in Cyprus to prepare for patrols in Helmand province, where they could be required to give life-saving first aid.

Commanding officer Lt Col Mark Haddock said: "Quite a few of these combat medical technicians will deploy to forward operating bases

with Infantry units. When the worst happens all eyes turn to the medic so they have got to be fit enough to do the patrol and be part of it."

The exercise was designed to

mimic operations in Afghanistan, with medical response and soldiering skills tested fully.

Cpl William Ross said: "Our job is to save lives – we are the front-line care as soon as anybody is injured and if you don't get that right they are never going to make it back to the hospital."



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IN MEMORIAM



SGT LEE DAVIDSON (32)
THE LIGHT DRAGOONS
KIA SEPTEMBER 9
— AFGHANISTAN

THE pregnant wife of a troop sergeant who was killed in an IED blast has vowed to tell her children about their father's heroism.

Sgt Lee Davidson of The Light Dragoons died when the Ridgback he was travelling in was struck by a roadside bomb in Nahr-e Saraj.

The 32-year-old began his Army career in August 1998 and after joining his unit the following year, deployed on operational tours to Bosnia, Iraq and southern Afghanistan.

He was subsequently posted to the Army Foundation College at Harrogate where he flourished as an instructor to junior soldiers.

Sgt Davidson deployed to Afghanistan for a second time in April and his troop was formed into a police advisory team as part of the Police

Mentoring and Advisory Group.

Lt Col Sam Plant, commanding officer of The Light Dragoons, said: "Sgt Davidson will be remembered as a simply superb soldier and a wonderful man. He was the most natural leader and soldiers flourished under his command – he set the perfect tone and example and cared deeply for his troops' welfare."

Sgt Davidson leaves behind his wife Samantha and sons Jayden and Jamie.

In a tribute to the fallen soldier his partner said: "My gorgeous husband Lee, we all can't believe you have gone. You are my best friend, lover and the best husband and father I could have ever have wished for. Your children will grow up knowing all this about you."



LCPL DUANE GROOM (32)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADE GUARDS
KIA SEPTEMBER 14 – AFGHANISTAN

A SOLDIER who was providing force protection for British military advisers to the Afghan National Army died when his vehicle was struck by an IED in Helmand province.

LCpl Duane Groom, of The Queen's Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, was killed as his unit extracted from a successful operation in Nahr-e Saraj.

The Fijian-born Serviceman joined the Army in 2007 and after completing his infantry training in Catterick moved to Nijmegen Company, where he participated in public duties and ceremonial tasks at the royal palaces.

After taking part in the Infantry Skiing Championships in 2011 and achieving a promotion in January, he deployed on his second

tour of Afghanistan.

Lt Col James Bowder, CO of 1 Gren Gds, said: "LCpl Groom was an outstanding soldier in every respect. Tough, keen and unflappable, he was utterly committed to his fellows and the cause."

"We are all tremendously proud of what he achieved during his time in the regiment, and particularly out here in Afghanistan where he contributed so much."

"His many friends and the broader battlegroup will never forget this most talented of men."

Cpl Joe Roligadra, of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh, added: "I have known Duane since I was 14 and he was always like a big brother to me."

"The loyalty that he showed me was over and above that of normal brotherhood."



SGT GARETH THURSBY (29)
3RD BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 15 – AFGHANISTAN

THE British Army is mourning the loss of two soldiers from the same regiment who were victims of a "green on blue" attack by an Afghan policeman in Helmand province.

Sgt Gareth Thursby and Pte Thomas Wroe, of 3rd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, were shot by the rogue gunman at Checkpoint Tora in Nahr-e Saraj.

Sgt Thursby joined the Army in 1999 and after completing his training in 2000, moved to 1st Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment.

His first deployment was to Kosovo in 2003 followed by Iraq in 2005, after which he passed the section commander's battle course to qualify for a posting at the Army Training Regiment in Pirbright as an instructor.

He returned to 3 Yorks as a section commander before being promoted to sergeant in 2010.

Lt Col Zachary Stenning, commanding officer of 3 Yorks, said: "Sgt Thursby's nickname 'Bull' epitomised everything; he was strong, confident and unbelievably robust."

"He was admired and deeply respected by his soldiers and peers for his soldiering skills, physical strength and forthright honesty."

"I heard just a few weeks ago that he had told his platoon to call him 'dad' during the tour. That is how he saw himself; a father figure for 30 men and women involved in gruelling operations."

The 29-year-old is survived by his wife Louise and two children, Joshua and Ruby.

Sgt Thursby's partner said: "He was an amazing husband and father, happy, full of life and kind hearted with a passion for his work and family."

Pte Wroe began his career in September 2010 and attended the Army Foundation College at Harrogate before joining 3 Yorks.

In the weeks before his 18th birthday he worked and trained with the battalion rear operations group in the UK until he was allowed to deploy on Op Herrick 16 on July 1.

Lt Col Stenning said: "Pte Tom Wroe had only been with us a few months, but in this short period he had made a significant impression on his fellow soldiers and commanders."

"Always eager and with unrelenting energy, he had pushed hard to join the regiment in Afghanistan. Arriving only some two months ago, his energy and professionalism quickly earned him the respect of his fellow team members."

"But it was his humour and character that really stood out. Whenever anyone asked how he was, his consistent reply was 'always happy'. This phrase captured the young man he was."

Maj Finlay Bibby, officer commanding Alma Company, 3 Yorks, added: "He was an extremely talented soldier who was fulfilling his dream by serving with the battalion on operations, the same battalion that his father served with."

Pte Wroe is survived by his parents Michael and Claire and sister Demi.

A family statement said: "Our son Thomas was a brave young soldier, who is loved by his family, girlfriend and friends. We can't believe you have been taken so soon from us. You would light up the room with your smile and bubbly personality. Our world will be a duller place without you. We are so proud of you, son."



PTE THOMAS WROE (18)
3RD BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 15 – AFGHANISTAN

THE BIGGER PICTURE

THE Band of The Life Guards entertain joggers in London's Hyde Park as they head home after the Major General's Inspection. This picture is one of many featured in *Uniquely British*, a new book charting a year in the life of The Household Cavalry. Written by serving officers and soldiers, the title combines behind-the-scenes images from the key events of 2011 and 2012. Proceeds from the release will go to the Household Cavalry Foundation. To order a copy visit www.hcavfoundation.org

Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer, RLC







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TAJAK

WALK BACK TO VILLAGE

KAMRA AIR FORCE BASE

AT TRUNK ROAD



JIHAD SCHOOL DROPOUT

THIS SOLDIER NEVER REVEALED HIS TERRIFYING PAST TO COLLEAGUES WHILE SERVING WITH THE BRITISH ARMY. HERE HE EXPLAINS WHY HIS FIGHTING CAREER COULD SO EASILY HAVE BEEN ON THE SIDE OF THE TALIBAN...

Interview: Joe Clapson

SIPPING coffee in his contemporary home and sporting a designer shirt, Alexander Khan is not how you might imagine a would-be Taliban recruit.

But as an impressionable teenager he came dangerously close to being brainwashed by Islamic fundamentalists after enduring a childhood of violent kidnappings and bullying.

Now, for the first time, the clean-shaven Op Telic veteran has revealed his horrifying past to the very community he says helped to rescue him from that dark fate.

Speaking to *Soldier* under a pseudonym for fear of reprisal attacks from Muslim extremists, the former lance corporal explained how he came to find his way into the British Army.

"At the age of ten my father died and I was left at the mercy of my stepmother and her brother,

who was very religious and took his anger out on me," the Lancastrian explained during an exclusive interview.

"I was kidnapped from the UK and taken to a madrassa [Islamic school] on the border of Afghanistan which was full of fundamentalists and a well known recruiting ground for the Taliban.

"I was 13 years old and frightened; as the weeks and months went by I was beaten and tortured."

Punished for having a British accent and not being able to read the Koran correctly, the youngster's destiny appeared to be decided.

"The imams would lock us in rooms and make us read Arabic scripture from a chalkboard. If you couldn't pronounce things correctly you would be whipped with canes," Khan recalled.

After escaping from the institution and fleeing to his late father's village in Pakistan, the desperate teenager begged not to be sent back there for more indoctrination. >>

>> Certain that he would spend the rest of his life in the South Asian country, it was only after witnessing the so-called honour killing of a female cousin that his family decided to return him to England.

But back in east Lancashire, in a predominately Muslim community, he found himself part of a group that was being primed by radicals.

"From the age of 14 to about 18 I was hanging around with lads who were being taught jihad and getting brainwashed," the former Serviceman admitted. "Three of my supposed friends were sponsored by community elders to go to Pakistan for training and at least one of the people I knew was recruited by the Taliban."

At the same time his peers were signing up to wage war against the Western world, Khan made the journey to a British Army recruitment office.

"I didn't want to be part of it," he recalled. "I had to escape the community that was so cruel to me."

The teenager's youth worker, a former soldier himself, suggested life in the British military and the boy was eager to know more about it.

"When he told me about a career in uniform one word he used that really appealed to me was 'family' as that was something I had been craving for a long time," Khan revealed.

After deciding to sign up with Her Majesty's Forces, he received death threats from several Muslim elders in the region – including his own uncle.

But undeterred, the bold youngster joined 16 Air Assault Brigade in 1996 after passing P Company on his second attempt.

Seven years later he deployed to Iraq on Op Telic and was involved in the invasion of southern Iraq.

During that time, the airborne operator held back from revealing to his colleagues any details of the mistreatment he had suffered or his previous relationship with pupils of terrorism.

"I had a Muslim surname and I am dark-skinned so fellow troops were aware of my religion but that was it," the softly spoken father-of-one said.

"On the whole I was just treated as one of the lads."

He added: "I have thought a lot about the fact I was fighting against Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere, but I believe I was on the right side and made the correct choice."

"There is a lot of negativity from certain minorities who say the Army just wants to kill members of the Islamic faith, but that is simply not true."

"The UK is doing a good job in Afghanistan and they need to be there to control insurgents."

The proud veteran ended his career a few months after returning from operations to assist his wife in her battle with cancer.

He now lives on the south coast and runs his own telecommunications business while conveying his remarkable experiences in a

series of autobiographical books that are set to cause a stir in the literary world.

In his first published title, *Orphan of Islam*, Khan talks candidly about his distressing childhood and how his life began with his father snatching him abroad in order to separate him from his mother.

A second book is now under way, which will shed more light on his Service career, the battle with his family and a recent quest to be reunited with the parent he never knew.

From starting out in the world as a downtrodden child, this determined individual has courageously served his country and got a Harper Collins publishing deal to boot.

And there is one organisation in particular he attributes this success to.

"The British Army made me who I am today," Khan said. "Like me, a lot of people from different cultures probably feel scared when they join, but the Service builds you up, gives you discipline and offers adventure with a great career. At first I found it very difficult coming from a completely isolated community where I had no

white friends into a large organisation like the Armed Forces.

"But the Army has a way of getting round people and building confidence."

"I am now looking into joining the Reserves and getting back in the green kit."

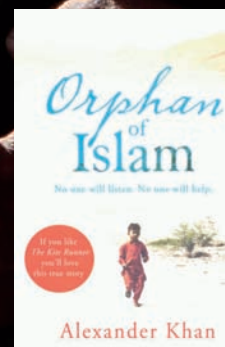
While Khan found the grit to transcend his upbringing, he acknowledges that others may not.

"There are still young lads in areas of England that are isolated and only hear one story from their imams – that 'non-believers are killing Muslims'," he added.

"It's a scary thought but I wouldn't be surprised if Britons currently fighting for the Taliban end up teaching others back in this country in ten years' time."

This is an unsettling suggestion – and one that may very well be behind the ex-soldier's ambition to step up and defend his country once more. This time as a Reservist. ■

THE BRITISH ARMY MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY



Brave words: Alexander Khan's *Orphan of Islam* is out now priced £6.99



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FELINE FORCE

TROOPS PROWL
THE PLAIN TO TEST
LATEST AIRCRAFT



Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

TESTING a new piece of equipment before anyone else in the Army must surely feature high on most British soldiers' tick lists – especially when that kit is a cutting-edge helicopter.

As the programme to integrate the recently launched AW159 Wildcat into the fleet gathers pace, Reservists from 6 Regiment, Army Air Corps found themselves first in-line to get up close and personal with the asset.

Some 85 members of the unit deployed to Salisbury Plain, where they conducted ground crew drills on the airframe as part of their annual camp.

In what was its debut appearance on an Army exercise, the platform also gave those responsible for its roll-out opportunity to monitor progress.

Soldier caught up with the action as the craft and its accompanying troops were tested on a simulated forward arming and refuelling point.

"To be told that, as a Territorial Army unit, you're helping out with trialling is a real honour," said Cpl Gareth Rundle.

"I'm an arming loading point commander, leading a pit stop team of seven.

"The aircraft comes in, we 'safe' it and then load it up as per our procedures.

"The fielding team are trying to roll out the Wildcat in a similar way to the Apache and adapt what we're doing seamlessly."

A ground crew member for a civilian aviation company in his day job, the 33-year-old said he was impressed with the capability of the AW159.

"It's a really good bit of kit," he added. "It has a bit more of a modern feel and shows that the fleet is moving with the times."

"We never know what operational climate we'll be in and the most important thing we need from our airframes is the ability to work in all weathers, which this can."

As a larger-than-usual group of plane spotters gathered on the slopes

'IT HAS A MODERN FEEL AND SHOWS THE FLEET IS MOVING WITH THE TIMES'

of the training area to catch a glimpse of the new kid on the block, the regiment's commanding officer, Lt Col Nigel Banks, was in no doubt about what the experience would bring to his personnel.

"For a Reserve regiment to work with Wildcat as the first group in the Army is a real privilege and something the soldiers are really pleased about," he explained.

"The aim is to introduce the new recruits to operating with aviation and enhance the skills of the troops who have been with us for some time.

"The guys love it. They joined the TA to do exactly this.

"We've had perfect weather, access to aircraft and ground equipment that they don't usually get their hands on and have put it all together in one tactical exercise."

While the Wildcat was undoubtedly the star attraction, personnel were also put through their usual drills with an Apache and a Chinook, as well as consolidating their basic military skills.

And with six of the unit's members deployed on operations at any given time, such serials are vital in keeping them current in special-to-arms training.

"This experience is second to none," said Capt Katie McLeman, flight commander of the regiment's 655 Squadron.

"The skill fade is huge if you don't get your hands on the kit so getting these guys out doing this is great."

Among several individuals preparing for operations was SSgt Lisa Finn. The 40-year-old will mobilise as part of 1 Regiment AAC for a tour of Afghanistan in January.

"In all my 11 years of being in the Reserves I've never been on anything as vast as this," said the former combat medic, who transferred to the corps to improve her chances of deploying.

"We've been practising underslung loads; in this case a trailer carried by a Chinook. It's my job to coordinate and lead the team on the ground to make sure it's lifted and dropped safely and correctly.

"The exercise is also about getting troops on and off aircraft and giving safety briefs; basically pulling everything together around helicopter handling which I'll be doing in theatre." ■



FACTFILE:

6 REGIMENT, ARMY AIR CORPS (VOLUNTEERS)

- Only Territorial unit in the Army Air Corps
- 140 strong
- Formed in 2006 as an attack helicopter ground crew regiment
- Provides individual reinforcements capable of deploying on operations and in support of exercises around the world
- Comprises a HQ, Support Squadron plus two ground crew squadrons: 677 (Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry) Squadron and 655 (Scottish Horse) Squadron

FUTURE FOCUS: THE FIELDING TEAM MISSION

THE buzz surrounding the launch of the Wildcat has barely died down but already the fielding team are hard at work conducting operational evaluation and tactical development for when it comes fully into service.

Team member Capt Bernie Fowler (AAC) explained why the training package

was so important.

"We are assessing current ground crew procedures and seeing where they are applicable to this aircraft, to make the necessary adjustments," he said.

"In broad terms refuelling is refuelling so it's more a case of fine tuning.

"However, with this aircraft the counter measures are

fitted differently and we have to take that into account in terms of safety."

The Serviceman added: "We have gained so much from one or two days out that we can take that back and start writing our procedures and getting them logged so we can move on with the programme.

"There are frustrations as there are with any new bits of equipment but the capability of this aircraft is really starting to come to the fore."





WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE



With many troops still questioning how the Wildcat varies from the Lynx, we asked one of its first flyers...

HAVING logged more than 4,000 hours over the course of 20 years flying the Lynx, WO2 Tony Cooke is among the initial Army Air Corps pilots to be converted to the Wildcat.

With experience of both platforms, he explained how any perceived similarities between the two are largely cosmetic.

"It looks like a Lynx but it's not a Lynx," the airman said. "It's similar in that it shares a few of the same components – the flight controls for example.

"Lynx was always considered to be a performance helicopter and this is no different but it's modern with a full glass cockpit and loads of systems and sensors. It's also the first aircraft to have Bowman radio fitted to it.

"The Wildcat happens to have space for some guys in the back but unlike the Lynx it's not a utility aircraft. Its primary role is surveillance and reconnaissance, utilising the camera on the nose.

"It will operate alongside the attack helicopter as its eyes and ears.

"And once we start working and deploying with the rest of the ground troops they will see what an asset it is."

'UNLIKE THE LYNX IT'S NOT A UTILITY AIRCRAFT'



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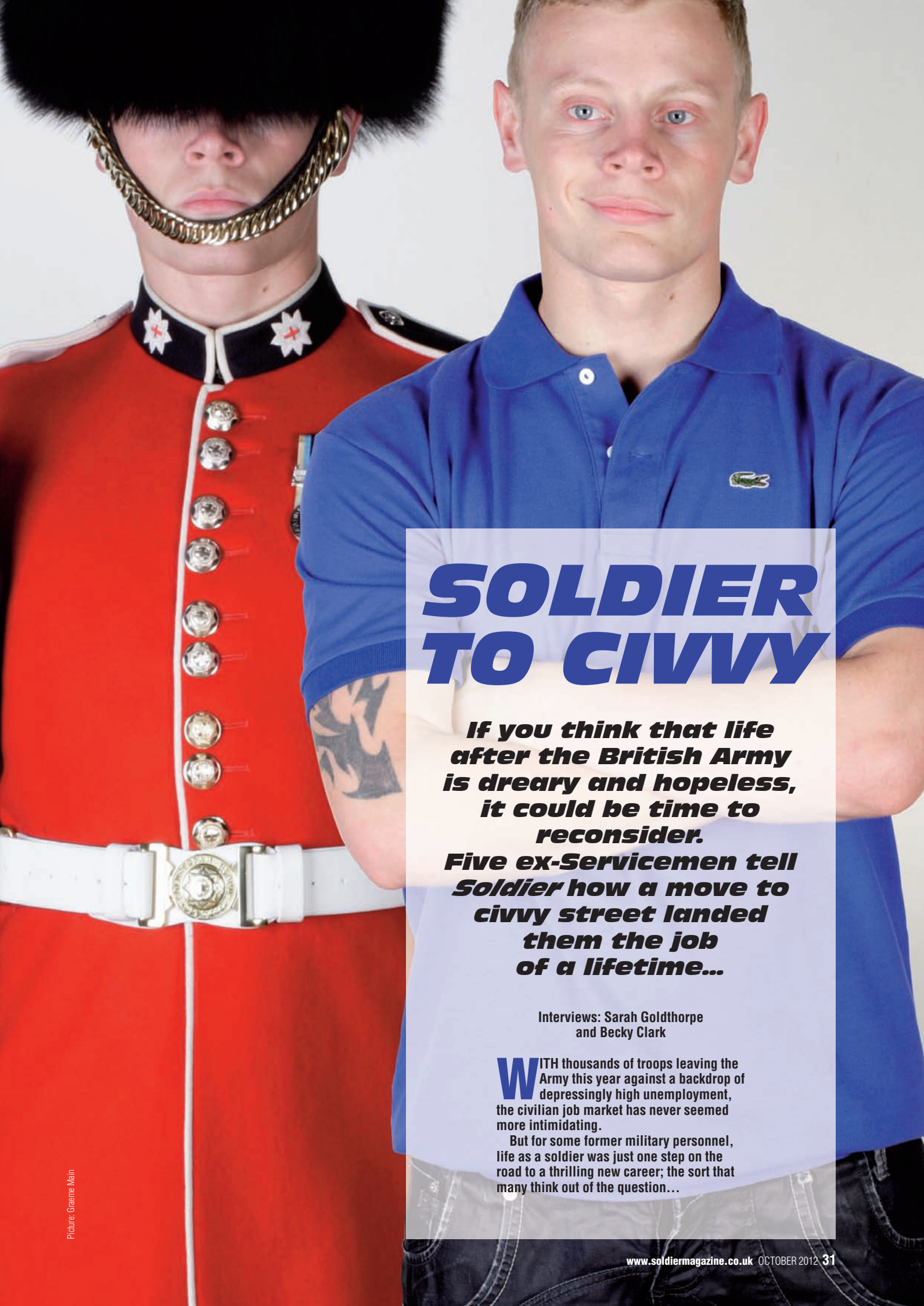
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*Price applies to Jaguar XF 2.2D SE 163PS including military concession. Prices shown are the OTR price including VAT. Model shown is a Jaguar XFR 5.0 litre V8 Supercharged with Italian Racing Red Metallic paint priced at £57,673.60 including military concession.

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SOLDIER TO CIVVY

***If you think that life
after the British Army
is dreary and hopeless,
it could be time to
reconsider.***

***Five ex-Servicemen tell
Soldier how a move to
civvy street landed
them the job
of a lifetime...***

Interviews: Sarah Goldthorpe
and Becky Clark

WITH thousands of troops leaving the Army this year against a backdrop of depressingly high unemployment, the civilian job market has never seemed more intimidating.

But for some former military personnel, life as a soldier was just one step on the road to a thrilling new career; the sort that many think out of the question...

WHEN John Hogan left the Royal Engineers to be a motorcycle journalist in

November 2005, the odds were stacked against him.

Having followed his father and older brother into the corps at 16, his future already appeared to have been mapped out. Breaking with tradition would not be easy.

"I come from a big forces family. Everyone who's been in the Engineers since 1975 will know the Hogan name," the ex-Serviceman told *Soldier* proudly.

"But I knew I wanted to be a motorcycle journalist at 13.

"I was a turbo nerd – one of those geeks that thinks he knows more than anyone else – and I used to read *Auto Trader* like it was the newspaper."

Conscious that he was expected to join the Army, Hogan put his childhood dream aside and instead embraced life in the military.

"I knew it would be good for me and got stuck in," he said. "I trained and my trade was a plant operator mechanic; a class one combat engineer."

However, before long the sapper's ambition got the better of him and he requested a posting to the multimedia Mecca of London as general duties NCO for 131 Independent Commando Squadron (Volunteers).

"That was the perfect location to pester publishing firms like Haymarket," the former lance corporal recalled. "I used to blag test drives in cars by pretending I was older.

"I even had the front to stroll into a Porsche dealership and pretend I was the QM so that I could test drive a Porsche 911 turbo.

"I collected the business cards of garage salesmen as trophies and would then write about the vehicles and send my words to motoring magazines to request work experience placements."

Being a notoriously competitive industry, Hogan found many of his approaches were ignored.

"Every time I got no response from an editor, I knew that was when other people would be giving up so I just kept going, pushing and pushing and pushing," he said.

"After three months of pestering, *Autocar* gave me work experience for a week. An Army grounding meant I knew when to keep my head down and prove that I could do it rather than jumping up and saying so.

"It went well and straight away they asked me back to do freelance work.

"I handed my notice in with the Service that day. I was so confident I was doing the right thing."

However, the career ending was not an immediately happy one.

The promise of a job with *Autocar* fell through and with a wife and young

daughter to support, the pressure was on.

"I felt too proud to go back to my chief of staff and for a little while I completely gave up," Hogan admitted.

"I spent two months bumming around a bit and even got turned down for a road surfacing job at Croydon Council."

However, persistence finally paid off when the keen writer became features editor for *Superbike* magazine.

Then earlier this year he was put in the driving seat and promoted to the position of editor.

"Doing Op Telic while others had been at university helped me to stand out and I used that to my advantage when applying for jobs," the journalist explained, reflecting on the secret to his success.

"I didn't shy away from the fact that I had a different background.

"People don't need artillery men in civvy street but the confidence they have is useful for so many things.

"Troops should use that drive to get a job they really want and leave the sheep to do the dull jobs. If they make half the number of sacrifices that they did to join the British Army then they will be a long way to succeeding."

With sales of his magazine now on the rise, the future looks bright for Hogan and his family – the people he credits most with helping him to achieve his dream position.

"When things get hard, it is the support of your wife and relatives that make life easier," the ex-sapper concluded. ■

For a little while I completely gave up!



The motorsport journalist



From drills to deadlines: Former sapper John Hogan left the British Army in 2005 and after a series of ups and downs, landed his dream job editing a motorsport magazine (pictured). The journalist says that the support of spouses and other relatives can make the move into civilian life much easier for Service personnel



The millionaire

FORMER paratrooper Tony Banks is proof that life can lead you in some unexpected directions.

The Scottish businessman served as a private in 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment before leaving the Army in 1987.

Ten years later, after working in the insurance industry and selling his house to set up a care home firm, the entrepreneur had made his first million.

His award-winning company, Balhousie Care Group, now employs some 1,000 staff and the success story has even led him to appear in the Channel 4 show *The Secret Millionaire*.

However, the former Serviceman told *Soldier* that it was his encounters in the 1982 Falklands War that sparked his commitment to caring for others and gave him the drive to establish himself in the commercial world.

"I went into the conflict a carefree boy, not really conscious of other people. But through the experience I matured into a man, aware of the value of mine and fellow soldiers' lives," explained the 50-year-old.

"In addition, I had been impressed by our medics. I felt they made a difference to individuals in an entirely positive way. They helped people and I wanted to be a part of that."

Having struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder and the adjustment to civilian life, Banks said he was eventually able to channel his emotions by using his military skills in the world of business.

"The Army had given me a very task-orientated outlook. The training is tough but it had instilled in me direction and confidence.

"Paras are constantly told 'you are the best' so I had no doubt that I would be a success in the insurance business as well.

"The motto of the Royal Air Force's parachute training school has always stuck with me – 'knowledge dispels fear'. I believe that if you have the knowledge, you will always be fine."

Reflecting on a CV that also includes newspaper delivery boy, refuse collector,

shelf stacker and raspberry picker, Banks confessed that he could not have imagined life after the Service would be so rewarding.

"I had no idea how passionate I would become about standards of care and how hard I would work – lobbying authorities and acting on behalf of my employees, residents and their families," he said.

"The enjoyment I got from helping others in the Army now extends to my life outside the military. While serving I established the values which are now integral to my second career." ■



AFTER spending 12 years as an aircraft technician in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Pete Hale decided to swap fixing aircraft for flying them.

The 37-year-old left the military in 2009 and, after obtaining his pilot's licence, landed his dream job with easyJet last November.

"I always wanted to be a pilot and that wasn't going to be possible in the Army so I decided to leave," said the former sergeant.

"Getting your commercial licence is expensive but I was able to utilise my enhanced learning credits to train at Oxford Aviation and used my resettlement grant to help pay for some of it.

"The major difficulty I encountered was actually between finishing the training and getting the interview with easyJet," added the ex-Serviceman.

"It took me about a year to get my lucky break."

Now that his second career has taken



off, Hale spends his time flying up to 180 passengers from Gatwick airport to destinations across Europe and beyond.

"It really is a dream come true," he explained. "The training with easyJet is very good and the aircraft are so new – it's a great place to be first officer.

"I recently completed my 500th hour of Airbus flying, which was a great personal achievement but I still have plenty of learning and experience to come.

"I love flying and feel very fortunate. I enjoy arriving in the morning, going over the plan with the captain and cabin crew and then following it through."

For those facing the daunting task of forging a new career in light of redundancy, Hale had the following advice: "Ex-Service personnel have great experiences and stories that employers want to hear in interviews.

"Young soldiers have been required to show far more responsibility and maturity compared to other people of the same age and that gives them a great background to talk about." ■

The airline pilot

Ex-Service personnel have great experiences and stories that employers want to hear



From fixer to flyer: Pete Hale spent 12 years as an aircraft technician in the British Army before leaving to become a budget airline pilot in civvy street – a job that sees the former sergeant travel the world and which he describes as a 'dream come true'

Main picture: Graeme Main

LEVISON Wood combined his love of globetrotting with the military skills he developed during his stint in The Parachute Regiment to enter uncharted territory on civvy street.

Together with fellow ex-officer Tom Bodkin, the 30-year-old set up adventurous travel company Secret Compass (www.secretcompass.com), which leads expeditions to some of the most remote places in the world.

Having deployed on Op Herrick in 2008, Wood now finds himself taking civilians horse trekking in Afghanistan and to the jungles of Madagascar. He has also assisted filming projects including a war crimes documentary in South Sudan with Hollywood A-lister George Clooney.

But while the practical side of leading expeditions came naturally, Wood admitted that he faced a steep learning curve with the commercial side of his venture.

"As with all good ideas, a mate from the Paras and I were talking about future job prospects over a drink in the pub," the former Serviceman explained.

"With no background in business but the supreme confidence of having led paratroopers into battle, we sat down, drew a logo, taught ourselves how to make a website and did all the relevant paperwork.

"It was a hard process learning about selling yourself and marketing. There is no modesty in civvy street,

which is quite against everything you are taught in the British Army."

Having invested a large chunk of his savings in the business, the self-confessed workaholic went without pay for more than 18 months to get the venture off the ground but kept faith in his own judgement.

"There were a few dead ends but before we knew it people were paying us to take them to some amazing places around the world," Wood continued.

"It was surprising how much respect and credibility an Armed Forces background gave and there is no way the firm could have grown as quickly as it did without that."

With first-hand experience of the talent found within the Army community, the globetrotter is now looking for other Service leavers to add to his workforce.

"We want to build up a team of outstanding former soldiers who can be trusted to uphold our reputation and lead expeditions to some of the most distant parts of the world," he added.

Asked about what guidance he would give to other military leavers, Wood concluded: "It's important to be passionate about what you do.

"My advice is not to do a job just for the cash; life is too short." ■

The globetrotter

FOR captain-turned-brewer Adam Smith, the organisational skills he gained during five years in The Light Dragoons were key to becoming a successful businessman.

After leaving the Army in 2002 he started an online company supplying children's play equipment before taking a new direction and buying Mayfields Brewery in Herefordshire in 2007.

"I could have gone to London and got a job in recruitment but that wasn't my cup of tea," said the 40-year-old.

"I set up the first firm and was eventually able to outsource that so I was looking for something new to do.

"I didn't know much about brewing so I spent a few days at a brewery to see how I got on and did a short course at the University of Sunderland."

Despite being a newcomer to a competitive industry in the midst of recession, Smith was confident his military background would boost the venture's profits.

"Army training gives you the skills to run a business successfully," he said.

"It makes you flexible and able to overcome problems.

"It's been hard work though – I only recently stopped

There is no modesty in civvy street, which is quite against everything you are taught in the Army



The brewer

working seven-day weeks. But we now produce 4,500 pints per week and have an annual turnover of £140,000.

"Our key thing is sustainability and using locally sourced ingredients as much as we possibly can.

"We've won a couple of regional awards for our most popular beer, Auntie Myrtle's, so it's nice to know you're doing something right."

Having gone through the process of establishing a second career, the former officer can relate to the difficulties faced by Service leavers.

"I'd say it took me about two years before I felt I'd properly made the transition from Army to civilian life," he admitted.

"One of the hardest things is making the change from a non-commercial environment to a financially driven one.

"But I would encourage people leaving the Army to consider starting up on their own. There is a lot of business support out there for people thinking of doing that."

Offering advice to those facing redundancy or discharge, he added:

"Stay positive and don't necessarily take the first thing that's thrown at you. Above all, try your hand at a few things and don't panic." ■

!We now produce 4,500 pints per week and have an annual turnover of £140,000 !



Hopping to it: Adam Smith's civvy street journey has been far from straightforward. After starting an online company selling children's play equipment he purchased a brewery in Herefordshire in 2007. The former captain believes Service leavers must remain positive, try their hand at a few jobs and not panic about what the future holds

Main picture: Graeme Main



1. Make yourself stand out

"Be clear about what you can offer – this is no time for false modesty – but make sure you can back up everything you say with examples. Important attributes are an ability to work in a team, determination to achieve results and the skills to communicate clearly and organise yourself. Do not underestimate these traits, they are not common."

Tony Banks, chairman of Balhousie Care Group



2. Get your foot in the door

"Consider freelancing or contracting. According to the latest Recruitment and Employment Confederation jobs outlook report, 86 per cent of employers are planning to increase or maintain temporary staff levels over the next 12 months. Many of those coming from an Armed Forces background will have the expertise and specific skill set required for different sectors and may value the lifestyle benefits that contracting and flexible working can bring."

Matthew Huddleston, chief financial officer at Freelance Professional Services Group

5 TIPS TO GET A TOP CIVVY JOB

WORDS OF
ADVICE, DIRECT
FROM THE
MOUTHS OF
EXPERTS



3. Find your niche

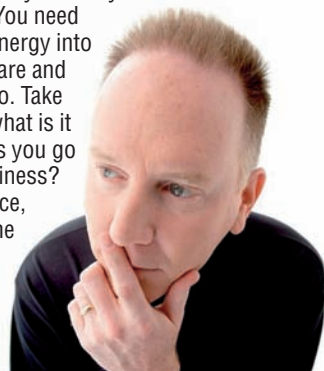
"If you do something you love, you're going to be much better at it. What is it that first made you want to join the Army? If you like the outdoors, physical training and problem solving, look for careers that will fulfil that same ambition. And then some of the leadership skills you learned will really come to fruition."

Dr Ivan Yardley (pictured above), author of *From Battlefield to Boardroom*

4. Pause for thought

"Stop and think before you worry about expensive courses. You need to be putting more energy into identifying who you are and where you want to go. Take a look around you; what is it that frustrates you as you go about your daily business? Poor customer service, perhaps? It will be the same frustrations as felt by recruiters."

Nicholas Harrison, career manager and founder of Soldier On!



5. Plan in advance

"Plot your run-out date, terminal leave, any remaining block leave, exercises or other unit commitments on a wall planner to ensure it does not conflict with your resettlement activities. It will help you to visualise the time you have left, which will pass quickly. Utilise your unit's first line resettlement point of contact, who will have close links to your area individual education and resettlement officer. Make sure you submit requests for any resettlement activities in a timely manner."

Andrew Coutts, individual education and resettlement officer at Bordon Army Education Centre

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The injured who suffer,
The families who struggle,
The veterans who remember,
The aircrew who fly,
The children who wait,
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Soldier On!

www.soldieron.org.uk

A CHARITY that helps those who have been medically discharged make the transition to civilian employment through coaching seminars, hands-on CV assistance and interview training. It offers temporary and permanent placements in a variety of sectors.

Pathfinder International

www.pathfinderinternational.co.uk

PATHFINDER magazine specialises in ex-Army jobs, civilian professions and resettlement advice. Distributed to Service leavers by the MoD, the publication works closely with lead industry and trade bodies to showcase careers in a wide range of sectors. Also available online.



Recruit For Spouses

www.recruitforspouses.co.uk

A BODY to support Service partners with finding work. It also helps to educate employers about the qualities military wives and husbands can bring to a workplace.



Civvy Street

www.civvystreet.org

SUPPORTED by The Royal British Legion, this website offers free information and advice about resettlement into civilian life, learning and work. It includes details of "be the boss", a government-funded scheme that provides ex-Service personnel with help starting and growing a business.

Regular Forces Employment Association

www.rfea.org.uk

HELPS Service leavers find and remain in employment throughout their working lives. Consultants are based at 24 regional branches.



Remploy - Veterans Service

www.remploy.co.uk

AS specialists in career support for disabled people, Remploy also advises injured veterans on making the transition into mainstream professions. The organisation offers help with identifying transferable skills and overcoming barriers, as well as guidance on career and training opportunities.



Remount

www.remount.net

AN organisation for serving and retired members of the military, of all ranks, to help equip them for civvy street. It runs various weekend courses.

The Officers' Association

www.officersassociation.org.uk

A GROUP that supports serving and former officers seeking employment, providing advice, assistance and accommodation.



Career Transition Partnership

www.ctp.org.uk

THE organisation contracted by the MoD to provide British troops with specialist advice on the transition to civilian life. Regional resettlement centres are located throughout the UK and its services – which include finance, housing and welfare support – are available for up to two years after discharge.

Heropreneurs

www.heropreneurs.co.uk

AN organisation for former soldiers and their spouses to help them set up and grow their own businesses. Services include dedicated mentors, specialist advisers, events and the Heropreneurs community network.



Cutting it in civvy street

Organisations on-hand to help troops plan for a second career

SAVING WHILE SERVING

**Consumer finance guru
Martin Lewis offers
words of cash-saving
wisdom to the ranks**

As those holding the nation's purse strings are constantly reminding us, now is the time to be doing more with less. So *Soldier* asked Mr MoneySavingExpert himself for his top tips to help troops reduce their personal spending. Here is what he had to say...

"KEEPING your finances regimented is crucially important. Okay, that's my first and last Army-money analogy. Like many civvies, it isn't easy for me to understand the lifestyle and pressures of the Forces and the difficulties it imposes on your families – so getting the puns right is even harder. Yet as someone who often talks about people avoiding debt, I know the debt we all owe Service personnel is unavoidable. So I have put together the following tips to help pay a little bit back."

SPEND CHEAPLY OVERSEAS

● If you're spending anywhere that doesn't take pounds, the very cheapest way to do it may surprise. It's actually by using the right credit card – though the wrong ones are the costliest way.

Most credit and debit cards add a hidden three per cent load, so spend £100 worth of euros and it costs £103. Yet there are a few specialist cards that don't, meaning you get unbeatable exchange rates

wherever you are in the world – far better than using bureaux de change or prepaid cards.

The best are the Halifax

Clarity, Post Office card and Nationwide Select (but you already need be a Nationwide customer for this one).

As well as being load-free

worldwide these have low cash withdrawal charges, though it's always better to spend on them than withdraw cash and use that.

If your credit score is wobbly, for easy acceptance the Aqua reward card is also load-free and gives three per cent cashback (maximum £100 per year) on all your spending.

However, its overseas ATM withdrawal fees are high.

Do note that these are credit cards, so they charge huge 11.9% – 34.9% representative APRs. The way to avoid that – and a must-do if you're

getting one – is to set up a direct debit to repay in full each month. That way you minimise the interest.

Some will charge a small amount on your cash withdrawals but work it this way and it's still cheapest.

Visit www.moneysavingexpert.com/travelcards



FLASH YOUR SERVICE PASS AND STAY AWAY FOR £1

● TAKING some well-earned rest and recuperation? De Vere Hotels lets military personnel returning from an operational tour of duty stay for one night at £1.

While the offer is ongoing, the hotel wants to keep it on the down-low so it asks that you email customerservice@keepithush.co.uk for full details.

The offer excludes Saturday nights and you will need to show your Service identification to claim.



RECLAIM PPI FOR FREE

● RECLAIMING payment protection insurance (PPI) is usually easy. You don't need a claim firm to do it – not even one purporting to target Armed Forces personnel, as if your case is somehow different.

You can often do it yourself with just a phone call or letter and that way you keep all the cash and don't have to give 30 per cent of what could be a large sum to someone who's just filled in a form for you.

Before you skip this one thinking it isn't for you, read this email I received: "Because of your prompting to check I had PPI insurance with my loan, I realised a loan I'd taken out had over £5,000 of PPI I had neither asked for, nor knew about. I've just received a cheque for £5,200, which I'll use to clear the loan balance."

Anyone who has had a card or loan that has been active over the last six years – i.e. they were still paying it then – should dig out the paperwork and check. Banks have put aside £6 billion to pay out claims.

A step-by-step guide with free template letters can be found at www.moneysavingexpert.com/ppi

ON-AIR ADVICE

Catch The Martin Lewis Money Show on ITV1 every Tuesday at 1930



USE AN ISA FOR SAVINGS

● Hopefully, you'll manage to find a little spare money to build up some savings.

If so, the best place to put it is into a cash individual savings account (ISA).

This isn't a product – it is just a tax wrapper so that you can save without getting tax taken off the interest you earn.

My favourite way to describe a cash ISA is to imagine a nice big chocolate (cash) cake. Usually the taxman comes along and takes a 20 per cent (or more) bit, meaning you get less interest.

Yet each year you get a tax-free ISA wrapper, a bit like cling film, which you can choose to wrap around some of that cake.

Once inside the cling film, the cake is still cake; it hasn't changed. The only difference is the taxman cannot bite it and it remains tax free, year after year.

Each UK citizen over 16 can put £5,640 per year into a cash ISA.

Of course, even though it's tax free you still need to ensure you get the highest rate.

Visit my website for more information on this.

ASSESS YOUR FINANCES

● I'M sure you know how much you earn, but do you know how much you spend each year?

If you can't answer both, your finances aren't in order.

Spend more than you earn and, at best, you eat away at savings.

At worst you build up debts, which can leave finances spiralling out of control. So it must be calculated, not estimated.

To find this out requires a real budget. I don't mean willy-nilly looking at a month's expenditure – that misses out things like Christmas, summer holidays or buying a sofa.

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Interview: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

HIS hard-man image may have earned merciless ridicule at the hands of *Extras* writers Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant, but Ross Kemp's quest to bring tough issues into the public domain has continued in earnest.

Having produced award-winning shows on topics ranging from the Afghanistan battlefield to farming practices in the Amazon, few could deny the actor has raised the bar for celeb-fronted documentaries.

The Help for Heroes patron and former *Eastenders* star spoke to *Soldier* after completing filming for two new programmes, both of which are likely to intrigue his British Army fanbase.

In the second series of *Extreme World* – aired on Sky One until October 8 – he travels the globe looking for people living in some of the most shocking environments imaginable.

"We go to Pakistan, which is a country with a lot of violence and killings based on religion or ethnicity, with people sliced up in road bays," Kemp said. "The purpose was to go to see what the future might hold for the place and, ultimately, what we discovered was that the politicisation of this country serves to divide it."

Also on the celebrity's itinerary during the show were trips to Venezuela – billed as having the most dangerous capital in the world – and East Africa, where he came face to face with tribal magicians.

"In Venezuela we got some great access to a prison run by the inmates where I saw more crack in one place than I had ever seen in my life," the television star revealed.

"In Africa we went to an area known as the sorcery belt, where everything is blessed by a witch doctor – sometimes using human body parts. >>

TOUGH TV

ROSS KEMP DETAILS HIS LATEST HUNT FOR DANGER

>> "Personally, I struggle to see how a potion that somebody had to be killed for can be lucky."

During the six-part series, the 48-year-old ventures into the underworld of Marseille and looks at the community struggle in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

But it is closer to home in Glasgow where his findings proved most startling.

In one scene, Kemp visits a jobless man previously imprisoned for domestic violence and who had been dependent on alcohol.

"He was surviving on 20 sausages cooked in a bowl of lard and the whole place was covered in grease," Kemp recalled.

"He told me he couldn't walk to collect his dole money because he'd pulled his own toes off when he was drunk."

The documentary-maker hopes such shocking insights will prompt viewers to be more aware of poverty in society.

"We have a situation in this country where people either turn a blind eye when they don't want to see someone living on the street or are simply not aware of things."

"I am as guilty as anyone but I'm not sure that's right in this day and age."

Despite the macho image lingering from his days as Grant Mitchell, Kemp insists he does not take himself too seriously or play up to the camera.

"I'm not the kind of person that says 'here I am being shot at,'" he said. "I think I do react as most human beings would and I'm genuinely interested."

"I think guys in the Forces will enjoy the series because they will know when the jeopardy is real."

In his other programme, *Invisible Wounded*, Kemp turns his gaze back on the military to look at those affected by mental illness.

The one-hour feature, due to air in November to coincide with Remembrance Sunday, will draw attention to the number of soldiers being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I speak to troops affected, their families and the experts, to ask what is being done to support our Service personnel and prevent further suffering," said the presenter.

"It's all well and good for politicians to stand at Headley Court with a prosthetic limb and say 'this is what we are providing' but what about the invisible wounded – people suffering in their heads?"

In both uncompromising programmes, this fan of the Forces has boosted his journalistic credentials by posing questions that many shy away from.

"I'm here to find out what's going on but I haven't necessarily got a solution," Kemp said.

An admirable endeavour that even his loudest critics will struggle to mock. ■



On location: Kemp toured the world in search of those living in incredibly tough circumstances

Pictures: Freshwater Films Ltd



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UNFAIR FIGHT

FORMER BRITISH OFFICER ROB JOHNSON RANKS THE GREATEST MILITARY VICTORIES AGAINST THE ODDS



1 DEFENCE OF KOHIMA, BURMA-INDIA BORDER, 1944

THIS epic struggle involved determined Japanese troops who had swept the British out of Burma and seemed poised to invade India, and handfuls of exhausted, sick and outnumbered British and Commonwealth soldiers who were cut off from any help.

Japanese victory seemed inevitable, particularly when the small British perimeter was pierced. The troops were under constant fire, water had to be collected from a hillside trickle and the wounded were injured further by shrapnel and mortar fire.

Relief forces had to battle their way yard by yard to reach the beleaguered garrison. Yet, in close-quarter fighting the Allies held on, checked, and then drove off the Japanese for good.

2 ISRAELI DEFENCE OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, 1973

WHEN Syrian armoured and infantry divisions annihilated every Israeli post before them in the opening days of the Yom Kippur War, it appeared nothing could stop them.

Yet, Lt Zwicka Gringold formed a composite troop of four tanks and, believing they were the only chance of preventing the Syrians descending into Israel, he and his men deliberately dashed into the midst of the 1st Armoured Division, causing chaos, before fighting guerrilla style from rocky outcrops.

At daybreak, with just one tank, the survivors had the satisfaction of seeing the Israeli counter-offensive get under way. Despite losses of 90 per cent, the Israelis on the Golan Heights had achieved the seemingly impossible.

3 DELHI RIDGE, INDIA, 1857

THE mutiny of the entire Bengal army, in which British soldiers and civilians were murdered, left a small force isolated on the ridge above Delhi. Despite baking heat, repeated assaults and months of siege, in which hundreds died, the British garrison and their Gurkha allies were reinforced sufficiently to counter-attack the city walls.

After several days of close-quarter street fighting with rifles and bayonets, the more numerous Indian mutineers were defeated and British order restored.

● Now a university lecturer, Rob Johnson is the author of *Outnumbered, Outgunned and Undeterred* (Thames and Hudson)



4 BATTLE OF THE PLATOON HOUSES AND PATROL BASES, AFGHANISTAN, 2006

THE initial deployment of 16 Air Assault Brigade to Helmand in 2006 meant the dispersal of small teams across the province in platoon houses. These were a magnet for Taliban assaults.

Day and night, there were repeated attacks; sometimes with salvos of RPG rounds, sometimes with swarms of local fighters with AK47s and occasionally with sharpshooters. Between skirmishes, British troops had to fill sandbags and reinforce their small fortresses, evacuate their wounded, re-bomb and ready themselves for another wave.

But guts and determination, the professional desire to see the mission through and the good humour in the face of adversity that has always characterised the British soldier ensured the Taliban attacks were smashed.



5 FINNISH DEFENCE IN THE WINTER WAR, 1940

THE Soviets outnumbered the Finns by five to one and possessed far more tanks, artillery and aircraft but in small teams on skis, Finnish soldiers flitted between woodland and ice-cold snowy plains, ambushing and sniping with great effect.

Fleets of Russian armour were courageously engaged and disabled along a prepared defensive line, and, even when this line fell, the Finns kept up their relentless resistance.

So demoralised did the Soviets become that they chose to negotiate rather than try to salvage the military situation.



6 THE DEVONS AT BOIS DE BUTTES, FRANCE, 1918

WITHIN minutes of arriving at a new position on the Aisne, after months of tough fighting, the 2nd Devons found themselves directly in the path of a massive German offensive which was designed to end the First World War.

Hour after hour, as waves of German troops attacked them, the battalion clung to a small hillock and a handful of sandy and collapsing trenches, determined to sell their lives dearly and buy time for units in depth.

Despite overwhelming odds, the Devons fought to the last man. The French government, so moved by the sacrifice which had gained crucial breathing space for others to regroup, awarded the regiment the Croix de Guerre – its highest honour.

7 SIMON DE BOLIVAR AND THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH AMERICA, 1808-1829

THE Venezuelan leader, Bolivar, fighting to drive out Spanish colonial rule, faced defeats and exile for ten years.

Undeterred, in 1819 he gathered a force of 3,000, including British volunteers, waded across the flooded plains of Casanare during the rainy season, then scaled the 4,000-metre Cordillera Oriental range as rations ran out, to attack the colonial Royalist Army.

Despite suffering significant losses of 25 per cent, Bolivar and his little force inspired thousands to renew the struggle for liberation.



8 THE RETREAT FROM CHOSIN RESERVOIR, KOREA, 1951

A SURPRISE attack by Chinese divisions against American positions encircling the Chosin Reservoir threatened disaster. Only with great determination could any of the formations hold their location, even using anti-aircraft guns in a ground role.

The US unit, RCT 31, was practically wiped out while the British Royal Marines' 41 Commando fought its way to the relief of troops at Hagaru-ri against almost impossible odds. The survivors managed to extract, fighting for 15 days, and carried out a successful evacuation at Hungnam.



9 BURNSIDE'S BRIDGE AT ANTIETAM, AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1862

AT the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest engagement of the civil war, all Union attacks had been checked with heavy losses. But on the extreme southern flank, Burnside's Corps had the opportunity to turn the tide.

A small stone bridge had to be traversed but the weight of fire brought down by Confederates on the bluffs on the far side made a crossing suicidal. Several attempts to get forward met with disaster until the colour parties of the 51st New York and 51st Pennsylvania dashed through the hail of lead, inspiring the entire Union line to spring up and cross.

Despite tremendous fire, the establishment of a bridgehead subsequently persuaded the Confederates to fall back.

10 THE BATTLE OF DEBECKA, IRAQ, 2003

SPECIAL Forces are designed for rapid insertion, recce and strike but nobody envisaged using them to take on an Iraqi armoured brigade.

Task Force Viking – a US formation – found itself confronted by a mixture of armour, APCs, mortars, artillery, infantry and a ZSU-57-2 at the Debecka crossroads, precisely at the moment when all its supporting assets, namely Peshmerga militia and allied air power, were unavailable.

Launching volleys of javelins, the small team of 26 faced the prospect of being completely overwhelmed, even at their "Alamo" position. Just when their supply of ammunition seemed exhausted, F14s screamed in overhead driving off the Iraqis, but all were astonished at the damage the American personnel had already inflicted against such odds.

● What, no mention of Rorke's Drift? Beg to differ with Johnson's top ten? Email mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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DON'T FORGET THE DUKE

■ I READ the article on history's greatest strategists (September) with interest and growing incredulity.

I completely fail to understand how John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (pictured above) did not appear.

Fighting with our allies in the War of the Spanish Succession, he held together with great tact and diplomacy a diverse group of soldiers of which the Dutch, although most courageous, were at times difficult to convince of the necessity to up arms and fight.

He devised the allied strategy including the long march from the Spanish Netherlands into Germany where he defeated the French and their allies at Blenheim. All this whilst keeping his own government on-side.

Never defeated in a siege or battle, his command of strategy, administration and logistics was outstanding.

The only British soldier to simultaneously hold the post of commander-in-chief and master general of ordnance, while acting as ambassador extraordinary as well.

I would also suggest that the Duke of Wellington should rate highly in this company. – **Martin Stoneham**, *Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum chairman*.

New footwear puts the boot in

I AM most unimpressed with the article ("New boots are made for walking") in your July issue regarding the revised combat boot.

After 35 years of wearing military footwear and a shorter period issuing such items to soldiers as a QM, I can see the flaws in the defence clothing project.

Having served in many different theatres of operations, I can with authority confirm that the current and previous issue boots have never been appropriate for jungle or desert missions.

They have suited temperate north west Europe and barrack conditions.

In the article it clearly states that the new footwear, which is ideal to support contemporary operations, will be coming into use in the next two years.

However, the present stockpile of boots will have to be issued before Servicemen and women receive replacements.

Are the clothing team aware that footwear provided in the next two years will last for approximately two to three years before troops get their new combat assault boots, which they need now?

Clearly the soldiers will be delighted when they receive them, probably in late 2017 should they still be serving.

Is this the way that Armed Forces committees operate?

If this kit is required now, procure and issue it now.

Any stockpiled boots could be sold to third world armies or simply issued to personnel as a barrack-type boot.

Why oh why do we have to read such items as this in the 21st century? – **Maj (Retd) J Knowles**.

■ LIKE many people I was bemused by the MoD announcement that new brown boots are being brought in.

I was aware that there were trials going on but had understood that olive green was the favoured option.

It is difficult to understand what precisely these versions are supposed to achieve.

They do not appear to offer any greater camouflage than black ones nor, from the illustration accompanying the announcement, do they seem to aesthetically match the new multi-terrain pattern uniform.

It is of course to be welcomed that greater thought has gone into the far more important factors of comfort, fit and utility but I would like to make two comments.

Firstly, whilst it's good that more

consideration is being given to sizes for female soldiers, it would be a mistake to mark boots as being for men or women.

There are men with small narrow feet and women with large, wide feet.

"Genderist" labelling may cause them to avoid better fitting boots for fear of being ridiculed. Far better to label the boots by their size.

Secondly, I welcome the fact there will be a variety of types and sizes of boot, but this will only work if we have a proper opportunity to try them on.

That means stores will need to have the full range available and be more sympathetic to those who want to do this.

When I buy shoes I spend quite a lot of time making sure the fit is correct.

With issued footwear, my experience is that you are asked for your size and they are given to you.

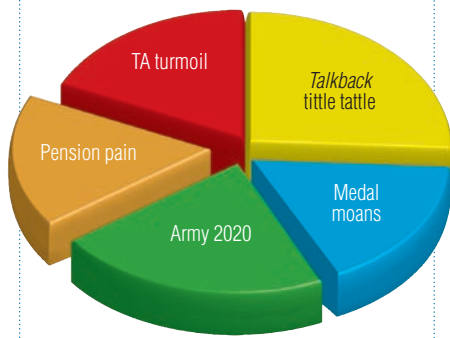
If they are not right when they arrive from Bicester, you are told it is your fault because that is what you ordered. – **Name and address supplied**.

The editor writes: The defence clothing team has stated that the new combat footwear should in fact be available from the end of this year. Read page 61 of our July issue for further details.



Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...





Picture: Slave Dock

Sea-ing the need for change: A correspondent argues that terms and conditions of service and daily allowances must be amended by the powers that be if British Army volunteers – such as LCpl Sally Wrigley pictured above during Exercise Lion Sun 7 in Cyprus – are to be encouraged to deploy on operations

‘Time to turn the tide on Territorial terms’

WHILE the government is keen to promote the image of “one Army, Regular and Territorial” perhaps it would be prudent for the conditions of soldiers on full-time Reserve home service to be reviewed before good people become disillusioned and leave.

Personnel on this arrangement are not entitled to health or dental care, do not receive any allowances, are not permitted to enjoy subsidised accommodation and cannot receive the X Factor reward package.

As an example, I know of an excellent community psychiatric nurse at the Reinforcements Training and Mobilisation Centre in Chilwell who has served in Afghanistan twice and is employed full-time to treat Regular and Reserve troops returning from theatre.

He is a senior NCO living in transit accommodation who commutes regularly.

The Army relies on experienced Reserves from the NHS to deliver medical care.

But such terms and conditions of service are in danger of putting off much needed health professionals from joining. – **Cpl Straw (AGC (RMP)).**

■ **LIKE** many of my Territorial Army colleagues, I have been “persuaded” by my various commanders to volunteer to be compulsorily mobilised and take part in an operational deployment.

One of the factors that helped sway my decision was the availability of the Reserve award (RA), a daily allowance which is intended to make up the difference between

military and civilian salaries if one is fortunate enough to earn more in civvy street than with Her Majesty’s Armed Forces.

This money is an incentive for Reserves to put themselves forward and removes a hurdle that previously dissuaded them from doing so.

In my civilian life I work for myself running a relatively lucrative consultancy and my spouse assists me from her fortunate position as a housewife by answering the telephone and licking the odd envelope.

One of the main reasons I made the decision to volunteer for compulsory mobilisation was on the basis that I would not be financially disadvantaged.

I was accepted into the Service, ceased working as a civilian and applied for the RA as part of the normal administrative process after signing up.

However, during pre-deployment activity at Chilwell I was astonished to find that my claim for the allowance was rejected.

The only course then open was to approach the Reserve Forces Appeals Tribunal. I did this immediately but the hearing was not scheduled until after I had completed all the preliminaries and deployed to Afghanistan.

I used up valuable time on my rest and recuperation to attend the tribunal and my appeal was “reluctantly” dismissed by the court on the basis that I could provide no evidence to support my claim.

In effect this was a technicality based on the structure of my company.

The court accepted that I was the sole

earner in the business but the Treasury argued that the detail of the statutory instrument was such that all shareholders in the company derive equal benefit from earnings proportional to shareholding.

Therefore, as my spouse and I have one share each in the firm, the profit that I make is considered as divided by two and therefore I personally earn insufficient money to qualify for the top-up payment.

I feel very aggrieved by this.

Not only did I find out all the hidden technicalities after I deployed, but I feel as though I have been duped into volunteering for mobilisation based on the availability of the award.

Surely the spirit of the RA is to encourage people to serve, not to hoodwink highly skilled individuals to put themselves at risk and their families in financial jeopardy by supporting the cause?

Watching my domestic bank account slip further into arrears, my wife has now had to suspend all manner of hitherto desirable but not essential expenditure.

And I am faced with the personal dilemma of whether to put a distant cause first or else prioritise my family and let down soldiers and my unit in the process by requesting a short tour.

Money isn’t everything but I hope the system is not conning members of the Territorial Army into volunteering for operations just to make ends meet. – **Name and address supplied.**

● **Reserves round-up – page 17**

'Death or Darfur decision, which will come first?'

WHILE I fully understand that the process underpinning the acceptance of "new" medals can be lengthy, almost four years have elapsed since a small number of personnel from across the Services returned from serving with the United Nations in Darfur.

To date, no formal permission has been given to wear the mission's medal.

Over this period of time, the issue of whether accepting the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) decoration as a British award has been raised by myself and others on a number of occasions, dating back as far as 2008 and as recently as November 2011.

The response, at all levels, has been "wait out". Unfortunately, old age, redundancy and Army 2020 mean the clock is ticking ever faster.

What chance is there of a straight answer along with a timeline before I draw my pension, am made redundant or die of old age? – [Name and address supplied](#).

Lt Col Kestrel Simson, PS12 (A), responds: The UNAMID was formally approved by the United Nations Security Council in 2007 and UK military personnel were involved in initial operations in Darfur. The mission is still ongoing today.

In 2008, the United Nations and African Union endorsed a UNAMID medal awarded for 90 days' continuous service.

Although UK personnel who were involved may be in receipt of the decoration, no authorisation has yet been given to wear it. This has been because of the evolving nature of the operation.

Later this year, the Ministry of Defence will be considering medallic recognition for a number of recent and current operations and now that it is unlikely British troops will be involved in UNAMID in the future, Sudan will be one of those on the agenda.

The main criteria that will be taken into account will be the risk from enemy action and the rigour of operational and environmental conditions over a significant period of time.

The conclusion could be that the operations in Sudan are not considered worthy of any form of medallic recognition and therefore the UNAMID medal may not be worn.

However, if it is judged that there was sufficient risk and rigour, the conclusion could be that the award is authorised to be worn.

While it is appreciated that you have had to wait some time, a decision on whether you may wear the UNAMID medal will be made in the near future.

Even though you and others may have left the Forces when a decision is made, you will still be eligible to receive and wear any decoration that is authorised.



Picture: Steve Dock

International response: A Nigerian soldier serving as part of UNAMID provides perimeter security in the South Darfur town of Muhajeria

'Non-contributory? Nonsense'

I WOULD like to comment on your article in the September issue – "Army pension age set to rise" (pictured below) – and others that have appeared in the media concerning the Armed Forces pension scheme.

The piece states that the system is non-contributory. However, I have a copy of the *Review Body on Armed Forces Pay 1995* and I will quote paragraph 65 of this report.

"The Armed Forces pension scheme (AFPS) provides for early and fast accruing superannuation benefits which are indexed linked from the age 55," it says.

"Service personnel do not contribute directly from their pay to the AFPS but we make an adjustment to recommended salaries to take account of the relative benefits of the Armed Forces scheme over those available to civilian comparators, noting in particular that a great majority of Service personnel normally retire earlier than most civilians.

"The current adjustment figure is nine per cent for all ranks, apart from Service medical

and dental officers, whose pay is adjusted by 11 per cent for ranks up to and including major and eight per cent for lieutenant colonels and above."

I believe this is still the situation so why do your magazine and other media outlets keep stating that it is a non-contributory system when

indirectly soldiers are contributing from their pay? – [SSgt J Watson, 204 Field Hospital \(Volunteers\)](#).

The editor responds:

Thank you for your letter, the sentiment of which I know will chime with other readers.

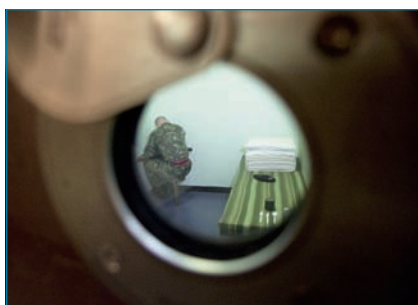
The phrase "non-contributory" certainly does seem to be triggering some debate across the ranks. Many feel that the term fails to convey the complexities of the scheme and the fact that, as you say,

adjustments are made to recommended salaries in light of the package on offer.

Although *Soldier* and other media outlets are using the correct terminology in the strictest sense, I am grateful to you for raising this issue on our pages.



Picture: Graeme Main



GET RID OF GLASSHOUSE

■ IS there still a role for the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester (pictured above)?

I ask the question as the Army makes redundancies and reviews terms of service and employment models, all with the underlying theme of trying to make budgetary savings.

If a soldier acts in a manner that would justify a military custodial sentence then surely the Service should terminate his contract with no financial gain and loss of pension? This would serve as a deterrent.

If custody is relevant then the civilian system should be sufficient.

Why spend money on troops who have transgressed outside the already comparatively lenient employment terms and conditions?

Save the money and invest in those who want a career. – [Maj Ed Cornes \(RA\)](#).

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#HARRY & HERRICK

@StatusInBeirut

Prince Harry is the Taliban's "most wanted man" apparently. I had no idea the Taliban was made up of shrieking teenage girls...

@tom_watson

Reckon I'd have a bender before being sent to fly Apaches in Afghanistan. I bet your kids would too @rupertmurdoch

@ColRichardKemp

Taliban would have spared Bastion an attack if it hadn't been for the film and Harry? Or just pathetically crude bandwagon-jumping propaganda.

@caitlinmoran

Camp Bastion baby should be called MiliTerry

#PARALYMPICS

@appinodigital

Had the pleasure of meeting Derek Derenalagi in the AppleStore – what a hero on so many levels!

@DuncanBannatyne

Well done Lance Corporal Rory Mackenzie #closingceremony

@benayers

I've put an Apple sticker on my leg. People say 'Are they doing legs now?' – marvellous pull out quote in #standard from Rory Mackenzie

@RoryDMack

What a night, one never to be forgotten! Well done to everyone who took part, behind the scenes and on the field of play.

#ROSS KEMP (PAGE 45)

@liam_tomkins

I think Ross Kemp documentaries, would be a lot shorter, if he didn't pause in the middle, of every single sentence

#COMIC CAPER (PAGE 74)

@Scrabblemouse

"Doth mother know thou art wearing her drapes?" Avengers can Assemble any time in my book :)

#SOLDIERMAGAZINE

@LCiz

@soldiermagazine spent two hours reading whole mag again – I couldn't put down the latest version. Quality. I like the ten combat tips :-)

@soldiermagazine



Picture: Steve Dock

Airborne identity: Having their own clothing is a boost to British Army parachutists, a reader stresses

'Don't drop the para smock'

I CURRENTLY serve in a parachute capable unit within 16 Air Assault Brigade, having passed P Company and completed my jumps early on in my career.

To settle the rumours on a clothing conundrum once and for all, can someone tell me if troops are to be issued a "smock, parachutist" in multi-terrain pattern?

I know the hierarchy and others may see it merely as an outdated bit of Gucci kit, but such a simple thing helps to set parachute-trained soldiers apart and therefore strongly contributes to our esprit de corps.

The garment is specifically designed for parachuting, unlike the general issue personal clothing system smock.

I think it would be a mistake for us not to be provided with one and, dare I say it, the beginning of the end for British airborne forces. – Name and address supplied.

in stating that the current para smock is specifically designed for use during airborne operations.

It has been recognised that there is an enduring requirement for this type of jacket and, as a result, the existing design of the garment has been replicated in the same multi-terrain pattern camouflage as the personal clothing system combat uniform. The new design will be available for issue very shortly but only to those individuals – and this is key – specifically filling a "jump" appointment.

The majority of the smocks will therefore go to 16 Air Assault Brigade.

No decision has yet been taken on how the items will be issued but it is likely to be as a one-for-one replacement when an entitled individual requires a new smock.

Headquarters 16 Air Assault Brigade will be providing information on this matter shortly.

PS12(A) responds: You are quite correct

Honour soldiers over sport stars

I WONDER if someone somewhere could help me fight my corner?

I have recently been reading about sports personalities, actors and politicians receiving honours and awards.

While I can understand some sportsmen and women being role models, they are essentially doing a hobby in their spare time.

Actors and musicians also seem to be getting rewarded for almost anything at the moment.

As a corporal in the British Army, I have organised medal presentations

and charity events, worked with schools, undertaken tasks in local communities and contributed to many other projects that are nothing to do with my day job.

I am an average soldier; there are plenty of military personnel who do a lot more than me.

Some – but very few – are recognised for this and I feel that it is about time we were acknowledged for our efforts.

One option I was considering was for all Servicemen and women leaving the Forces after 22 or more years of service to be automatically added to the honours list and become a Member of the British Empire.

We have all done our time for Queen and country and, as it stands, the country doesn't give much back.

I look forward to hearing others' views. – Cpl Andy Langdon, DST Leconfield.

Worthy recipient?:

Ryder Cup star Luke Donald (pictured left) and former England goalkeeper David James were among the sporting personalities to receive an MBE earlier this year

Picture: Action Images/Reuters



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Perspective needed on so-called prestige

WRITE to convey my disappointment at the standard of rooms, services and pricing at the so-called prestigious Victoria Services Club (VSC) in London.

The overall impression across the ranks is one of transit accommodation and for the second time I had the misfortune of having to stay there – a hotel that can only be described as a comedy of errors – with my family.

I would firstly like to draw attention to the *Soldier* endorsement represented on the club's website: "VSC offers a warm welcome to Service personnel and their families and rooms at a fraction of what it would cost to stay at major hotels in similar prestigious locations," it says.

"From its inception in the 1940s as a gift from a grateful nation to returning Service personnel, it has evolved into a true jewel in the military welfare crown."

Please, some perspective!

It is not my intent to discredit nor undermine what is a charitable and commendable institution and service provider but I feel that this statement is not a true reflection of what is on offer at the club.

Inside, we found that the majority of expenditure seemed to have been allocated to the social bar area with limited work on the establishment's overall accommodation.

After a mountainous approach through a set of two lifts, one resembling a dummy waiter, we found the summit of our room.

This looked like something from the 1970s or 80s with badly hung military curtains that barely met in the middle. Benefits of catching an early sunrise could be a plus, I suppose.

However, the bedding was made of hessian



Tired: The Victoria Services Club in London is being refurbished

sack-like material and the shower had no holder.

Quick to use my Army initiative, I got the wife to hold it over my head while we both nearly broke our legs slipping on the torrent of misplaced water on the floor – oops, no shower curtain.

It was then somewhat amusing to help my spouse apply her make-up at a dressing cabinet that was broken, lifting the mirror up for about 20 minutes.

We gathered our belongings and laughed all the way to reception to pay a generous £160 for one night.

My sarcastic tone is the only way to keep my amusement at such a sorry state of affairs. I stay in London quite frequently and regularly pay far less for much more.

Please can we sort this institution out or, if they are in the midst of an upgrade, pay less if we get less? – **Capt Brown.**

Roy Lennox, Victory Services Club Secretary, responds: The reader refers to two quotes on our website taken from *Soldier* in 2004 and 2009.

Over the last five years the club has modernised the majority of its 192 bedrooms.

A further 28 will be refurbished by April 2013, this will leave just 19 to be updated in 2014.

From his description, it sounds as if Capt Brown and his family stayed in our Memorial Wing – the area that is currently being worked on.

Those rooms which have not been refurbished are tired but most people still think they are good value.

He appears to have stayed with us on two occasions and I assume his first visit was satisfactory otherwise he would not have returned.

I have to say that I am disappointed he did not register a complaint during the second stay as we encourage members to let us know if there are any problems.

The VSC has recently been running at an average of 90 per cent occupancy and this can only lead me to believe that we are good value for money and provide an excellent service.

Furthermore, we have been accredited by Hospitality Assured, a European business excellence award and received a certificate of excellence from the external assessor TripAdvisor.

BLUNDER BLOWS RESERVIST'S HELMET COVER

WHILE reading *The Informer* section of August's edition I noticed the caption: "Indistinguishable from Regular colleagues: Maj Gen James Everard has dismissed the notion that Reservists such as the soldier pictured – shown below preparing for mobilisation on Op Herrick 17 in Cumbria – cannot step up to the Army 2020 challenge."

I disagree with the opening statement. I immediately distinguished the subject as a Reservist because I have yet to meet or even witness a Regular soldier with a helmet cover on sideways. – **Cfn Smithson, COSU, Cyprus.**



Site puzzlement persists

THE statement in *Talkback* claiming that soldiers must pay to use the Rewards for Forces website (www.rewardsforforces.co.uk) is inaccurate – "Costly discounts" (August).

It does not cost to benefit from these concessions. You can opt to pay for the membership card that the portal offers but this is not needed.

If you are serving your Army ID will do. A lot of the discounts can be had online as well, with a code provided.

I have used the site several times and have not been required to pay any fees. – **Name and address supplied.**

● Saving while serving – pages 41-43

Don't **bottle**
it up.

TALK TO SOMEONE



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When an IED strike killed one of his comrades, and wounded two others, Guardsman Jordan Pearson thought his own physical injuries would be his only lasting problem from the devastation.

A rifle muzzle protruded from his chest, piercing just millimetres above the main artery going into his heart, his radio had gone through his arm,

and the explosion had fired shrapnel, gravel and metal the length of his back to the soles of his feet. His legs burned from the fierce heat of the metal fragments piercing his skin, his trousers were all but gone - shredded in the blast.

Despite his own injuries, he tried to help carry the other wounded from the ensuing firefight, instinctively pull-

ing the rifle muzzle from his chest. Three years on, and Jordan's body remains scarred with shrapnel still coming out of his skin every day. The hidden mental scars, however, have damaged him more than any physical injury.

"Having had both types of injuries, physical and mental, the physical side of it was far easier to get

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Living through the **guilt** of surviving

over. The mental side of it, well it's just taking so long to get over. You finally think you are there and then one little thing happens and it all comes back down again," says the 21-year-old Grenadier Guard.

The hardest thing to deal with has been the reaction of people he had considered friends - their ignorance of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder leading them to think he was faking flashbacks, nightmares and crippling insomnia to get out of soldiering.

"The things people have said about me since admitting my post-traumatic stress are, to be fair, what I would have thought about anyone else too... before it happened to me. Everyone says just man up, and that's what I had been doing for so long but it came to a point where I couldn't man up any more. I had to go get help to get through it because it was only going to get worse, not better. I was short-tempered and angry, drinking too much and arguing, and I was having difficulty sleeping. I was getting paranoid about sleeping in the same room as the other blokes in case they took the mick out of me for screaming in the night from the nightmares.

"I was torturing myself with what ifs, and if that had happened what would have come out of it. But I still thought there was nothing wrong with me, that it was everyone else and they just hadn't adapted to me coming back. My now wife Loren begged me to realise what I was doing, and how hard I was making other people's lives with my arguing. It would be over the stupidest little things. But I thought it was everyone else."

The turning point came when Jordan reacted badly to a joke made at a family wedding, and Loren's father took him outside for a little chat warning him that if he continued he would lose Loren and destroy everything he had.

"I went to the Med Centre as soon as I got back to work. I didn't want to hurt anyone, and I was starting to worry about how much of a hold I had over myself during the flashbacks and the drinking. I didn't know what I was doing."

Soon after reporting to the Med Centre Jordan was referred for psychotherapy, and was encouraged to talk through the explosion in Nad-e Ali - breaking it down into little bits to look at each action from different angles. By doing this he could slowly see that he had done nothing wrong, and that nothing he could have done would have saved his friend.

"When I first went to the sessions my intention was just to forget everything, I didn't want to relive it. I wanted everything out of my mind so I could finally get a decent night's sleep. We tried things like the breathing techniques to deal with my anger, but it just didn't work with me - it's easier said than done to sit there and think of a happy place when all you want to do is be angry. But breaking things down and looking at it from different ways did make me feel better as I could see I did what any normal soldier would have done in the situation.

"It takes a lot of time. There is no quick fix. It's been nearly two years for me now, and it's a constant cycle of good and bad days. It feels like you

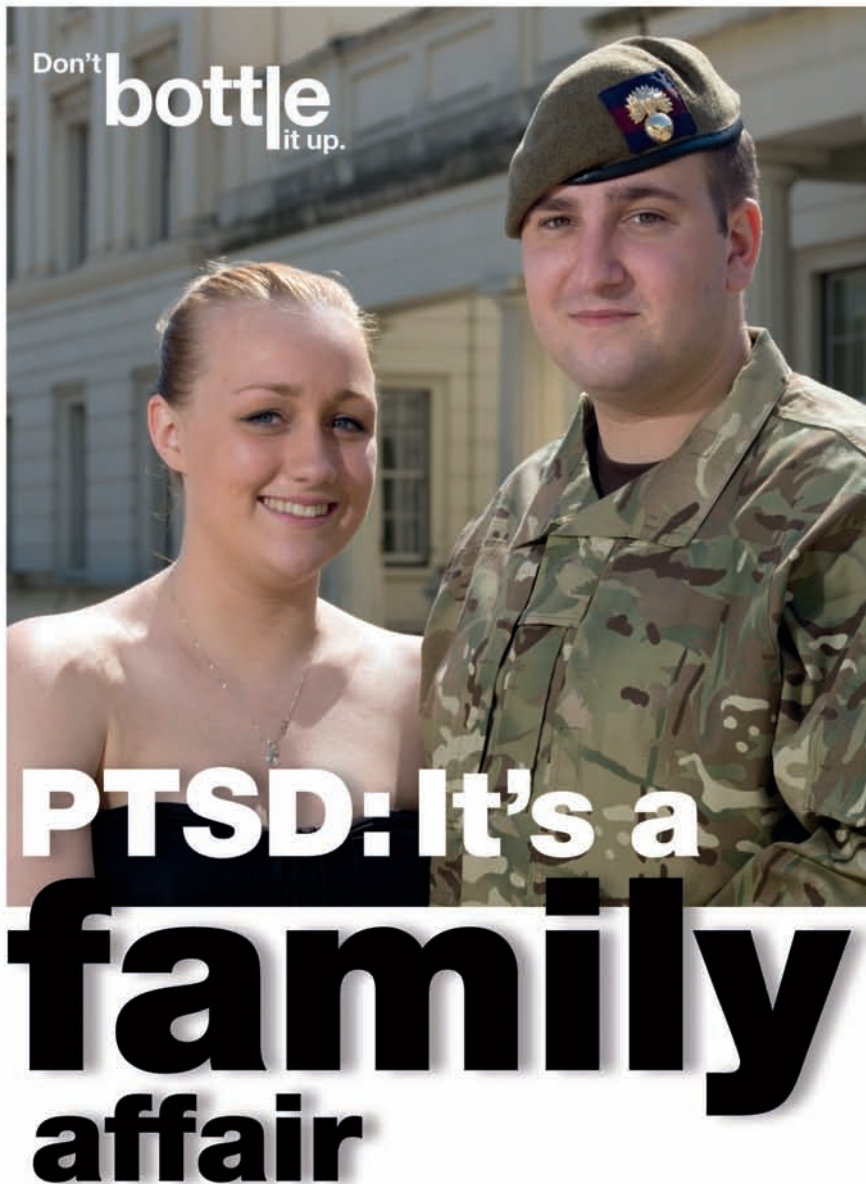
are stuck and you can't go that little bit further.

Initially though it was like a roundabout - sometimes I would go to the therapist and there would be absolutely nothing wrong and it would all be fine, and then a week later I would go back and there would be loads I needed to talk about. Now the memories only tend to come back on days like Remembrance Sunday, whereas before it was every night and I would remember that little bit more than I did the night before - so it would play on my mind. I still have my good days and my bad days, but now it's more good days than bad days. And when my mood swings Loren will tell me to stop me going into them so much. She knows the signs when I am starting to go downhill."

"The biggest thing for me is being back at work though - it keeps you busy and your mind off other things. I just hope others will be able to make the most of my experiences and go to seek help, and this campaign will change the way people think about mental health."

Article written by Claire Spencer - Army News Team (in support of the Army's Don't bottle it up - mental health stigma campaign)

Further help and information is available:
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23386.aspx



When Guardsman Jordan Pearson deployed to Afghanistan on HERRICK 10, his wife Loren assumed their life would simply be put on pause until her funny, confident soldier returned for their happy life ever after. The call to say he was injured in Selly Oak hospital was just the start of their altered lives.

An IED explosion had killed one of his friends and injured him as well as two others. His physical injuries from the blast healed relatively quickly, although three years later and he still has shrapnel pieces coming out of his skin every day, but the mental scars have remained.

"I was relieved when I knew he was going to be OK, but I realised as soon as he came home he wasn't the same anymore. I think it made me a little bit angry because he had gone out as one Jordan and it was like having a stranger come back. I felt kind of angry because I felt that my boyfriend had been taken away," says Loren, 21, who has been

married to Jordan for a year.

"It sounds really naïve but we thought that if you go to Afghanistan you either come back fine or you don't come back at all. I don't know why we didn't think that you can get injured or anything else can happen to you. We literally just thought that we could put our relationship on hold for six months, he'd come back, and we would both be exactly the same and just carry on from where we left off. But it wasn't like that at all."

He no longer wanted to socialise, and completely shut himself off from his family and friends.

To this day he has still not been able to rekindle the same relationship with his parents.

"He used to be really laid back, but when he came back he would snap at everything. He also couldn't sleep and I used to get so tired staying up next to him because it felt strange sleeping alone when I was used to him being next to me. But he would put up such

a fight so he wouldn't have to go to sleep even if it meant he had to sit up and watch TV all night."

Initially they both hoped it would pass and things would get back to normal. They were engaged and looking forward to moving into their new place, but Jordan's experiences still haunted them with his drinking increasing.

"He became obsessive about things like painting the walls, and he was angry for no reason so he would just be in his own world painting the wall in the flat. But then I remember one day walking into the bedroom to find him lying on the floor in the gap between the bed and the wall.

No matter what I said he wouldn't get up. I think the only thing that got us through it was a lot of persuading him that there was something wrong. I think if we had just tried to turn a blind eye to it then it never would have got sorted."

In desperation, Loren turned to the Army Welfare Service who notified his Battalion that there was something wrong, while Loren's father also warned Jordan that if he didn't get help he risked losing everything he had with Loren.

Not wanting to lose the woman he refers to as his "scaffolding" because of the way she has held him up, Jordan reported to the med centre and was quickly referred to a psychotherapist. Two years later life is still not perfect, but Loren can see signs of the old Jordan returning.

"It still makes me feel really upset thinking about it all. And I know it sounds corny, but I stayed because I loved him. Everything else about us was so strong, and the man I met was worth fighting for. I never wanted anything material in life. All I ever wanted was to get married to a nice man, and have a nice little family in a nice little house. That's all I have ever cared about. And I think we are most of the way there now. It doesn't have to happen tomorrow, but I believe it will happen.

"And yes I think about the future - there is the way you want your future to go, but not everything in life always turns out the way you plan it anyway.

"I'd rather us concentrate on us getting him sorted so that then we can start to enjoy our life together a bit more.

"It will be worth it in the end."

Article written by Claire Spencer - Army News Team (in support of the Army's Don't bottle it up - mental health stigma campaign)

Further help and information is available: www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23386.aspx



COMPETITIONS

The Rise and Fall winners: Amanda Egglestone, Bingley; Tracy Grant, Kingstanding, Birmingham; Shauna Robson, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear; Mr R Whatmough, Epsom, Surrey; Lucy Taylor, Ilkley.

Spine line winner: Jackie Mayne, St Omer Barracks, Aldershot.



DIARY

October 5: London Pacific Fashion Show. The Help for Heroes fundraiser will be held at the Salvation Army Theatre, 275 Oxford Street, London W1C 2DJ from 1800 to 2100. For more information and tickets, priced £25, visit www.londonpacificfashion.org

October 6: Surrey Heritage Celebration. A day of free events at the Surrey History Centre in Goldsworth Road, Woking, including children's craft activities, a family history helpdesk, behind-the-scenes tours of the archive and the Surrey heritage annual lecture. Held between 1000 and 1530. To book a place at the talk call 01483 518737.

October 6: Horse racing at Ascot Racecourse. There will be numerous stands covering Army activities and charities as well as musical performances by the Rifles' Band. For details contact Peter Walker on 01635 204433 or email peter.walker205@mod.uk

October 6: Ride To The Wall 2012. Thousands of motorcyclists from across the country will take part in a memorial ride to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. A service of remembrance will be held at 1400 and there will be a programme of activities throughout the day. Proceeds from the day will go to the NMA. For more information visit www.rttw.org

October 10: Army Photographic Competition prize presentation, Imperial War Museum, London.

October 18: Swift & Bold at the Royal Albert Hall. The Massed Bands and Bugles of The Rifles and their special guests celebrate the history and achievements of riflemen past and present in a one-off night of music and entertainment. Starting at 1930, the evening is being held in support of Care for Casualties with tickets ranging from £15 to £60. To book, call the box office on 0845 4015018.

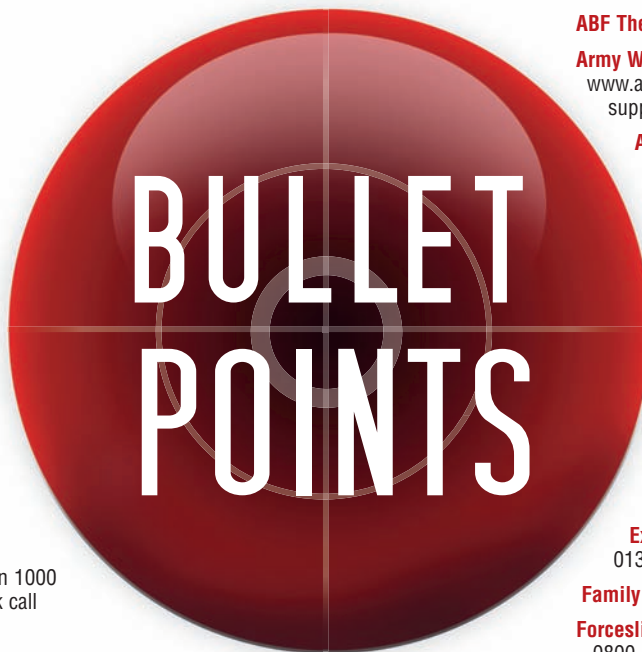
October 18: Support the Forces Day at Uttoxeter Racecourse in support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the National Memorial Arboretum. Gates open from noon; first race 1410; last race 1715. Discounted tickets for Forces personnel are £10. Call 01889 562 561 or visit www.utttoxeter-racecourse.co.uk for more information.

October 19-28: Exercise Cambrian Patrol, Wales. Contact brian.pratt683@mod.uk for more details.

October 28: The ten-mile Bupa Great South

Run in Southsea, Portsmouth. If you are interested in competing in the race – which has previously featured Olympic and world medallists – on behalf of The Royal British Legion contact Clare Peppiatt on 02380 477274 or email cpeppiatt@britishlegion.org.uk for further information.

October 28: The main day for the national series of 5km races known as the **Poppy Run**. Open to all and aims to raise funds and awareness



for The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. For more information visit www.poppy-run.com or email Jim Cowan at jim@poppy-run.com

November 11: Remembrance Sunday.

November 12: Descend from 417 feet at the National Abseil Centre to raise money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. All kit is provided but there are only 50 places available. Minimum sponsorship is £150. For full details and to book telephone 01604 770606 or email david@edoneinvestments.com

November 15-16: A military music spectacular featuring the regimental bands of The Household Division at Central Hall, Westminster. To book tickets visit www.theguardmuseum.com and follow the link to the box office or call 08448 717605.

November 30-December 2: The Regimental Slipper – a pantomime based on *Cinderella* but given an Army twist by a cast comprising members of **Larkhill Garrison**. For information on how to book tickets (priced £5 for adults and £2 for children) call Caroline on 07729 583679 or join the Larkhill Panto page on Facebook.

Until further notice: Exhibition of War Correspondents – reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to those at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

Until further notice: The Lord Ashcroft Gallery – Extraordinary Heroes. The world's largest collection of Victoria and George Crosses. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ.



DIRECTORY

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

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

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

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

Blind Veterans UK: (formerly St Dunstan's) www.blindveterans.org.uk; 0207 7235021

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forcesline: UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854.

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

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

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

Poppyscotland: 0131 557 2782; www.poppyscotland.org.uk

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

Scottish Veterans' Residences: 0131 556 0091; www.svrnline.org

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from the UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafa.org.uk

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

uk4u Thanks!: 01798 812081; www.uk4u.org



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 72/12: Tri-Service university short course programme – academic year 2012/2013

ABN 73/12: Guidance for personnel deployed on Op Olympics and not registered for the enhanced learning credits scheme

ABN 74/12: Changes to Open University fee structures from September 2012

ABN 75/12: Jobseeker's allowance regulation changes for personnel in the Reserve forces

ABN 76/12: Changes to equality and diversity training on CLM courses

ABN 77/12: Accrued pension rights for specialist groups on AFPS 75, those on non-Regular TACOS, commutation and AFPS 75 members who promote shortly before then leave shortly after transition to the new pension scheme

ABN78/12: Army Dependants Assurance Trust (Gurkha) closure to new members

ABN 79/12: Reserve unit liability – overbearing policy

ABN 80/12: Outstanding civilian performance appraisal and development reports

ABN 81/12: Tissue reference (DNA) sampling kits

DIN 2012DIN01-188: Selection of the Army Medical Services Corps regimental sergeant major

DIN 2012DIN01-185: Maritime Reserve recruit bounty scheme

DIN 2012DIN01-184: Pensions tax – scheme pays for in-year leavers

DIN 2012DIN01-183: Instruction to code medical referral letters

DIN 2012DIN01-182: Operational welfare communications – *WelComE*

DIN 2012DIN01-181: The Supreme Award for Recognition of Achievement

DIN 2012DIN01-180: Stonewall workplace equality index

DIN 2012DIN01-179: Tri-Service arrangements for the administration of Service wills

DIN 2012DIN01-178: Band B nine box grid and band B high potential development programme

DIN 2012DIN01-177: Non-consolidated payments to non-industrial staff earning below £21,000 pa (full time equivalent salary)

DIN 2012DIN01-175: Pension rights accrued by specialist groups in the Armed Forces pension scheme 1975

DIN 2012DIN01-173: Pension tax relief – lifetime allowance briefing note

DIN 2012DIN01-172: Pension tax relief – annual allowance scheme pays

DIN 2012DIN01-171: Winter sports travel

DIN 2012DIN01-170: Defence recovery policy

DIN 2012DIN01-169: Service with the Pathfinders, 16 Air Assault Brigade

DIN 2012DIN03-030: Scottish independence referendum – guidance on conduct

DIN 2012DIN03-029: Policy for explosive ordnance disposal and search and counter-IED international defence engagement

DIN 2012DIN03-026: Name change of Lynx Helicopter Force to Lynx Wildcat Maritime Force

DIN 2012DIN03-025: The provision of temporary

landing zone safety officer

DIN 2012DIN04-125: Residual vapour detector kit No 1 Mk 2A

DIN 2012DIN04-124: Operating handle housing – security of attachment

DIN 2012DIN04-123: Astute Class Fleet acceptance process

DIN 2012DIN04-120: Defence Equipment and Support change of contract arrangements for support of UHF Satcom

DIN 2012DIN04-119: Introduction of a logistic services transport ex-works and reverse supply chain priority collection service

DIN 2012DIN04-118: Declaration of BID/1300 (also known as Inkerman) as being obsolete by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2012DIN04-117: Declaration of BID/1320 (also known as Beauty) as being obsolete by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2012DIN04-116: Drawdown of BCIP asset configuration management system

DIN 2012DIN04-115: Notification of detonator assemblies non-electric becoming obsolescent

DIN 2012DIN04-114: Amendment to 2012DIN04-033 rescind obsolete declaration of TEM(E)-controlled test and measuring equipment

DIN 2012DIN04-113: Contractual arrangement for maintenance and repair of non-DII information technology and audiovisual systems

DIN 2012DIN04-112: Renaming of short-range air defence post tallies

DIN 2012DIN05-034: Standing Army liability committee terms of reference – annex C to Army manpower liability adjustment policy DIN 2012DIN01-005

Continued on page 64

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NO. 851

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of David Hasselhoff with members of The Royal Regiment of Scotland during this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 851, Soldier**,

Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by October 31. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The

results will be announced in the December issue. Usual rules apply.

August's winner: First correct entry drawn at random was Mrs D Fleming, Trowbridge, Wiltshire. **Runners-up:** Mr M Cotton, Shrewton, Wiltshire and Jane Niell, Bewdley, Worcestershire.



DIN 2012DIN05-032: Defence branding

DIN 2012DIN05-031: Revised Service boundary for the defence high-grade messaging service

DIN 2012DIN05-030: Maritime battle staff, Combined Task Force 150 contact details

DIN 2012DIN06-031: Compensation claims against MoD – Service and civilian employer's liability and clinical negligence

DIN 2012DIN06-030: Announcement of range safety notice 03-12

DIN 2012DIN07-134: Chief of air staff's fellowships

DIN 2012DIN07-130: Biathlon rifle trainer courses 2012

DIN 2012DIN07-129: The Ulysses Trust

DIN 2012DIN07-128: Information systems short courses for September 2012 to July 2013 at the Defence Academy College of Management and Technology

DIN 2012DIN07-127: Incremental staff required for Adventurous Training Group (Army)

DIN 2012DIN07-126: Army European winter activity instruction

DIN 2012DIN07-125: Adventurous training sea kayaking: planning expeditions in training year 2013/14 to Cyprus

DIN 2012DIN07-124: Adventurous training sub-aqua diving: planning expeditions in 2013 to Ascension Island, Cyprus and Gibraltar

DIN 2012DIN07-123: Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) level 3 and level 5 professional qualifications

DIN 2012DIN07-121: Core maritime skills 7 – operational law

DIN 2012DIN07-120: Exercise Medsail 2013

DIN 2012DIN07-119: Sport science – professional accreditation through the university

DIN 2012DIN07-118: Tri-Service university short-course programme – academic year 2012-2013

DIN 2012DIN08-007: Accounting

arrangements 2012/2013

DIN 2012DIN08-006: Non-pay as you dine messing and casual meal charge for non-entitled personnel for financial year 2012/13

DIN 2012DIN09-019: The Ruth Carter Prize for Nurses and the Eliza Mackenzie Prize for Student Nurses

DIN 2012DIN09-018: Attendance at investitures

DIN 2012DIN09-017: Oliver Sword Award 2012

DIN 2012DIN10-032: Exercise Snow Summer

DIN 2012DIN10-031: Merlin Helicopter Force cocktail party celebration

DIN 2012DIN10-029: Army Snowboard Freestyle Championship and freestyle ski meet 2012 – Exercise Snow Method

DIB 42/12: Launch of the new MoD logo and government brand rationalisation

DIB 43/12: Transforming defence: the new head office concept and future head office senior structure

DIB 44/12: Implementation arrangements for MoD 2012 civilian pay award

DIB 45/12: Publication of Armed Forces continuous attitude survey 2012 report

DIB 46/12: Ministry of Defence announces new permanent secretary

DIB 48/12: Message to staff from new permanent secretary



REUNIONS

Royal Horse Artillery Association: The 92nd reunion dinner will take place in Trowbridge on October 6. Attendance is open to all past and present members of any RHA unit and their partners. Those who would like to attend should contact the dinner secretary for full details: R J Whiteway, The Hideaway, 18 Immenstadt Drive, Wellington, Somerset TA21 9PT. Telephone 01823 665650 or email rhaasn@hotmail.co.uk

407 Troop RCT: An informal reunion for all members who served between 1980 and 1983 will be held on October 26-27. For further information please contact Colin (Thommo) Thompson on 07887 986588 or email [Colin](mailto:Colin.Thompson@mod.uk).

Thompson103@mod.uk

Royal Devon Yeomanry: A reunion dinner will be held in Barnstaple on October 27 for all past and present members of the attached ranks to the Royal Devon Yeomanry Artillery, D (RDY), The Royal Wessex Yeomanry. Ladies are welcome to attend. For details please email rwxy-dsqn-psao@mod.uk

South Notts Hussars Association: The annual reunion and remembrance dinner will take place at the TA Centre, Hucknall Lane, Bulwell, Nottingham NG6 8AQ on Saturday, November 10. Tickets priced £20 are available from the association secretary at the TA Centre.



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or e-mail your name and address to apt.mod@btconnect.com with the event you are interested in attending.

October: 1, Salisbury; 2, Plymouth; 3, Bristol; 16, Telford; 17, Sandwell; 18, Burton-on-Trent; Canterbury, Eastbourne, Woking (dates TBC).

November: London (date TBC).



SEARCHLINE

Annika Hofmann from Germany is looking for **George Matthews who was based in the town of Schleswig in 1945 and perhaps also 1946**. Anyone with information is asked to email annikahofmann@outlook.com

Social worker and former casualty key worker Sandra Knox is **researching the needs of soldiers who are struggling to come to terms with their injuries, emotions or illness**. Any personnel or relatives who can help by telling her what their family required during such experiences are asked to email sandra@onecontinuum.co.uk

Brian Abey is writing an account of his military service in the Royal Artillery between 1957 and 1963. He is trying to map his **journey from Hook of Holland to Bergen Belsen** (Hohne) by rail. Anyone who can help him obtain details of the trek (thought to have taken place around **April 28, 1961**) is asked to email brian.abey@talktalk.net

Clive Slade is looking for information about a **troop ship arriving in the UK from India between 1945 and 1946**, which carried a serving member of the Forces who was suffering from polio and had been nursed through the journey in an **iron lung**. He believes this was a first, with his father being one of the nursing staff. Contact candvs4649tontrav@hotmail.co.uk

Myra-Ann Simpson is looking for a **John Meyers** who was posted to Wick in 1943. Contact myra.ann.simpson@hotmail.com

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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Spouses need a hand as well

ONCE heard it said that you should always be planning for when you leave the Army. However, the persistent operational tempo will have made such organisation near impossible for many of today's soldiers.

When addressing resettlement, the government must look at the ability of spouses to earn a reasonable income in order to ensure that families gain a greater degree of financial independence and security.

As numerous troops already know, their husbands and wives have significant difficulty establishing careers and accessing training.

And figures from the Army Families Federation's employment campaign only serve to highlight this.

Our most recent survey found that of the 70 per cent of spouses who had tried to gain work, 81 per cent thought their chances had been affected by frequent moves and 70 per cent believed the remoteness of their posting had a bearing.

Further figures confirm that a significant number of others find it very difficult to progress in their professional lives.

Some 85 per cent felt they had to start at

the bottom every time and 78 per cent said their soldier is away so much that it makes it difficult to hold down an occupation.

For those leaving Service families accommodation and settling elsewhere, employment is likely to be as much an issue for the spouse as it is for the soldier.

The ability to raise a deposit and secure a mortgage requires other halves to earn a decent income too, so plans for a pain-free journey into resettlement would require them to start securing a career and training long before the family make the leap to civvy street.

I hope that as decisions are made on where to base Army personnel, the need for their partners to access employment is taken more seriously.

The UK economy is driven by dual-income households and unless Service families can compete, home ownership will always pose a considerable problem.

On a positive note, spousal employment was top of the agenda when I met the general officer commanding Support Command, Maj Gen Colin Boag, recently.

I was pleased to hear

that he has some interesting ideas for proactively supporting Army partners so they can access work – an encouraging sign that command understands the needs of the modern family. ■



Painting the town red

SEEKING refuge from last month's conference preparations, I spent a Saturday night out with some younger friends and was surprised at just how animated they were on the issue of Service pensions.

Considerably knowledgeable about the value of their package, I am not sure my husband ever needed to be so aware of its long-term value when he was 30.

It is indeed a sign of the times.

While we are told that the new arrangements will be among the best in the public sector, this is only one side of the story.

The decreasing overall value of soldiers' pay packets means there is no spare cash for investments elsewhere and pretty soon the pension will not be viewed as a reason to stay.

When the economy improves, the more lucrative salaries of civvy street will call even louder as they may offer the extra money that's missing at the end of the month in most Army households.

● Armed with ambition
– pages 31-40

For better or worse: Most partners looking for work say their chances have been affected by regular moves

Picture: Graeme Main





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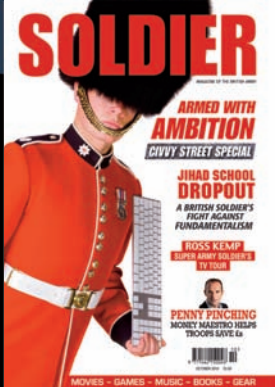
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The pen pal column has been a feature of *Soldier* since the 90s, however, with the increase in various forms of social media and numerous dating sites this has led to a marked reduction in both the number of pen pal requests and responses.

The service is no longer available. Any pen pal advertiser who has already had a request published, or reader who has sent a reply within three months of the advert's cover date, will still have their post sent onto the pen pal box number.

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reviews

HOT TO TROT:

OCTOBER'S BRIGHT LIGHTS

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P82 TOP GEAR **BEAUTIFUL BIKES**

reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

VIVACIOUS VIEWING



CASA DE MI PADRE out now

WILL Ferrell usually makes me laugh until tea comes out of my nose but not this time. This movie deliberately breaks every cinematic rule to add to the cheese; from shaky cameras to obviously fake backgrounds. The kooky deadpan slapstick would normally work. However, this film is in Spanish with subtitles, which makes it hard going for a comedy. The story of a simple Mexican lad fighting a drugs cartel and getting the beautiful girl could have been a sure-fire hit, but here the familiar formula fails.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



WRATH OF THE TITANS out October 15

THE original *Clash of the Titans* used to be one of my favourite films, with its dodgy skeletons, bad Medusa and a mechanical owl. The remake was awful; slapstick in comedy and nowhere near as epic, despite the special effects. *Wrath of the Titans* is a vast improvement on the *Clash* rehash, spoilt only by **Liam Neeson's** bad acting. On the plus side, the computer-generated elements are awesome and the battles are enormous. Another positive is the beautiful **Rosamund Pike**, who features as the warrior Queen Andromeda.

Capt Nick Mazzei, AGC (ETS)



THE VICTIM out now

A PAIR of young girls run afoul of a couple of corrupt cops and, while fleeing for their lives, come across a strange hermit living in the woods. The question is whether he will be their saviour or another victim. For his directorial debut, *Terminator* star **Michael Biehn** has ventured into "Grindhouse" territory, a genre he clearly knows well. Sporadic violence and nasty characters populate this thriller, with a gritty performance from the director himself. This is an engaging movie that maintains its grip on the viewer until the end.

Cpl Jools Finch, MPGS



BLACKTHORN out now

THIS movie supposes that Butch Cassidy survived the famous shoot-out with the Bolivian military in 1908 and builds a story around what might have happened to him. In the hands of director **Mateo Gil** the tale is entertainingly told and evokes many classic westerns of old. **Sam Shepard** excels in the lead role of an aged robber planning his return to the US while being pursued by a dangerous posse. *Blackthorn* wrings real emotion from the notorious outlaw's situation and serves as an excellent nostalgic sequel.

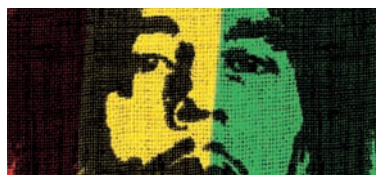
Cpl Jools Finch, MPGS



MY WAY out now

IT is a shame that this is one of the biggest budget films you'll probably never see. Foreign language features are rarely a first choice for a Western audience but this epic tale of a Korean athlete, forced into fighting for the Japanese during the Second World War, demands an airing. Life-long friendships are tested in prisoner camps as survival and fanaticism compete, while power gives way to sacrifice on the battlefield. The action scenes, which required an unprecedented arsenal of vehicles, are well worth tuning in for.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



MARLEY out now

THIS is a bio-doc about the legendary singer-songwriter **Bob Marley**, told through the eyes of producer **Kevin Macdonald**. If you're into the musician you will be riveted but if you're not, you will be reaching for the stop button. Although the filmmaker is clearly a fan of his subject this is not a one-sided voice. *Marley* is a very open and sometimes controversial feature charting the life of reggae's most famous star through a series of interviews and concert footage. The film received critical acclaim upon its theatre release and rightly so.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

Interview: Joe Clapson

BOASTING an ultimate dream team of comic book heroes, there was always a significant risk that *Avengers Assemble* would not meet lofty expectations.

But worry not, Marvel's latest big-budget production is first class.

For fans of the genre this is silverscreen paradise with Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr), Captain America (Chris Evans), Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) and the Hulk (Mark Ruffalo) all playing big parts in a story scripted and directed by the imaginative creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Joss Whedon.

The film's over-the-top action centres on the caped and muscle-bound crusaders' bid to thwart the nefarious Loki (Tom Hiddleston), who has designs on taking over the planet, and will delight comic book buffs.

But *Avengers Assemble* is not the sole preserve of Marvel anoraks – it will also appeal to those looking for a colourful alternative to the usual run-of-the-mill rom-com or bio-pic.

Canadian actress Cobie Smulders, who plays Maria Hill, an agent working for Shield – the peacekeeping force responsible for assembling the movie's graphic novel protagonists, is a perfect case in point.

Despite being more accustomed to appearing in television sitcoms than superhero flicks, the star of *How I Met Your Mother* was quickly charmed by the fantasy feature.

"I spent hours online researching and purchasing comic books to learn more," said the 30-year-old.

"Joss wrote such a great script and he knows more about this world than I do so I came in asking him questions.

"I showed up on the enormous set on day one and there were hundreds of extras walking around in Shield uniforms.

"It was like a whole other ball game and the scale of that alone blew my mind."

Enlightened to the merits of Marvel, Smulders explained that sharing a screen with a plethora of prime physiques also served to sculpt her physically.

"It was almost like the best possible movie I could do in this genre," said the former model.

"To help with the transition I did lots of training and I went boxing a few times a week."

And after being part of the third biggest movie of all time, with global box office takings that exceeded \$1 billion after just 19 days, Smulders is keen to stay aboard the *Avengers* freight train.

"I'd love to be a part of Shield for as long as they'll have me," she added.

"It's cool and interesting to be a part of this world. I have no idea how they'll do it. But I will do whatever they say, as long as I can play Maria." ■

OLIVAS

PICK OF THE MONTH:
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE

COMIC CARNIVAL

SUPERHEROES UNITE
AGAINST EVIL

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games

A screenshot from the game Aerial Assault. In the foreground, a biplane with a red nose and olive drab body is flying towards the viewer. In the background, a large battleship with multiple gun turrets is on the water. The background shows a hilly coastline under a clear sky.

OCTOBER'S
CONSOLE CAMPAIGN

PICK OF THE MONTH:

AERIAL ASSAULT

PACIFIC SQUADRON DOMINATES THE SKIES IN FIGHT
FOR SUPREMACY DURING SECOND WORLD WAR

Review: Richard Long

WITH a steady stream of military titles flooding the market, developers are constantly searching for innovative ways to make their hot releases stand out from the crowd.

While offerings such as *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* rely on their impressive track records to maintain a strong and steady fan base, newcomers have to adopt a novel approach to combat if they are to achieve a semblance of success.

Taking to the skies hardly seems unique, but *Damage Inc Pacific Squadron WWII* boasts an expansive aerial battleground that forms the backdrop to more than 12 hours of dogfights and campaign missions.

Set in the Pacific theatre, the game springs to life during the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour and follows the story of pilot Bobby – whose brother is killed by the Japanese – and his efforts to defend military strongholds from the enemy.

This lone crusade is noble enough but it also forms one of this release's many faults as the actor voicing our young hero is wooden in the extreme and the cut scenes are tiresome at best.

With an aerial arsenal of more than 30 aircraft to select from there is plenty of scope when it comes to waging war.

Unfortunately, the on-screen recreations lack the style and sheen of the real-life machines as the graphics fail to fully deliver.

The same can be said for the ground buildings and other targets, which have a distinctly low-resolution feel.

Players can unlock upgraded versions of each plane as the war unfolds which is the developers' attempt to add a feeling of technological advancement between 1941 and 1945.

This approach means shooting down opposing aircraft becomes more difficult, as the progression makes them more agile and better armoured.

The game features more than 20 missions consisting of hundreds of objectives in 11 different campaign areas and while this implies a sense of longevity, the reality is that sorties can become a tad repetitive and somewhat boring.

Combat is made easier thanks to a slow-motion option that can be activated at the push of a button.

This aid reduces enemy planes to the pace of a crawl and allows ample time for Bobby to calmly take aim before blowing his rival from the sky.

While this is a helpful addition it also takes away the skill and edge needed for victory in a dogfight.

The online and multiplayer options allow you to fly alone, alongside or against teammates and this is probably the best source of fun within the *Damage Inc* realm.

On the whole, this is unlikely to threaten the gaming world's top military titles due to its lack of variety.

There is enjoyment to be had but there is only so much flying and shooting at Japanese planes you can do before finding better ways to spend your time. ■

VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND

DARKSIDERS 2

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

THIS is an old-school action adventure title that offers a massive quest and simple puzzles. It has a feel of *Tomb Raider* and *Devil May Cry* and while the graphics and sound are nice and clear, I feel it could be better. At the end of each scenario you have to fight bosses, which range from large to ludicrous, with the biggest being the least interesting to battle. As you play along you can upgrade armour and weapons and unlock a selection of spells and other helpful items. Some may find these games fun, but it is less gripping than other releases in the genre.



Cpl Neil Edwards, R Signals

NHL 13

for Xbox 360/PS3

WITH a new update hitting shelves every year, the developers behind *NHL* must be in constant search for innovative ways to refresh the gameplay in this series. The 2013 variant has introduced true performance skating to capture the explosive speed and power of the sport's top stars, while a completely overhauled AI system results in quicker, sharper and more realistic decision making on the ice. These additions combine well with the solid foundations of earlier titles to make *NHL 13* a decent game, even if it takes some getting used to.



Andrew Simms, Soldier

WORMS COLLECTION

for Xbox 360/PS3

AS a young fusilier I had many a fun afternoon smashing up my platoon muckers with a well-aimed rocket or an exploding sheep. This title is nothing new and some might say it is an odd release as *Worms: Armageddon* is all you will ever need. For those unfamiliar with the series, you take turns controlling worms with the aim of destroying your rivals. The fun comes from the weapons used to eliminate your opponents and if there is one game you need in a FOB/PB, it's this one. This compilation is a great way to decide whose turn it is to do the evening's pan bashing.



Cpl Mike O'Neill, RLC

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

for Xbox 360/PS3/Wii

DESPITE coming more than a decade after the original, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* certainly proves to be worth the wait. Fans of the series will find plenty to enjoy here, with more than 50 fighters, a host of game modes and some stunning graphics on offer. Newcomers to the franchise should not worry though as skills can be perfected in the all-encompassing fight lab before heading to the opening bout. The only slight downside is that the controls are somewhat difficult to learn, but once mastered the entertainment value is seemingly endless.

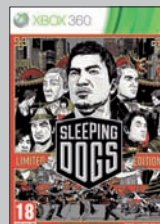


Richard Long, Soldier

SLEEPING DOGS

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

SET in Hong Kong, this title sees you take on the role of an undercover cop attempting to infiltrate the higher echelons of a triad organisation via drug busts, street racing and inter-gang rivalry. As with other games of this genre, there is a plethora of side quests to complete and these give you credits to increase your skills and fight moves. Although not breaking new ground, this is the best Sand Box release I have played for a long time. It never takes itself too seriously and the graphics are nothing special, but I still felt a desire to come back for more.



Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps

MADDEN NFL 13

for Xbox 360/PS3/Wii

ALONGSIDE the *Fifa* series, *Madden* has been the flag bearer for Electronic Arts' impressive sporting portfolio over the past decade and beyond. The latest addition to the fold features all the glitz and glamour of the gridiron world, even including a few "messages from our sponsors". Those lacking an understanding of the many plays of American football may struggle to begin with, but once a basic grasp of tactics is achieved the touchdowns will start to flow and dreams of Superbowl glory will almost become reality.



Richard Long, Soldier

miss

OCTOBER'S
WALL OF SOUND



PICK OF THE MONTH:
BACK WITH A BANG
QUEEN OF ATTITUDE RETURNS

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

Review: Richard Long

AMONG the plethora of American pop princesses flooding the musical mainstream, P!nk has always stood out from the crowd thanks to her unique style and attitude.

This approach has certainly paid dividends as the Pennsylvania native has sold in excess of 30 million albums since making her debut in 2000.

Having taken time out of the limelight to start a family, the star has made a welcome return with her sixth studio offering – *The Truth About Love*.

The record sees her joining forces with producer Greg Austin (Lily Allen, Red Hot Chili Peppers and The Shins) for the first time, while a roll-call of long-term collaborators including Max Martin, Billy Mann and Butch Walker make a welcome return.

With a strong supporting cast in place it is clear P!nk is determined to continue her career with a bang and the joys of motherhood have done little to dent her raw and almost punkish approach.

The album can be segregated into two distinct styles as guitar-driven bad-girl pop anthems weave between simple, but sometimes uninspiring, ballads.

Tracks such as *Slut Like You* and *Here Comes The Weekend* offer a strong rock 'n' roll sound but they unfortunately characterise an artist trying a little too hard to push the musical boundaries.

However, when P!nk forgets such complexities and sticks to what she does best this record ticks all the right boxes.

Lead single *Blow Me (One Last Kiss)* is a pure pop classic that grows impressively from a mid-tempo start, while standout track *Try* has all the trademarks of a future international hit.

While attempting to be edgy, naughty and trendy on the one hand, the album delivers more than its fair share of low key slow burners on the other.

Motivational ballad *The Great Escape* is perhaps a little too sickly as it tackles the trappings of substance abuse, but the other offerings in this field are much better.

All in all, *The Truth About Love* delivers exactly what we have come to expect from a singer who has worked tirelessly to create her own niche in a congested market.

The attitude and bad language remain in place but, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it is the strength and range in P!nk's voice that shine through as her main selling point. ■

Babel by Mumford and Sons

IN *Sigh No More*, Mumford and Sons produced an album that made folk accessible to the masses. Successfully following up on such an earnest effort was always going to be difficult, but it is clear from the first enthusiastic twangs of *Babel* that the band has achieved it. From the raucous title track to banjo-laden *Whispers in the Dark* and reflective slow-burner *Hopeless Wanderer*, they stick to what they know best without sounding like a carbon copy of what went before. Not only have they matched their debut, this lively, heartfelt record may even have surpassed it.



Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier

Screaming for Vengeance

THIS is a remastered celebration of 30 years at the sharp end and Rob Halford and co have added tracks from a show in San Antonio and a live DVD to what is an iconic British metal album. *Vengeance* is Judas Priest in all its studded leather-clad magnificence. The record kicks off with *Hellion/Evil Eye* and its galloping guitar riff and also contains hit single *You've Got Another Thing Comin'*. However, the title track is best enjoyed as one of the live bonuses, where Halford's stratospheric six-octave vocal range is proved to be anything other than a studio-engineered phenomenon.



Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

Coexist by The xx

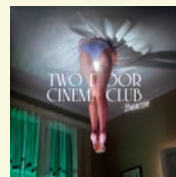
IF ever a record screamed winter, *Coexist* is it. The icy electronic soundscapes and hushed vocals make you want to huddle round the speakers, but each track hides enough spark to keep you warm. Ostensibly a love album, it opens with the dreamy *Angels* and understated *Chained* before mixing things up with steel drums in *Reunion* and a classic house beat in *Swept Away*. The hypnotic sound of *Sunset* is a particular highlight. The variety prevents the songs sounding too samey and in an age of sugary-sweet R&B and pop featuring fake tales of love and loss, *The xx's* latest album is a trip worth taking.



Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier

Beacon by Two Door Cinema Club

NORTHERN Irish trio Two Door Cinema Club enjoyed notable success with debut offering *Tourist History* and this swift follow-up builds impressively on those foundations. The indie-pop vibe continues on tracks such as *Handshake* and *Sleep Alone* and while these are enjoyable enough, it is hard to escape the feeling that this album could benefit from an extra injection of energy and greater backbone. However, *Beacon* should not be instantly dismissed and signs of progression are evident within the music, unfortunately it is just a little too similar to what has gone before.



Richard Long, Soldier

Contact by The Noisettes

THE different musical tastes of a pair of divas merge on this third album, which flits comfortably from electro-pop and bossa nova to country and doo-wop sounds. The offering doesn't slot into a specific genre and the two-piece aren't really comparable to another act, which is refreshing. But, as expected with *The Noisettes'* material, everything on the recording has positivity about it. The standout track is the pop-soul toe-tapper *That Girl* but *Ragtop Car* and *Contact* also showcase Shingai Shoniwa's sensational voice. Fans of *Wild Young Hearts* won't be disappointed – this is one to play loudly.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

Come of Age by The Vaccines

WITH the album title and an experimentation with new musical sounds it is clear *The Vaccines* want to mark themselves out as a serious rock band. In their defence, the likes of *Bad Mood* will get crowds going and stick in your head. But, it is not going to define a generation. Despite mimicking other styles, such as a strange impersonation of *Bob Dylan* on *No Hope*, the best tracks come from taking hints from their first album, like with *Weirdo* and *Lonely World*. Although the group are regarded as one of Britain's brightest up-and-coming acts, this offering is far from ground-breaking and is average at best.

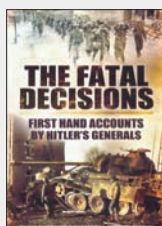


Joe Clapson, Soldier

RECONNOITRING READING

The Fatal Decisions edited by Richardson & Freidlin

MUCH has been made of the many occasions when Adolf Hitler overruled his general staff and affected the fortunes of the Third Reich during the Second World War. Using the personal recollections of some of those officers, **William Richardson** and **Seymour Freidlin** take a very close look at some of the dictator's most significant mistakes. The accounts include such pivotal campaigns as the Battle of Britain, Stalingrad, France 1944 and the Ardennes. This is a true fly-on-the-wall tale of some of the most far-reaching decisions of the war.

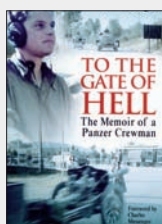


Maj Mike Peters, AAC

To the Gate of Hell

by Armin Bottger

UNEVEN editing of this narrative epitomises this book as the reminiscences of a veteran reflecting on his time in uniform. It jumps from the simple day-to-day concerns of a Wehrmacht soldier (girls, food and staying alive) to his view of his hierarchy and disdain for the Third Reich. Carrying a camera in his pistol holster allowed this Panzer radio operator to illustrate his story with his friends, his training and his battles, often in retreat, against the advancing Russian army. A short and easily-read view from a rank-and-file perspective.

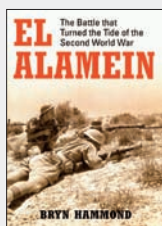


Maj Toby Hamnett, AGC (ALS)

El Alamein

by Bryn Hammond

THIS book, like many before it, charts the turning point in the Land Forces campaign against Axis forces in Egypt during the Second World War. The author has used a wealth of audio interviews, quotes and documents to present the battle from the point of view of both sides. The human aspect sets *El Alamein* aside from those of its predecessors focused purely on tactics. It details the failings prior to Montgomery's command and talks of the inspiration and morale boost his leadership provided for the soldiers on the front line.

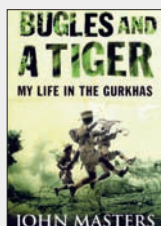


Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps

Bugles and a Tiger

by John Masters

A REPRINT of the 1956 original, this light read by **John Masters** is his account of service with a Gurkha battalion in 1930s India. The book follows the author's journey through Sandhurst to his consternation at immediate appointment to company command, as was the policy with the Army in India. Masters' offering is notably an exploration of the human spirit in soldiering. Frontier operations bordering Afghanistan feature heavily with the consistent and now familiar themes of intelligence, precision and proportionality. A must read for those with Gurkha experience.



Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

If You're Reading This...

by Sian Price

WRITTEN by soldiers from the battlefields, this collection of farewell letters highlights a remarkable similarity of thought regardless of the war, the nationality, culture or upbringing of the correspondent. Those featured – men who paid the ultimate sacrifice, be it during the Napoleonic War or in Afghanistan – talk about the love for their family and friends, recollect happy times in the past and seldom mention dying in conflict. *If You're Reading This...* captures the mood and feelings of men writing their last letter home. A compelling book probably best read in small tranches.

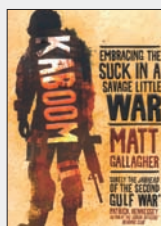


Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Kaboom

by Matt Gallagher

THE author deployed to Iraq in late 2007 and began to blog his experiences in the Sunni heartland to the west of Baghdad. His dispatches were cut off by his chain of command in mid-2008 but *Kaboom* recounts his entire tour. The title is reminiscent of **Patrick Hennessey's** *The Junior Officer's Reading Club* in tone and criticism of the generational gap between regimental and field/staff officers and **Anthony Swofford's** *Jarhead* in its critique of military life. Proof, if needed, that Britons and Americans are one people divided by a common language.



SSgt Paul Barnes, AGC (SPS)

Interview: Richard Long

WHEN the Olympic flame snaked its way across Great Britain ahead of the summer's Games, the nation absorbed a plethora of inspirational stories stemming from those carrying it.

The relay gave everyone from charity workers to community heroes the chance to shine and for one former soldier the experience proved to be particularly overwhelming.

Andy Coogan was given the honour of performing the Dundee leg and while he was nominated for a lifetime's service to athletics, his amazing story is about far more than a career in track and field.

The 95-year-old, who is the great uncle of cycling legend Sir Chris Hoy, overcame starvation, torture and disease as a Japanese prisoner of war and his harrowing tale of survival has been vividly recounted in *Tomorrow You Die*.

After signing an undertaking with the British government at the end of the Second World War, Coogan agreed to never talk about his time in captivity but a reunion organised by the Lanarkshire Yeomanry History Group inspired him to finally shed light on the horrors he faced.

"I wanted to tell my story as a tribute to the men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, who stuck together in the most extreme circumstances and got us through hell," he told *Soldier*.

"We all signed an agreement to keep quiet about our time as prisoners and also about what we saw in Nagasaki after the bomb was dropped.

"So I remained silent but we all had tales to tell and everybody wanted to get on with their lives. It was really only after the reunion that I wanted to document my story.

"I was quite lucky because I have a fantastic memory and a lot of the things that happened to us you could never forget, even if you wanted to.

"It was difficult sometimes though and quite distressing having to relive the horrors of the battle of Malaya and our captivity. I still have nightmares all these years later.

"We were a forgotten army out in the Far East. Naturally, the priority was to defend Britain and defeat the Germans. But the fall of Singapore was the nation's biggest ever military disaster and I think we were seen as an embarrassment to the establishment.

"If it had not been for the work of the Far East Prisoners of War Association we would have been totally forgotten. It is important that the public should know about the crimes that were committed against us."

Coogan's fantastic memory has delivered an action-packed biography that graphically captures the brutality of the Japanese army during the author's three-and-a-half-year spell in captivity.

The catalogue of atrocities makes for grim reading at times, particularly the treatment of sick and wounded soldiers, and the total lack of humanity shown by captors is hard to digest.

But the story is an important one to tell and while thousands perished at the hands of such an evil regime, it is difficult not to take a great sense of pride in the brave troops who held firm to the very end.

As a talented runner Coogan saw his Olympic hopes disappear with the outbreak of war, but his survival in such bleak circumstances proved to be one of the biggest victories of his life. ■



PICK OF THE MONTH:

COOGAN'S RUN

PRISONER OF WAR RELAYS FEAT OF
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ENDURANCE



Brutal biography: Andy Coogan's Second World War memoirs are out now in hardback priced £18.99 (Mainstream Publishing)

Main picture: Alan Richardson, Pix-AR.co.uk



RACY RIDE

PICK OF THE MONTH:

THE RULING CLASS

BMW HP4 SPORT BLOWS RIVALS OUT OF THE WATER WITH LIGHTER AND QUICKER TOUCH

Pictures: Source



Review: John Hogan

WHEN BMW Motorrad unveiled the amazing *S1000RR* back in 2010, you could almost hear the Japanese manufacturers laughing, "look at the silly lights, they don't even match!".

And then they would have ridden it, considered what they had to offer in return and scratched their heads.

As a road bike, out of the box and with nothing more than a tank of unleaded, it wiped the floor with its rivals.

Traction control that works, 190bhp at the wheel and anti-lock brakes were all available for less than the price of almost all the competition.

You could commute to work in the lashing rain, with the heated grips on and a smile on your face, just as easily as you could roll up for a track day, nonchalantly push a few buttons and run at the front of the fastest pack.

If the original *S1000RR* threw the rule book for making a 1,000cc sports bike out the window, this *HP4* version finds that rulebook, kills it, buries it then digs it up and kills it again.

Aside from the traction control getting a stack more adjustability, the model has launch control, race anti-lock brakes and semi-active suspension.

The last of those features will leave you wondering what the hell just happened after a test ride.

Imagine having a couple of midgets along every time you head out on the road.

Not only are they really good at hanging on, they're also reading the road and making subtle tweaks to your suspension.

Compression and rebound damping is electronically adjusted in milliseconds on the fly, leaving you free to make the most of that power.

Essentially, these changes have been made so that BMW can homologate the *HP4* for racing in a bid to make the bike as successful as the road version.

There's so much more to it than this page space can do justice, but the bottom line is that this new model is lighter – and therefore quicker – than the standard *S1000RR* offering.

It has got more trick kit than a bootneck's belt and, with a price tag of around £18,000, you need to start saving those pennies now. ■

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THE most characterful Japanese sports bike for years, the *R1* now comes with six level traction control. The cross-plane crank's inline four needs pipes to be fully appreciated. Spend some time on this and you will really gel with it. But don't expect to fall in love after a measly test ride. If it's good enough for Tommy Hill... Buy for **£11,999**.



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A LITTLE bit dull in comparison to the other bikes on this page. Ridden in isolation, the *Fireblade* feels like the perfect litre bike, regardless of the missing traction control. Comfortable, capable and really easy to go fast on, the Honda was the benchmark. Now it's more the whipping boy. Buy for **£11,300**.



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SOLDIER SPORT

SERVICE SNOWBOARDERS HIT THE INDOOR SLOPES FOR WINTER SEASON OPENER

PICTURE: GRAEME MAIN



Big hitters fire REME to glory

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

APOTENT top order display from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' batsmen provided the platform for a five-run triumph against the Royal Signals in the Army Inter-Corps Twenty20 final.

Opener LCpl Clive Kyangungu (pictured) set the tone with a rapid-fire knock of 50 from just 33 balls as last year's runners-up posted a healthy total of 165-8 in their innings.

The signallers made a blistering start in reply but with the required rate steadily creeping upwards they fell agonisingly short on 160-5 – despite some final over fireworks from wicketkeeper Sgt Stu Houghton.

After winning the toss and electing to bat, the REME took full advantage of the early fielding restrictions with a boundary-laden partnership from Kyangungu and Cfn Stu Tognarelli.

The duo smashed 61 runs from the first six overs before the latter fell to Sig Patrick Joseph for 24.

Kyangungu continued the brutal assault but on reaching his half-century he was stumped off the bowling of Cpl Ray Harrison.

Army batsman WO2 Steve Hole kept the runs flowing with a well-composed 47 but a devastating late burst from Sig Craig Lewin brought the innings to a quiet close.

The pace ace recorded figures of 5-21 as the REME middle order struggled for runs late on.

Having excelled with the bat, Kyangungu claimed the early wicket of WO2 Ross Thubron to leave the signallers on 12-1 in the second over.

But Sig Jordan Baczkiewicz repaired the damage in a 66-run stand with all-rounder Joseph before being caught in the deep after bringing up his 50.

Spinner LCpl Jonathan Boynton captured the prize wicket of Joseph for 44 and Sgt Keith Ford was run out for 26 as the pressure mounted.

With 25 needed off the final over the REME were seemingly in control. Houghton managed to hit two booming sixes and a four at the death but with

deliveries rapidly running out his side fell just short.

Speaking at the end of the contest, REME batsman Cpl Mike Hill praised his team's efforts in what was a challenging competition.

"We have come through a tough run of four matches in three days and you've got to have something about you to win all of them," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I'm delighted for everyone in the team and I was hoping to win as this was my last Twenty20 game for the REME side.

"We had to hit as many runs as possible and we did very well to get the total we did. I think the pressure got to them towards the end of the innings and they just couldn't get over the line.

"Clive Kyangungu did a great job at the top of the order. That was his second 50 of the week and he also bowled a good, controlled spell to keep the score down."

The Royal Engineers won the plate competition, beating the Royal Artillery by three runs in the final. ■



Up for the cup: The Royal Artillery overpowered the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers to claim an emphatic 181-run victory in the Power Cup final

Heyns signs off in style as gunners run riot

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

A SUPERB knock of 96 from Bdr Muzza Heyns fired the Royal Artillery to a comfortable victory in cricket's Power Cup final in Aldershot.

The Army batsman suffered an unfortunate run out as he chased a century in his final Service innings, but his effort in the middle saw the gunners set a competitive total of 246-8.

In reply, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – who celebrated victory in the Inter-Corps Twenty20 final a week earlier – crumbled to a miserable 65 all out in what proved to be a distinctly one-sided contest.

Batting first, the Royal Artillery suffered an early setback but the brilliance of Heyns, who posted his runs off just 108 deliveries, ensured the scoreboard kept ticking over.

Gnr Nick Schofield and WO2 Chris Grant made useful contributions before 2nd Lt Rich Warner smashed an unbeaten 43 to give his team the momentum at the halfway point.

The REME top order then failed to cope with the gunners' opening barrage as wickets tumbled at regular intervals.

Capt Steve Booth was the chief tormenter, recording superb figures of 4-11 from seven overs, while Schofield claimed 3-20 in his spell. Lt Col James Cotterill took 2-9 to complete the rout.

Speaking at the end of the contest, Heyns, who is leaving the Army after a ten-year career, told *SoldierSport* he was delighted with the outcome after some doubts at the start of the day.

"It is fantastic," he said. "We felt that we did not have our strongest side out but we turned up with great heart and performed superbly as a team.

"On a personal note, you can score 200 and still lose a game. I didn't quite get to three figures but the team stuck together, everyone chipped in and we gave a great performance in the field.

"I will miss this tremendously. I've represented the gunners, the Army and the Combined Services and have built some great friendships." ■



Army crushed in T20 showdown

A SPECTACULAR batting collapse ended the Army's hopes of victory in the women's Inter-Services Twenty20 cricket tournament in Aldershot.

Chasing a target of 140 against the Royal Air Force in the final game, the Reds raced to 37-0 from four overs before crumbling to a meagre 46 all out to hand the title to their opponents.

Having tasted defeat against the Royal Navy, and with the light blues beating the Senior Service, the fixture formed a must-win game for the hosts.

But a ruthless RAF side were simply too strong for the Army, who conceded 46 extras in the field and saw only two players reach double figures with the bat.

Opener Flt Lt Alice Kelly set the visitors on their way with a knock of 44, before Flt Lt Harriett Tadikonda maintained the

momentum with an unbeaten 33.

The duo repeated their fine form with the ball as Kelly claimed 2-21 and Tadikonda returned outstanding figures of 5-3 from just 2.4 overs as the Reds' batting line-up was blown away.

The action continues this month as players from all three sides travel to Sri Lanka for a two-week tour with the Combined Services.

"The Marylebone Cricket Club ladies went there two years ago and that marked the start of the competitive women's scene in the country," explained Col (Retd) Peter Sharland, secretary of the Army Cricket Association.

"We are following in their footsteps. The Combined Services have been playing for five years now but this is the first tour."

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Picture: Sgt Alison Baskerville, RLC

King of the court: LCpl Netra Rana (1 RGR) was part of the Great Britain team that reached the sitting volleyball quarter finals at the London Paralympics

Servicemen revel in Games spotlight

Report: Richard Long

PARALYMPIC rower Capt Nick Beighton (RE) saw his medal hopes dashed by the narrowest of margins as a photo finish robbed him of a podium place at London 2012.

Competing alongside Sam Scowen in the mixed double scull, the officer (pictured below) had to settle for fourth place after a three-way battle for bronze resulted in glory for American pair Oksana Masters and Rob Jones.

The British crew qualified for the final following a superb showing in the repechage after they finished second behind the French boat in their heat.



China's Lou Xiaoxian and Fei Tianming dominated the medal race and led from the 300-metre mark, while France's Perle Bouge and Stephane Tardieu took silver.

"It's bittersweet," Beighton said at the end of the final. "We are so proud of what we have achieved. We have worked so hard. You always aim for the top and we gave it everything. You win some; you lose some. When you put it all in perspective, we've achieved a huge amount."

Scowen added: "I didn't expect to get to a Paralympic final but I'm gutted to miss out on a medal by such a small margin."

Beighton, who lost both legs above the knee in an IED blast in Helmand province, only started rowing two years ago and said competing at the Games had been a huge boost in his recovery process.

"The Paralympics are a great vehicle for getting people out and getting their confidence back at the grassroots level of sport," he added.

Pte Derek Derenalagi (2 Mercian) echoed those sentiments after he finished 11th in the F57 discus final.

He said: "Paralympic sport helps to rehabilitate soldiers to get back to normal life again. It's very important for troops returning from Afghanistan or anywhere in the world, and even those who are injured at home."

Derenalagi (pictured right), who lost both legs when the vehicle he was travelling in was struck by a roadside bomb in Helmand in 2007, received a rousing reception from the Olympic Stadium crowd but faced the daunting

prospect of competing in an impressively strong field.

The soldier's throw of 39.37 metres earned 771 points, but with Russia's Alexy Ashapatov recording a distance of 60.72 metres he finished some way off the gold standard.

"Going into the stadium and performing in front of 80,000 people, I'm just humbled by the route that I've taken, not giving up and then taking up Paralympic sport," he said.

LCpl Netra Rana (1 RGR) completed the Army's Games roster in the men's sitting volleyball, but the British squad slipped to a 3-0 defeat to Iran at the quarter-final stage. ■



SPORT SHORTS

■ **RACERS** from the Samsung Honda team hosted troops from personnel recovery units at a qualifying day for the British Superbike Series.

Wounded and sick soldiers were given close access to several star riders including Gnr Sam Banda (RA), who competes in the Triumph Triple Challenge event.

Sharon Salle, transport clerk at 145 Brigade PRU and widow of grand prix motorcycle racer Mark Salle, said: "It was a really interactive day and the riders were very respectful of the work the Services do."

■ **THE Army Triathlon Association** is holding a number of training weekends over the winter months.

Sessions will be open to athletes of all abilities, from squad members to complete beginners. The programme will focus on the swim, bike and run disciplines as well as strength and conditioning and core stability.

Lectures are also being planned in subjects such as nutrition, planning a race season, how to structure training regimes and

recovery techniques.

The events will be held in Aldershot from November 24-25, January 26-27 and March 9-10, with Catterick hosting a session from February 23-24.

For more information contact WO1 Nick Lees on 01980 656814 or nicholas.lees874@mod.uk

Further information is also available from the Army Triathlon Association page on Armynet.

■ **THE 2012 leg of the Help for Heroes** 4x4 European Rally raised more than £192,000 for the military charity.

Starting on the byways of Salisbury Plain, the drivers travelled to mainland Europe where they visited the First World War battlefields of the Somme and Ypres.

Applications can now be made for the 2013 event, which will follow the route of the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944-45. Visit www.h4hrally.co.uk

■ **WEYBRIDGE Rugby Football Club** has donated 250 shirts to Service personnel bound for Kenya in a bid to help the sport's development in the African country.

Soldiers from the Military Stabilisation Support Group will take the kit with them when they start their deployment next month.

It is hoped the shirts can be used to strengthen relationships in local communities and expand Kenyan rugby at a junior level.



Picture: Graeme Main

High roller: Bdr Paul Martlow (RA) starts the winter season in style at the Army indoor championships

Snowboarders take flight

ARMY snowboarders returned to action last month as the sport staged its second annual indoor competition at Hemel Hempstead.

Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) took the overall title, finishing ahead of SSgt John Craig (RAPTC) in second and Sgt Danny Davis (19 Regt RA) in third.

The winter sports stars are now preparing for a busy period on the slopes, with a number of events looming on the horizon.

They travel to Stubai, in Austria, for the Army freestyle championships this month, before attention turns to the

Inter-Services showdown in the French resort of Meribel.

The competition will be staged from February 2-9 and the Army men will be hoping to retain their title from earlier this year, while the women will be looking to triumph against the Royal Air Force following their slender ten-point defeat at the same event.

The competitive season comes to a close with the full Army Championships in March.

For more information on the discipline and details of all upcoming fixtures visit www.awsa.org.uk/discipline/snowboard

Corps shine bright in season opener

THE Adjutant General's Corps enjoyed a successful start to the new Rugby Union campaign by winning two out of three titles at the season's opening tournament in Aldershot.

A host of teams were in action at the corps festival and a try in each half from Capt Alexis Coxon (pictured) steered the AGC women to a 10-0 win over the Royal Artillery in the first final.

The men faced a tough challenge in the league two showpiece and found themselves trailing the Royal Army Physical Training Corps 14-7 at half-time.

But a four-try burst in the second

period turned the contest in their favour and they celebrated a 31-14 victory. The Royal Engineers

took the league one crown following a keenly contested final against the Royal Logistic Corps.

A 0-0 interval scoreline reflected the tight nature of the match but a try from Spr Noxi Laqekoro set the sappers on their way five minutes into the second half.

OCdt William Reeve extended the lead with a penalty before Pte Joe Ranuku gave the loggies hope with a late score in the corner.

However, LCpl Gerhard Wessels sealed their fate as he pounced on a loose ball to secure a 17-5 victory.





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Rugby's momentum man

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

HAVING seen the Army Rugby Union team achieve a remarkable run of success in the last two years, new head coach SSgt Axel Rees (REME) is aware of the enormity of the task he faces.

Under the guidance of Capt Andy Sanger (RE) the Reds won the inaugural International Defence Rugby Competition and inflicted two thumping defeats on arch rivals the Royal Navy at Twickenham.

Rees was identified as the man to continue the momentum after a steady rise through the game's coaching ranks and the 41-year-old is relishing the opportunity of building on his predecessor's impressive foundations.

"This is the proudest moment of my Army career, it is the pinnacle of anything I've ever done," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I have worked my way up through the corps and academy levels and now I'm getting the top job.

"My aim is to carry on the progress from the last two years and try to move the team on to another level.

"Andy took over after a loss at Twickenham in 2010 but he had a massive achievement in winning the defence world cup.

"The Army has won everything in the sevens this year and the under-23s were also Inter-Services champions last season.

"I have got to make sure that success continues as we are there to be shot down."

Rees, who only retired from playing three years ago, made the step up after leading the Reds' young guns last term and is now finalising his coaching team before turning his attention to matters on the pitch.

"I have got until January before I name my squads for the senior and A teams," he explained.

"My aim is to visit every rugby officer in the Army, get their fixture lists and identify new talent.

"That is not just in the UK, but Germany as well.

"It is a definite open-door policy

and the database of players I have received is fantastic.

"We will lose blokes to deployments and redundancy but we have guys coming back from operational tours. Hopefully they will return in good physical condition.

"I also know what talent there is coming through from the under-23s and some of them may well be ready to make the step up.

"We have already had 40 or 50 guys putting their names forward for that squad so the players are out there."

The coach conceded that Inter-Services success is this season's

top priority but he has also set his sights on claiming some notable scalps among the sport's professional ranks.

Rees said: "The Navy game is our biggest target but we have also been getting a lot closer in our fixtures against A teams from the likes of Northampton Saints and Worcester Warriors.

"One of our aims is to pinch a win in those matches.

"We know we are always going to be up against it as they have full-time players on their books, but we are closing the gap." ■



FULL THROTTLE

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

MISSION Motorsport's top racers are bracing themselves for a true test of their skill behind the wheel as they take to the track for this season's Britcar 24-hour event.

The four-strong team, which includes three wounded soldiers, will be competing under the charity's banner at Silverstone in what is considered to be the UK's premier endurance race.

A superb showing at last year's motoring marathon saw the Mazda MX-5 crew finish 24th in a field of 60 competitors but a new-look outfit will be taking to the grid for the 2012 leg.

Mission Motorsport co-founder Maj Jim Cameron (2 RTR) is leading the charge in the team's Nissan 370Z and will be ably supported by drivers Sgt Gary Dunning (RLC), Tpr James Gillborn (9/12 L) and LCpl Martyn Copleston (2 RTR).

"Last year the Mazda gave us an introduction to the Britcar 24 and we



● LCpl Copleston



● Sgt Dunning

had some good support from wounded blokes who were working in the pit lane," Cameron told *SoldierSport*.

"This year we are using injured soldiers who have come through the driver training programme.

"As with any endurance event, our first goal is to finish. We have taken a group of individuals and moulded them into a team, but it is not just about the drivers, the whole package has to be right.

"To complete the race would be fantastic but once we are on the track we

will be picking our targets and aiming for other competitors in the field."

As part of their preparations for the event, the Servicemen received expert tuition from five-time Le Mans winner Derek Bell at the Thruxton Race Circuit.

Cameron said: "I approached him and explained what we were doing and he was happy to help out.

"We could not have asked for a better instructor and he will be joining Sir Stirling Moss as a patron of the charity.

"We are also very excited to have Nissan on-board. They have a wonderful history of taking guys from zero to hero within motorsport.

"Our efforts in Britcar 24 would not be possible without partners such as these."

Mission Motorsport celebrated its official launch in March and offers injured personnel a taste of life in the fast lane, while also providing vocational opportunities for those considering a career outside the Service.

The initial aim was to introduce 60 injured soldiers to the various disciplines

on offer, but more than 150 have already passed through the system.

The charity has assisted Dunning in his battle with post-traumatic stress disorder and he believes motorsport played a key role in his recovery path.

"This has helped me get out and speak to people," he explained. "I could not even go to the sergeants' mess for tea and toast as I was that paranoid."

"Six months ago I would never have thought I would be doing something like this. But I realised that if I talked to new people and went to new places a racing car would be waiting for me at the end of it."

"I am leaving the Army in November and would like to do something in the motorsport world."

"It is a massive industry and jobs can range from security and logistics to testing and engineering."

"When it comes to interviews I will definitely be more confident. I used to be so quiet but Mission Motorsport has

"TO FINISH THE RACE WOULD BE FANTASTIC BUT ONCE WE ARE ON THE TRACK WE WILL BE PICKING OUR TARGETS"

brought me out of my shell."

In the meantime, Dunning is concentrating on his track career and the daunting prospect of racing at the world-famous Silverstone venue.

"I am still a bit intimidated by it all," he explained. "Whenever I go to a new circuit I take it slowly, but once I get used to it the pace picks up."

"The Britcar has come around very quickly. It is going to be difficult but we have a fantastic car."

"We've already done the 2CV 24-hour race so we have a good idea about how it all works. Everything is coming together at the right time."

Copleston is a more experienced member of the military team having competed in last season's Lotus Cup at Donington Park.

The Serviceman, who was injured by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan in 2011, is hoping for a strong showing at Silverstone having completed his advanced driver training at the circuit.

He said: "This will be my first race at the track. It is very exciting and we will be up against some fast cars."

"Our first goal is to get round and finish and we don't want to let the team down."

"There is a good blend of people in the set-up and I have met a lot of new faces, we are all from a similar background and that has really helped."

The Britcar 24-hour race was being staged as this issue went to press. See next month's edition for a full report.

For more information on Mission Motorsport and how to get involved visit www.missionmotorsport.org ■



Moore builds perfect form

BODYBUILDER Cpl Gemma Moore (AGC (SPS)) will face the toughest challenge in her sporting career next month as she competes in the British novice finals.

The soldier only started flexing her muscles over the last year but is targeting a prolonged run of success following some encouraging early showings.

"After being posted with the Royal Engineers for so long I wanted to be as strong as they were so I wouldn't lag behind," Moore told *SoldierSport*.

"I have always been interested in bodybuilding and over the past 12 months I have been eating properly and training with a coach so I can get on the right path.

"I stepped on stage for the first time in May and also competed in August. I'm now looking forward to the British finals.

"My goal is to finish in the top three. I would love to get a trophy."

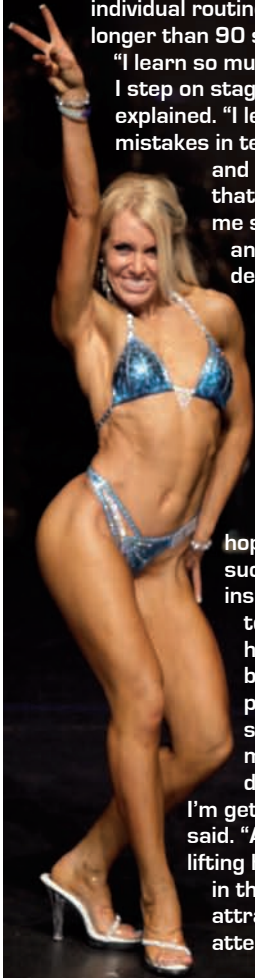
Moore will be judged on her ability to present a balanced, symmetrical and developed figure with confidence, poise and grace. She will also have to perform an individual routine lasting no longer than 90 seconds.

"I learn so much every time I step on stage," the NCO explained. "I learn from my mistakes in terms of poses

and dieting and that has made me stronger and more determined.

"And work has been so supportive with the training and allowing me to see my coach." Moore is

hoping her success will inspire others to follow her on the bodybuilding path. "Fellow soldiers ask me what I'm doing and how I'm getting on," she said. "A woman lifting heavy weights in the gym attracts a lot of attention."



Picture: Graeme Main

New dawn: UFC star John Hathaway offers some expert tips and advice to the Army's martial arts stars

Grapplers enter combat world

COMBAT grappling staged its first official training session last month after the discipline was accepted into the Army's martial arts set-up.

More than 20 soldiers attended the event in Aldershot, which featured instruction in various wrestling and grappling moves from British Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) stars Jimi Manuwa and John Hathaway.

Organiser SSgt Lloyd Lovejoy (REME) is now hoping to hold regular training camps for personnel and believes the pursuit will flourish within the ranks.

"There is massive interest among the guys," he told *SoldierSport*.

"It is a contact sport but we practise in a safe manner. We wear head guards,

gloves, gum shields, foot and shin protection and the use of elbows and knees is forbidden.

"This is just an introductory session to find out who is interested.

"The UFC approached us saying they wanted to work with some troops and we were delighted to have them here.

"The more events we have, the bigger this will become. The plan is to hold bi-monthly sessions with a view to forming a team to represent the Army."

Anyone interested in taking part should contact SSgt Lovejoy on 01985 222383 or via lwceg-ladartificer@mod.uk

Further information is also available from WO2 Sean Gilsenan (RLC) on 01235 513126.

Racers running hot after promising debut

THE True Heroes Racing motorcycle team has celebrated its first full meeting on the track.

Comprised of injured and able-bodied Servicemen, the set-up saw LCpl Murray Hambro (2 RTR) compete in the North Gloucester Road Racing Championship last month.

The soldier, who lost both legs in an IED blast in Afghanistan, rode a specially adapted Triumph Daytona 675R machine at the event, which marked the start of a busy period of action.

CPO Phil Spencer launched the team after meeting a

number of wounded personnel at various charity events and was delighted with the debut showing.

"This is an extraordinary achievement as Murray only completed his rehabilitation programme a few months ago," he said. "Motorsport is a fast, frenetic and pressurised environment, not too dissimilar to the battlefield.

"It is also a world many Service personnel would not have considered open to them. To compete at the highest level possible is a real challenge, but it gives them something to get their teeth into."





Wave riders reach full power

WHILE its success on the track continues at pace (pages 94-95), Mission Motorsport has also been making waves in the world of powerboat racing.

Competing in the P1 Superstock series, the team claimed its first podium finish at Cowes in August in what was one of the highlights of an encouraging debut season.

"It has been a steep learning curve," manager Tony Compson said. "We are a team of novices and we had to do compulsory race training before we could even compete."

"Getting people qualified and race trained takes time."

"We have had continuity with the driver but that has not been the case with the co-driver. We have had three different navigators for four meetings, the chemistry between both is really important and we need them to train together to achieve that."

Reigning P1 250 champion John Wilson has mentored the Servicemen and women throughout the campaign and has been a welcome source of advice and guidance.

The race series finished in

Weymouth last month and Compson is already planning ahead for 2013.

"We have now got to look at our funding for next season," the former Royal Marine said. "I would love to run two boats, one for our top pairing to race in all year and the second for up and comers in the sport."

"But it all depends on budgets. Our aim is to keep it going and hopefully train new guys as they come through."

"We got a third place finish at Cowes and have been knocking on the door all season. On the whole, it has been an encouraging first year."

Picture: Graeme Main

SPORT SHORTS



MIXED martial arts star Pte Jack Marshman (3 Para) recorded a convincing victory over Andrew Punshon at London's Wembley Arena.

The soldier forced his opponent to tap out in the first round of their middleweight clash as he extended his record to 11 wins and just one defeat.

Despite celebrating another triumph, Marshman was forced to relinquish his British Association of Mixed Martial Arts title as he failed to make the weight ahead of the fight.



THE Combined Services paragliding team capped a superb season of action by winning the British Club Challenge.

More than 20 sides took to the skies for the series, which was held between April and September.

All three Services were strongly represented in the squad, with more than ten pilots used. The cross-country event sees competitors take off from a hill and fly as far as they can, choosing the right air to circle and climb in before deciding when to race.



BRITISH soldiers went head-to-head with their Afghan counterparts in a battle for athletic supremacy at the Helmand Olympics.

Staged at the Karzai Sports Stadium in Lashkar Gah, the event saw teams from 12th Mechanized Brigade, the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security competing in a variety of disciplines. The police topped the medal table with victories in the football, bodybuilding and 100-metre sprint.

final word



We asked personnel attending an “insight into industry” day at Gibraltar Barracks in Minley how well equipped they felt for life on civvy street

INTERVIEWS: SIANNAN WATSON
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Pte Luke Randle (RLC)

Officers have had more time to build management qualifications than junior ranks so I think we’ll struggle. Everyone who already works on civvy street has proved themselves and shown they are reliable, and we’ll be competing against that. I think there should be more flexibility. Just because I’m a logistician doesn’t necessarily mean I want to do a logistics job after the Army.



Pte Francis Luswata (RLC)

Being a soldier you do a variety of jobs during your career so it’s hard to pinpoint one specific skill that is transferable – especially when you’re putting together a CV for civilian employers. I would say organisational and managerial expertise are the main ones for me but it’s hard to define. I’m feeling hopeful. Job fairs like this give good insight into what is needed.



WO2 David Rai (AGC (SPS))

The Career Transition Partnership gives us vital information. We spend most of our time within the confines of the military so getting an insight into what is required on civvy street is important. My main transferable skills are in human resources administration, driving and security. It is up to us to make the final choice about what we do but it’s a case of finding the right job in the right place.



Pte Amandeep Singh (RLC)

Times are very uncertain. There’s a recession on and even people with lots of experience are struggling to find jobs. We can’t use military skills like weapons handling on civvy street but we can build up qualifications through our standard learning credits and driver’s licence or HGV licences for example. Firms are looking for the best candidates though so it is tough.



Cpl Gareth Newport (Int Corps)

Although I serve in the Intelligence Corps, I’m using enhanced learning credits to study accounting, which is something totally different. It is experience I am lacking but everyone faces that in a new career and I might be able to gain some proficiency in the discipline as part of my resettlement. I’ve got good feedback from people in the sector which is very encouraging.



Cpl Steve Brazington (RE)

I am leaving the Army in April after 24 years. Being a corporal I have got management skills and that’s what I will be looking to do so I feel prepared. I have done some agency work and think the military work ethic is strong. I am happy to do that extra little bit to get myself a promotion on civvy street. I don’t really mind what I have to do to prove my worth.



Capt Owen James (AGC (ETS))

I feel a certain amount of trepidation but I think the Army has given me a lot of good life experiences. The biggest challenge is making sure you have the accredited skills; civilian qualifications to match your Service experience. I feel I have done okay in that respect – partly because the Army has pushed me and also because I have been self-motivated to get off my backside.



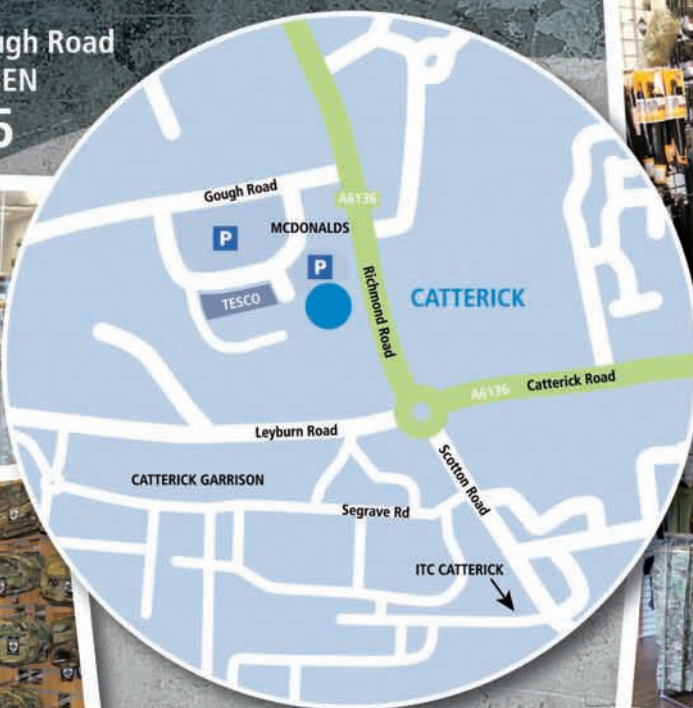
Maj Ricky Harvey (RE)

The big thing I’m trying to understand is what I’m worth on civvy street; what sort of areas I will be able to go into comfortably. Most people in the Army are highly motivated and willing to put in the time and effort to get the job done. We’ve got experience in people management and working through problems to get solutions that may not be obvious to most.

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