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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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Cover picture: Graeme Main

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STORY

“

The hardest part
has been adapting
to the environment

”

Breaking the ice – p40



Answering the call



DURING these unprecedented times the British Army is again proving just how valuable its contribution is to

homeland resilience.

Whether it's transporting crucial medical equipment or distributing protective clothing for NHS staff (page 7), personnel are meeting the challenge to keep society's essential cogs turning.

The coronavirus pandemic has been described as the most deadly crisis to erupt since the Second World War and, somewhat ironically, it's hit us right in the middle of our six-month period marking the 75th anniversary of *Soldier* with excerpts from some of our 1945 wartime issues.

In this edition we reveal the most harrowing reports ever seen in this publication (page 21), showing scenes of depravity that certainly bring a little perspective to our current situation.

Over the coming months we will continue to bring you a selection of news and events from around the British Army – and if you want your unit's contribution to the relief efforts featured in an upcoming issue, please do get in touch.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

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Royal Logistic Corps troops deliver vital personal protective equipment to a London NHS depot



Picture: PO (Phot) David Jenkins, RN

Stepping up support

Service mobilises to bolster civilian authorities at time of national crisis

ARMY medical professionals are taking the fight to the coronavirus – backing up NHS colleagues at a new temporary hospital at London's ExCeL centre.

As this issue went to press, Health Secretary Matt Hancock confirmed military personnel would work alongside civilian staff at the facility.

Providing care to patients suffering from the disease, the NHS Nightingale hospital will initially provide 500 beds – potentially rising to thousands in the weeks ahead.

The move came as Servicemen and women were pressed into action to help in the fight against coronavirus under the command of a new Covid Support Force.

The number of troops on higher readiness was doubled to around 20,000, while measures had been taken to call out Reservists.

Some 50 soldiers helped deliver much-needed personal protective equipment to NHS colleagues in hospitals as well as other organisations (see page 26).

And the first of 150 personnel from all three Services plus the Royal Marines – 75 of them supplied by the Army – were standing ready to drive oxygen tankers.

Troops from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment; The Royal Lancers; 14th Signal Regiment and 7

Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps were among those to attend the first of seven, five-day training courses at four sites across the country.

Elsewhere, the Joint Helicopter Command stood ready to assist those in isolated communities, while scientists from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory were helping Public Health England better understand the illness.

The Standing Joint Command has been overseeing the Covid force, co-ordinating the MoD's response to the pandemic with several other government departments.

Defence chiefs have emphasised that there are already "well rehearsed mechanisms" established for domestic crises, such as major flooding.

Maj Gen Charlie Stickland – Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff Operations and Commitments – said having more troops at higher readiness, plus the availability of Reservists, would give commanders even greater flexibility.

"Our Servicemen and women are committed to maintaining our operational output and delivering any support the government requires," he said. "The Covid Support Force, potentially drawing upon our scientists or oxygen tanker drivers, will form part of an effort to support the country during its time of need."



“We will support the country during its time of need”



GLOBAL SITREP

1. CALIFORNIA

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

THE Royal Dragoon Guards gained useful lessons to take forward for their new Strike role as they perfected their drills alongside US Army personnel at the National Training Center, at Fort Irwin.

From using wheeled platforms in complex terrain, to managing communications and employing mortars to provide indirect fire when operating at reach, they took full advantage of the two-week package, known as Exercise Diamond Back.

Augmented by soldiers from 3rd Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, they also provided a stealth reconnaissance capability for their counterparts from 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

"One troop from B Squadron reached the summit of Tiefert Mountain and established an observation post," Maj David Brooke (RDG) explained. "Being able to gather information on enemy movement across the training area was hugely valuable to the brigade effort and we astonished our American colleagues, who said it couldn't be done."

Fort Irwin comprises more than 1,000 square miles of rocky hills and deep wadis, which the UK personnel navigated in US Army Humvees. A resident opposing force employing unconventional tactics intensified the challenge.



2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

GUNNERS SHOW GRIT

A CHARITY challenge to pull a Land Rover 34 miles saw Mount Pleasant-based troops raise hundreds of pounds for Service causes.

The team from 14 Battery, 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery took just over nine hours to tow the 3.5-tonne vehicle from their camp to Stanley, battling a strong head wind and multiple hills along the way.

Their efforts raised £800 for the ABF The Soldiers' Charity.



1. CALIFORNIA



Troops feel the chill in Bardufoss – page 40

“Everyone wants to beat you

”

Bobsleigh duo deliver in Germany, page 67

3. NIGERIA

MISSION MILESTONE

PERSONNEL belonging to the British Military Training Team in Nigeria have trained 500 of the country's troops in the first quarter of 2020 alone.

The country's Armed Forces are working to contain violent extremism, particularly in north eastern regions controlled by Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa.

As part of the UK's ongoing support to that mission, Royal Engineers have delivered improvised explosive device detection training to the Nigerian Army's explosive ordnance disposal

operators, and infantrymen have helped upskill its 707 Special Forces Brigade.

In addition, they supported the formation during a US-led counter terrorism exercise in Senegal and Mauritania, which also involved troops from Morocco, Burkina Faso and Cameroon.



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7. GERMANY DRAGON DRILLS

SOME 400 troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh became the first armoured infantry outfit to train in Sennelager since it reopened for business.

The soldiers conducted mounted and dismounted live firing, simunition serials and a virtual package in the combined arms tactical trainer.

They also found time to mark St David's Day and visit Berlin and the Bergen Belsen memorial, before Exercise Gothic Dragon was cut short amid the escalating coronavirus crisis.

6. NORWAY FIRE AND ICE

APACHE attack helicopters fired potent Hellfire missiles inside the Arctic Circle for the first time.

Facing temperatures as low as -30 degrees Celsius and white-out flying conditions, 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps trained in the far north of Norway alongside Royal Air Force Chinooks and Royal Navy Wildcats. The serial was a precursor to the multinational Nato package, Exercise Cold Response.



Picture: Capt Iain MacLennan, AAC



4. SOMALIA GRADUATION DAY

A PARADE in Baidoa marked the first complete battalion of the Somalia National Army (SNA) trained by UK troops on Operation Tanager.

Members of 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment delivered the bulk of the instruction to the formation's third and final infantry company. The British contingent also helped provide personal equipment, vehicles and accommodation to the Somalis, whose region of responsibility is the South West State – which covers some 31,000 square miles.

"This marks a step-change in capability for the SNA and a tangible milestone in the programme to support them in the fight against Al Shabaab," said the mission's commander, Col Tony Casey.

5. IRAQ CORONA PAUSES TRAINING

AN ESTIMATED 400 troops deployed on Operation Shader are being moved back to the UK in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

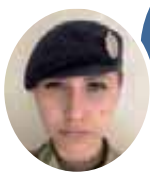
The pause in training, which will last at least 60 days, follows the Iraqis' decision to cease activities.

Commander British Forces, Col Chris Davies, said the need to protect the force as the virus spreads across the Middle East had necessitated the suspension. He added: "We have made the decision to redeploy training teams from the Irish Guards Battlegroup back to Aldershot, where they will be held at readiness and be in a position to support their families through the crisis."

Since 2014 UK teams have helped train more than 100,000 Iraqi, Kurdish and Peshmerga fighters to boost the battle against Daesh.



Picture: Cpl Charles Clare, PWRR



View from the GROUND

Bomb disposal specialist Cpl Carly Howard (RLC), of 321 EOD and Search Squadron, discusses her new T7...

Soldier: How big an advance is this robot?

Cpl Howard: The manipulator arm is exceptional. It incorporates haptic feedback to give us a sense of weight, pressure and force, simulating the sense of touch we did not have with previous remote-controlled vehicles. This feeling is directed through to the gripper on our portable command console (PCC), instantly giving us the sense of contact with the object.

Soldier: Where will this tech really excel?

Cpl Howard: In all sorts of situations. Even tasks such as opening vehicle doors. The feel we now have means we can grip a handle with a particular pressure and gauge the weight of the door opening. It helps us recognise resistance and when the door is fully opened as the movement on our console becomes restricted.

Soldier: What else about the T7 stands out?

Cpl Howard: The robot truly mimics the range of movement and motion you use with your own arm through the PCC – that is definitely a standout feature.

Soldier: What does this mean for the teams?

Cpl Howard: When it comes to tasks such as having to move large main charges, previously you relied simply on the cameras to ensure you had control and hold of the object. But now the haptic feedback gives us the added reassurance of carrying out the tasks as required due to the sense of feeling fed back through the controller on the console. This aids the speed and efficiency of the task. The number one operators are impressed as this potentially means less time in their bomb suits.



“It’s been through a lengthy trial”

Feeling the difference

Bomb disposal squadrons receive “handy” next-generation robot

PERSONNEL at 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps are enjoying the benefits of a state-of-the-art platform that allows the operator to actually feel objects with a robotic hand, as well as move them around.

The T7 remote-controlled vehicle, which is also fitted with a high-definition camera, is now fully operational with 321 Squadron, based near Antrim.

The unit regularly assists the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) when a suspicious object is reported.

According to PSNI statistics, there were around 20 such incidents in 2019, with the Army’s bomb disposal personnel having to deal with a range

of tasks, from confirming hoax devices to locating and dismantling numerous viable booby traps.

“The T7 has been through a lengthy trial period and will offer enhanced communications, robustness and ease of use, among other things,” said Capt Rob Kelly (RLC).

Troops from 721 Squadron, based in Ashchurch, Gloucestershire, are next in line to receive the asset and all EOD teams across the regiment – who tackle around 2,500 taskings per year – will eventually be equipped with these remarkable machines.

The roll-out is part of an upgrade in capability that features nearly 300 new vehicles, including 4x4s, to increase the unit’s agility and reduce response times.

SIGNALS PUT CADETS’ CYBER SKILLS INTO PRACTICE

■ THE ROYAL Signals have been hosting budding cadet cyber specialists.

Young men and women from across the country attended the CyberFirst Defenders course at Blandford Camp, designed to provide an insight into the world of cyber and how common threats can be managed.

Written by the National Cyber Security Centre and delivered by Army Cadet Force adult volunteers, its various elements included looking at first-line defences such as firewalls, anti-virus software and managing the personal digital footprint.

The practical element gave the cadets an opportunity to construct and run the security of a typical home network, putting various skills into practice.

Cdt CSM Joshua Gowland, from Durham ACF, said: “I had a fantastic week and enjoyed the amazing insight into the world of cyber defence.

“I’m really looking forward to putting my new-found signals knowledge into use during fieldcraft.”

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SOLDIER TALKS TUMOURS

■ AN AFGHANISTAN veteran and career soldier who is living with a tumour has thrown himself into a new TV campaign in a move to help raise awareness of the disease.



SSgt Steve Blake (RLC) came forward to share his story as part of Brain Tumour Awareness Month – having been told he had the condition some two years ago.

The video production manager has undergone surgery and has been treated with radiotherapy since his diagnosis. But, in the same time, he has also married wife Becky, become a father and been promoted, as well as finishing a degree course.

He said: "Taking part was incredibly important to me as raising awareness and finding a cure is vital."



GUNNERS BECOME GUARDS

■ THE Royal Horse Artillery have taken over guard duties at Windsor Castle for the first time since 2008.

Soldiers from The King's Troop passed an inspection by senior staff from the Household Division and replaced the Foot Guards for two weeks in mid-March.

"This is not our primary job and the personnel worked hard to prepare themselves," said Maj Victoria Flood.

The unit started rehearsing the complex ceremonial moves and order of commands at Christmas.

WEBSITE OVERHAULED

■ FORMER personnel will find it easier to find the information they need for a smoother transition to civvy life thanks to a newly overhauled Veterans UK website.

The revamp features a series of "hubs" – available on the homepage or via a search – focusing on different topics relevant to those who have left the military. Online claim forms are also set to be added later in the year.

Additionally, the service is easier to navigate, while the on-screen language has been made much simpler.



“
Body armour
and packs
can present
problems
”



Time for new base data

FEMALE soldiers from the UK and its allies still have a raw deal with kit and more must be done to meet their needs, a leading feminist writer and campaigner has declared.

Addressing delegates during the Army Servicewomen's Network conference at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Caroline Criado Perez said troops were still complaining that the likes of ill-fitting body armour impeded their effectiveness.

She blamed a historic lack of feminine data collection for the problems – with equipment predominately tailored for men – and argued that developers need to ensure accurate information is collected to improve designs.

Perez was speaking after highlighting these issues in her book *Invisible Women*, where she argues that a bias in basing findings of research on men's bodies has led to subsequent data on women being skewed.

Perez pointed out that 95 per cent of female emergency service workers

said personal kit had impeded their job, while Nato troops reported a host of similar concerns.

Even basic items such as shirts tailored with men in mind had proved a problem. "Some women say it is actually more difficult to look smart," the author (pictured left) argued.

"Body armour and packs can also present problems for female soldiers – the issues could have a serious impact on the health of women in the military."

She highlighted that the blame for the failings did not lie with any individual or organisation – but simply a centuries-old tradition of using men as a data baseline.

Perez said there was more of an awareness of collecting female statistics but highlighted it could take years in some areas, such as medical research, for more useful data to emerge.

Senior officers were among the personnel attending the event, which had the theme of "value" and featured a range of presentations plus networking opportunities.



EQUALITY ON TRACK, BUT MORE WORK IS NEEDED

■ THE arrival of female troops in ground close combat roles is being welcomed by their male counterparts as a positive step, a senior officer has said.

Speaking during the Army Servicewomen's Network conference at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Service gender champion Lt Gen Ivan Jones told *Soldier* that he was heartened with the way the move had so far been received.

However, he accepted more work needs to be done as the Army embraces equality, even though it was now more progressive than many other employers.

"While we should celebrate the remarkable achievements, we must also acknowledge that we still have a way to go," he added.



Ground view

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



DURING a very busy month of travels I have been struck by the huge scale of digital revolution that has taken place during my 22 years of service.

Back in the late 1990s, gadgets we now take for granted were still on the drawing board while our equipment and skill sets were also very different.

Fast forward two decades and the Service is at the forefront of technologies that are continuing to transform the way we do business.

Take 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery in Cyprus, for example. These troops featured in *Soldier* last month – but for those who don't know they are responsible for flying the Watchkeeper unmanned aerial system.

I originally visited them when I was the Field Army Sergeant Major around 18 months ago. Going back and seeing the significant changes that have taken place in terms of capability

and delivery since then was truly amazing.

But it was the people running the unit that most impressed me – those operating the kit are junior NCOs.

The technical challenges the Army is placing on soldiers is far greater than when I joined, and they are rising to them.

It was a similar story on Exercise Cyber Spartan, run by the Royal Signals, which tested troops' response to simulated digital attacks.

I have not seen anything like this before, having never been on an exercise where I didn't come back with wet feet.

But this was all held indoors with rooms full of computers presided over by people training for a new and complex battlespace.

We offer fantastic opportunities in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) field and must ensure that we nurture our emerging talent because we're going to need it in future conflicts.

“
I have not seen anything like this before
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q After a busy start to the year, what is your ideal holiday destination?

A Anywhere a rifle, helmet and a cot are not needed.



Key contributions

CONTINUING the change theme, it was a privilege to speak at the fifth Army Servicewomen's Network conference.

This event, and the organisation behind it, has seen rapid growth – there were 800 delegates this year, which was double the number from 2019.

It was good to see so many men among them and, of note, that we are now all talking more openly about issues such as the menopause and returning to work after childbirth. These are

important themes we have not been great at airing in the past.

Elsewhere, the media has been quick to pick up on “trailblazing” women, such as those going into ground close combat roles and completing the P Company course.

But while marking these “firsts” is important, do not be disheartened if you are not among them.

It doesn't matter if you are not yet at the peak of your career – rest assured you are highly valued for your contribution.

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Technology looks to new reality



Picture: SimCentric

TECH savvy troops are tapping into a video game world to improve their sharp-end skills as they continue to trial a simulation based on a popular first-person shooter.

The new virtual reality kit – which has the same roots as multiplayer sensation *Fortnite* – allows 30 soldiers at a time to immerse themselves in a digital environment (below).

Wearing headsets, personnel are confronted with a realm of impressive visuals plus high-definition surround and gesture control mimicking real-life actions and scenarios.

They can hold a weapon while crouching and crawling their way

around the battlefield as they play their part in serials specially designed with the kit in mind.

Tests have already taken place with The Parachute Regiment and officers at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, while pan-Armed Forces trials are also planned.

Produced by civilian firm SimCentric, the kit is the brainchild of the company's innovation director Tom Constable – an-ex Army Air Corps Regular and current Reservist.

He said that an operational tour of Afghanistan had given him a passion to create "technology that will reduce the risk to our Armed Forces".



“It will reduce the risk to our Armed Forces”

ARMY APPRENTICES MAKE THEIR MARK

■ APPRENTICES have been recognised for their hard work at the third Army Apprenticeship Awards ceremony held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Around 5,500 soldiers completed courses from a range of more than 40 programmes in the last academic year, and nominees were selected for four categories; intermediate, advanced, chartered management degree level and apprentice. LCpl Kieran Ralston (AAC, pictured right), winner of the intermediate award, said: "Overall, the scheme gave me a massive confidence boost, knowing I could do my job and do it well."

The Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, both an advocate of the programme and part of the judging panel, believes the awards are an opportunity to celebrate the high-level accreditation that soldiers can gain

"Their efforts demonstrate to everybody just how much the Service invests in us as people," he said.



PIPERS STRIKE RIGHT NOTE

■ GIFTED troops from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland hit a sweet note as they walked away with this year's highly cherished Army Champion Pipe Band accolade.

They fought off strong competition during the Service's piping and drumming competition at Edinburgh's Redford Barracks.

Other winners included PMaj Ben Duncan (Scots DG), who emerged as the best piper, and LCpl Will Crawford (4 Scots), judged champion drummer.



CRASH BURDEN CUT

■ SOLDIERS faced with a mountain of paperwork after a vehicle collision or other road traffic incident will soon have the burden lifted – thanks to a digital system.

The new e-Impact package – which is being trialled by Royal Air Force units – cuts down on the ten-or-so forms currently needed after a smash.

Produced by specialist software firm TRL, it is envisaged that the programme will go live soon via Defence Network – with a mobile phone app to follow later.

Project spokesman Ian Walker, of the MoD's Movement Transport Safety Regulator, said e-Impact would cover all defence personnel and civilians.

"The introduction will cut out most of the form filling, and we are hoping it will eliminate them all in future," he added. "It will make life easier."

HERO DOG REMEMBERED

■ A CANINE companion who comforted prisoners held by the Japanese during the Second World War has been recognised with a top award.

Bull terrier Peggy – an abandoned puppy who became the mascot of 2nd Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders captured in Malaya – received a commendation from charity PDSA.

The story of the much-loved animal – who came home with personnel after the conflict's conclusion in August 1945 and remained with the Army until her death two years later – was recalled during a ceremony at the regimental museum in Aberdeen.

WIN

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SPINE LINE COMPETITION



WELL done to those who spotted the link between the three names on last month's spine; Brig Ian Bell, Brig Richard Clements and Col Tim Hill were the last three commanders of the British Army in Germany.

For this issue we have teamed up with AfterShokz (www.aftershokz.co.uk) to offer two readers the chance to win a pair of sports headphones, plus accessories.

The Aeropex, worth £149.95, features an open-ear design and weighs in at less than one ounce to offer all-day comfort. Completely sweat and waterproof, they boast an eight-hour battery life as well as deeper bass, louder volume and less vibration.

The Air, worth £99.95, are easy to wear with glasses, hats, cycling helmets and other kit and have a six-hour battery life.

To be in with a chance of winning a pair tell us what links the words on the side of this issue. Answers – including daytime phone number – to the usual postal address or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

TROOPS' HELPING HAND

■ PERSONNEL transitioning to civvy street are getting a helping hand – care of a local authority in London.

Guaranteed interviews are being offered to veterans applying for a job with Wandsworth Council, giving them a face-to-face opportunity to showcase their skills if they meet the minimum criteria for the role.

For more details on the scheme visit jobs.richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk



Leaders in the spotlight

“
We meet to
discuss the
findings
”

FUTURE commanding officers are being given a helping hand into post with a temperature check on how they are likely to be perceived by their subordinates.

They will receive a so-called “180 degree” assessment in which around a dozen troops provide feedback on a leader's attributes.

The COs will also be interviewed and given a frank report on their skills, allowing them to develop strengths and iron out any weaknesses.

The assessment, which forms part of the wider mental health package for the senior personnel, will be repeated after six months in post.

Dr Joanna Harvey, principal occupation psychologist at Army HQ, said the scheme was trialled during last month's commanding officers' course and a second pilot will follow.

She added: “After receiving the

results we meet new COs to discuss the findings.

“We will be able to tell whether the responses from the soldiers are a one-off or seem to form part of a wider pattern – and from there suggest a way forward.

“They then have the opportunity to practise different behaviours if this is what is required.”

It is believed the assessment – which is widely used in the American, Canadian and Australian armed forces – could have a wider use across the Army in future.

But decisions on how it would be managed and administered have yet to be finalised.

“The pilot has had a positive response,” Dr Harvey explained.

“The assessment might benefit others such as regimental sergeant majors in the future.”

ON HIS TOES



A 62-YEAR-OLD former US Marine has set a world record for maintaining the plank.

George Hood kept static for an incredible 8hr 15min 15sec, smashing the previous best of 8hr 1min set by Mao Weidong in China in 2016.

A Guinness World Record official adjudicated at the event in Chicago, which

raised money for an Illinois-based mental health counselling facility.

The ultra-endurance athlete trained for seven hours a day for 18 months, completing around 2,100 hours of plank time, 270,000 push-ups and nearly 674,000 sit-ups. Hood has set the plank record a total of six times over the past eight years.



Cyber security is key

PERSONNEL must be sure footed enough to compete with adversaries in the information war.

Addressing the first Strategic Command conference at the Royal

United Services Institute, Armed Forces Minister James Heapey said new threats such as cyber attacks required defence and its partners to work closely together.

Setting out the vision for the new organisation, he said cyber security and beating hostile activity through the latest technologies – such as artificial intelligence – were key priorities.



“Winning the fight of the future requires integration across land, sea, air, cyber and space,” the politician added. “It is no longer enough to have highly complex systems – you need all that data to get a better understanding of what the enemy is doing.”

A joint Service organisation, Strategic Command was established from the old Joint Forces Command late last year.

Heading up the new outfit, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders said it would be a platform for experimentation while developing structures to meet future threats.

“We need integration across land, sea, air, cyber and space”



Picture: Cpl Rob Kane, RLC

Elite Indian unit trains in the UK

SOLDIERS from one of the Indian Army's most decorated units were on Salisbury Plain Training Area to take part in the fifth edition of Exercise Ajeya Warrior.

Around 120 troops from 14th Battalion, The Dogra Regiment worked alongside personnel from B Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles and completed a package designed to increase understanding of each other's organisations and their operational tactics and experience.

The visitors took part in a series of stands, which included both

offensive and defensive missions, counter-IED drills and casualty evacuations, with the armies concluding with a 72-hour joint counter-insurgency exercise.

Commanding officer of The Dogra Regiment, Col Amit Saini, said: “We are here to learn the best practices of the British Army and to showcase our own expertise.

“It is a chance to hone our skills so that in the future we can operate jointly under the wider UN mandate and achieve great success wherever we are.”

IN NUMBERS

120

number of Indian Army troops on the exercise

1858

Year that The Dogra Regiment can trace its lineage to

50%

of the unit's troops hail from the state of Himachal Pradesh

72

length in hours of the counter-insurgency exercise

UNDER PRESSURE

EIGHT recruits from the Royal Armoured Corps Training Regiment in Bovington have been learning to deal with emergencies at sea at HMS Raleigh near Plymouth.

The trainee soldiers had a chance to sample the Royal Navy's Havoc damage repair simulator ahead of their phase two Army trade training.

Using specialist equipment in a dark, smoke-filled, wet and noisy environment, they battled to plug breaches in a mock hull and prevent more than 240 tonnes of high-pressure water from flooding the moving unit.

Exercise team leader Tpr Davis Reddock said: “We had to work fast and with aggression to prevent the water that was coming in at great speed and at considerably high pressure.”

SIGNALLING WAY FORWARD

AN INITIATIVE launched by a small all-female contingent from the Royal Signals is stepping up its activity as their corps celebrates its centenary.

In a busy period of events the Women in Technology scheme will be holding a workshop programme and focusing on further collaboration with interested civilian organisations.

Created some three years ago to address a gender imbalance in science, technology and engineering subjects, committee member Maj Emma Thomas is hoping it will now showcase opportunities for all.

“This initiative seeks to help our people be the very best they can,” she added.

MENTAL HEALTH BUDDY

■ A FORMER gunner has set up an initiative to help veterans with mental health issues in his hometown of Barrow-in-Furness.

Tony McNally (below) has introduced a buddy system whereby ex-Service personnel give up their time to talk to others.

Working closely with local authorities and healthcare professionals, the volunteers are on standby to provide extra support to those who find themselves in a dark place.

McNally also contacted the town's sports teams for free tickets for veterans, with rugby league outfit Barrow Raiders the first to get on board.

"I have found that when I attend a sporting event, I forget all about my own PTSD and other worries," he said.

McNally has set up a Facebook page – Furness and South Lakes Buddy Mental Health Group. For more info email fslmhg@yahoo.com



MUSICIANS HIT HIGH NOTE

■ A GIFTED violinist from the Countess of Wessex's String Orchestra wowed judges with her playing as she scooped the top slot in the Army Musician of the Year competition.

Musn Ewelina Wozniak (below) stole the show with a performance of Edouard Lalo's *Spanish Symphony* to claim the contest's £500 top prize.

Musn Kataizyna Kucharczak, from the Band of the Grenadier Guards, came second with her interpretation of Derek's Brown's *Human Error* on sax.

Musn Aaron Chilton, a percussionist with the Band of the Coldstream Guards, completed the podium places with a take on Goff Richards' *Zimba Zamba* on the xylophone-like marimba.



“He was highly respected by his peers”

“She had achieved a great deal”

IN MEMORIAM

Pte Joseph Berry

Died, February 22, 2020,
Kabul, Afghanistan

A YOUNG soldier described as a “force for good” will be dearly missed by his loved ones and colleagues following his death in Afghanistan, the MoD has said.

The department confirmed Pte Joseph Berry (Para) died from “a non-battle injury”, although no further details have been released.

Respected by colleagues and commanders, the 21-year-old from Cheshire deployed to Kabul as part of Op Toral 9 last November in an adviser force protection company.

Having passed out of the Infantry Training Centre Catterick in 2018, Pte Berry joined 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and travelled to Kenya and Belize on exercises, as well as Mexico for adventurous training.

The tour had been his first



operational outing and a statement from the MoD said: “He was popular throughout the battalion, no doubt because of his fierce resolve to support his fellow soldiers.

“Pte Berry was highly respected by both his chain of command as well as his peers and will be remembered for his passion, determination and selfless attitude.”

LCpl Brodie Gillon

Killed in action, March 11, 2020,
Camp Taji, Iraq

THE loss of a gifted medic and committed Reservist who had achieved a great deal in her Army career will be “keenly felt”, friends and colleagues have said.

LCpl Brodie Gillon (RAMC) was remembered for her commitment to both helping others and developing herself after joining the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry.

The 26-year-old junior NCO, who had served for five years, was killed in a rocket attack with two personnel from the United States at Camp Taji near the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

She had deployed to the Middle East this year as part of the Irish Guards Battlegroup.

A civilian sports physiotherapist, LCpl Gillon juggled professional commitments with Army life, qualifying as a class one combat medical technician in 2018.

Described as a fit, energetic and compassionate individual, she served with the Royal Guard at Ballater in



Scotland in 2019 before volunteering for operations.

Her commanding officer, Lt Col William Leek, described the Servicewoman as “a larger than life soldier destined for great things in her military and civilian careers”.

He added: “We are proud and humbled to have served with her in our ranks. She was determined to deploy on operations, help others, develop herself and gain experience – she had achieved a great deal and her loss is keenly felt.”

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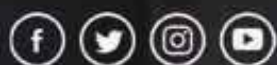
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ON INTO EUROPE



In our second anniversary edition from 1945 we reveal how *Soldier* reported on atrocities unearthed by British troops...

DURING the second month of its life, *Soldier* was filled with accounts of Allied forces pushing Nazi troops back across Europe and into Germany.

The spring offensive had begun in northern Italy, the British and Americans driving up through southern Europe at around the same time as the Soviets were

reaching the outer suburbs of Berlin.

Meanwhile, the struggle to advance from the west, with the crossing of the Rhine and fierce enemy opposition to contend with, was proving to be a slow and deadly process.

However, it wasn't only the intense fighting that proved daunting for the Allies.

As *Soldier's* pages graphically depicted, the advancing

EVIL IS BARED

It is no part of *SOLDIER* Magazine's job to dwell unnecessarily upon atrocities. The man at the sharp end of the battle sees enough in one day to fill his belly with the horror and beastliness of war, and does not therefore require this journal to underline it.

But the human race has, in the last two weeks, been confronted with the ultimate in man's inhumanity to man.

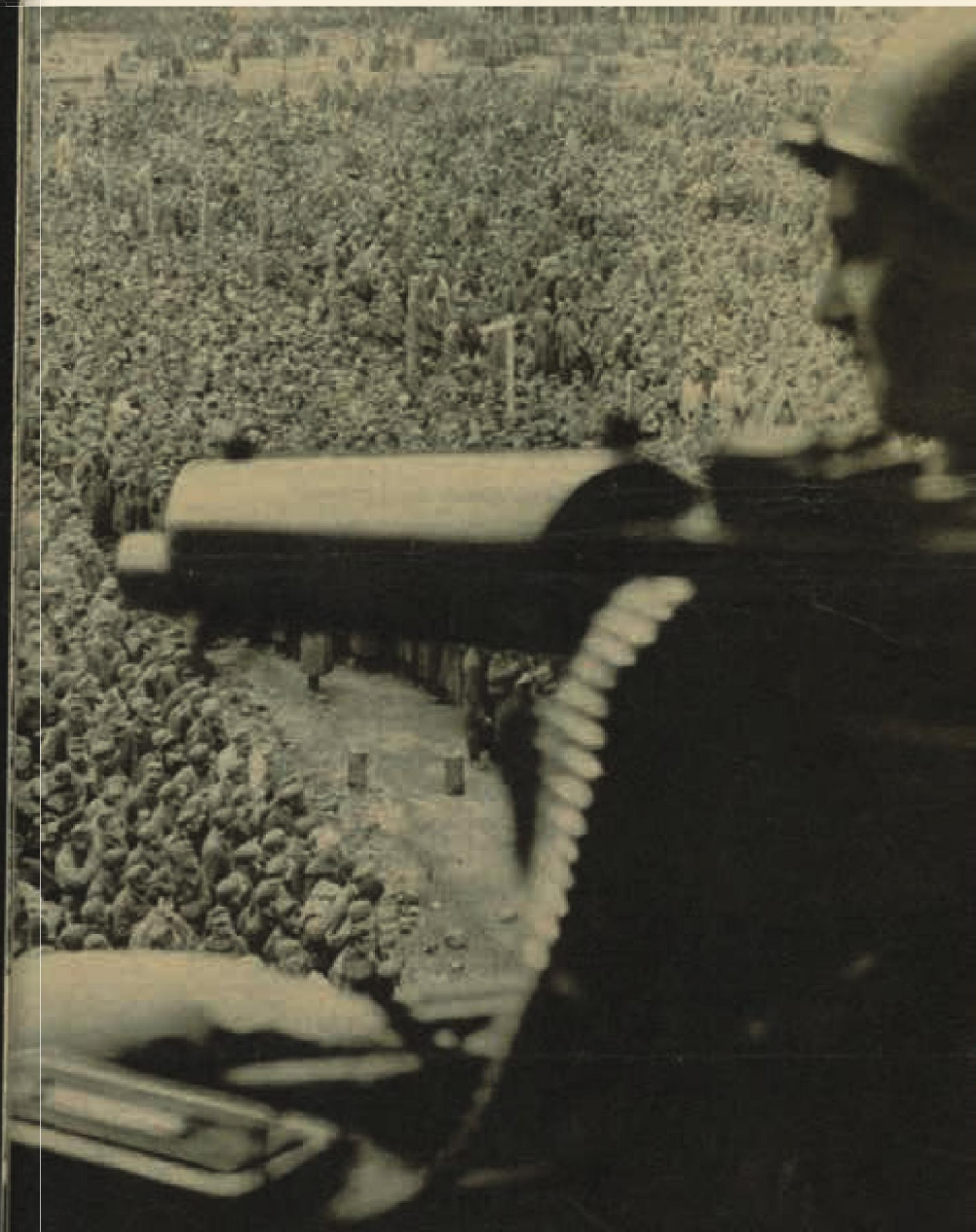
The concentration camps at Belsen, Ohrdruf, Nordhausen and Buchenwald have been uncovered by the Allied Armies.

What was there perpetrated by the Germans reaches such depths of foulness, degradation, misery and bestiality, that none may close his eyes nor look the other way.

On page 6 of this issue is printed the story; this is the evidence.

If any man fighting in this war in British uniform still wonders whether he is on the side of good against evil, this must convince him; for here Evil is bared.

Let us never forget it.



HERE IS THE EVIDENCE



On the left is the Monster of Belsen, S. S. Commander Josef Kramer. This well-fed sadist knows that whatever is in store for him he will not have the flesh slowly cut from his bones by the knife of starvation — the fate of the victims you see below.



THERE is no propaganda like the truth. And the truth about the German concentration camp, long suspected but never fully credited, proves to be worse than anything we, of the civilised nations, ever dreamt of.

Now it is made clear to us, beyond a shadow of doubt, what we have been fighting against. Here is the fate that would have been ours also had our spirits failed or our purpose swerved; if we had been a nation small in numbers or a great nation small in heart.

Here is the evidence.

The Senior Medical Officer of the Second Army, a grey-haired brigadier with a lifetime's experience, visited the concentration camp of Belsen immediately after it had been captured, and here, in his own words, is the almost unbelievable story.

"I am told," he said, "that 30,000 prisoners died in the camp in the last few months. I can well believe that figure."

"It is the most horrible, frightful place I have ever seen."

"I went into the camp with anti-tank gunners, and while questioning the S.S. Commander, an enormous man with heavy features and a cruel face, shots were fired inside the camp. We went outside and saw twenty dead and dying prisoners near a potato patch. More were being shot by German guards as they were stealing potatoes."

"We saw compounds filled with dead and dying — dying in mass in front of our eyes."

"There was one crematorium, but the Germans did not use it because they could not cope with the number of deaths. We saw enormous covered death-pits. One which was uncovered contained a great pile of blackened and naked bodies. There were several piles of unclothed dead."

"There was typhus in every compound, but typhus caused far fewer deaths than starvation. There may now be about 1,000 cases of the original 1,800, for it is on the wane."

"People were lying dead in gutters outside huts, to which they had gone to rest more comfortably, and died as they lay."

He paused before continuing his

statement and then went on, "I cannot vouch for this, but prison doctors told me that there had been cannibalism. Prisoners were so far gone that they took out and ate the hearts and kidneys of people who had died."

"Food was distributed by block leaders who were also prisoners. They were supposed to organise things and get dustbins and food from the cookhouse to the compound. Those who were too weak to move had no food and died... a large number of prisoners must die before we can prevent it."

"When the camp was liberated it was found that there had been no water for days. I saw men and women standing na-

ked in the open trying to get themselves clean with cupfuls of water from ponds and ditches, and the drops of coffee cups."

Thousands of Germans taken prisoner by the Allies have been taken to the camp and shown the dreadful conditions and the horrors perpetrated by their own countryfolk. People from local towns have also been made to go round the camp and witness the savagery of which they were the willing accomplices.

A full photographic record has been made for evidence against war criminals, and for the purpose of warning future generations.

The S.S. Commander is under close arrest, and German prisoners and guards are being made to clear up the camp, which will then be evacuated and destroyed.



General Eisenhower grimly surveys the Yard of the Dead.

troops were having to deal with discovering the true extent of Adolf Hitler's persecution of Europe's Jewish population.

Some of the images on these pages may be challenging but we make no apology for publishing them again.

The author of the column on page 21, commenting on the evil and degradation that had been exposed, concludes, "Let us never forget it".

The trouble is, a disturbing number of people already have – and some refuse to believe these atrocities ever took place.

A recent poll of more than 2,000 UK citizens by Opinion Matters for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust – a charity established and funded by the UK government – revealed that five per cent of adults believe the Holocaust to be a work of fiction.

Perhaps they should be shown these pages from our archive which contain images taken just after British troops had reached the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany in April 1945.

They found an estimated 10,000 unburied bodies (the crematorium had broken down) along with around 40,000 very sick prisoners.

It is estimated that up to 28,000 of these poor souls died shortly after the liberation due to the lingering effects of their barbaric incarceration.

These horrific pictures and mind-numbing statistics are hard to take in. But as *Soldier's* reporter so eloquently writes on the opposite page, "there is no propaganda like the truth. And the truth about the Nazi concentration camps, long suspected but never fully credited, proves to be worse than anything we, of the civilised nations, ever dreamt of."

Opposite: A harrowing first-person account of the discovery of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, that British troops liberated in April 1945. This page: A soldier's letter provides a fascinating glimpse into the nature of the fighting as British and Allied troops advanced from town to town across France and Germany. And an ingeniously camouflaged access road to Adolf Hitler's main command complex is discovered.

Letter From a Soldier

THIS is a tale of one night's fighting in Germany by Cpl. Harold A. Bibby, H.L.I. He writes:

Dear Bob,

I got back from my three weeks' junior commanders' course at 53 Div. School, and next day I went into battle back in command of No 1 section (our old section) with "Mac" as my 2 i/c.

The battle was pretty fierce — tanks and Churchill flame-throwers. As it grew dark the heavens were lit by the lurid glow from the liquid fire. Wherever there are tanks on flat open ground there's bags of shelling, as you know.

Well, between dropping into shell holes, waiting, then driving on again, we eventually reached our objective. "Open Order" takes some controlling in the dark, and the section leader has to be a bully. However, I kicked a few behinds in crates quite cheerfully and so kept the line steady and moving.

Our objective was an X track crossing the main road to... (censor) and we dug in. We (10 platoon) of "Baker" on the left and "Able" on the right. And so, astride the main highway to... (censor) we endured for another 24 hours until the Welsh relieved us. And it was there that I got a burst of Spandau bullets through the thigh (at last). The Spandau was on our side of the road a bare 40 yards away and every moment in the slit brought a burst of fire.

"Pretty Potent Mixture"

Well, our SP's took on all comers and the duel went on till dawn. Add to this moaning minnies — our 4.2 mortars, our 25-pounders, Jerry's panzerfaust, our rockets, Jerry's bombers and then, as dawn broke, our Typhoons doing close support with rockets — and you've got the mixing of a pretty potent mixture of sudden death. By this time, we had got our slits six feet down with a fire step. We had rations with us (2 men packs) and with the aid of our tommy cookers we luxured up a few times, polished off our canned beef and biscuits. The tins were useful... afterwards we slaked them over the side.

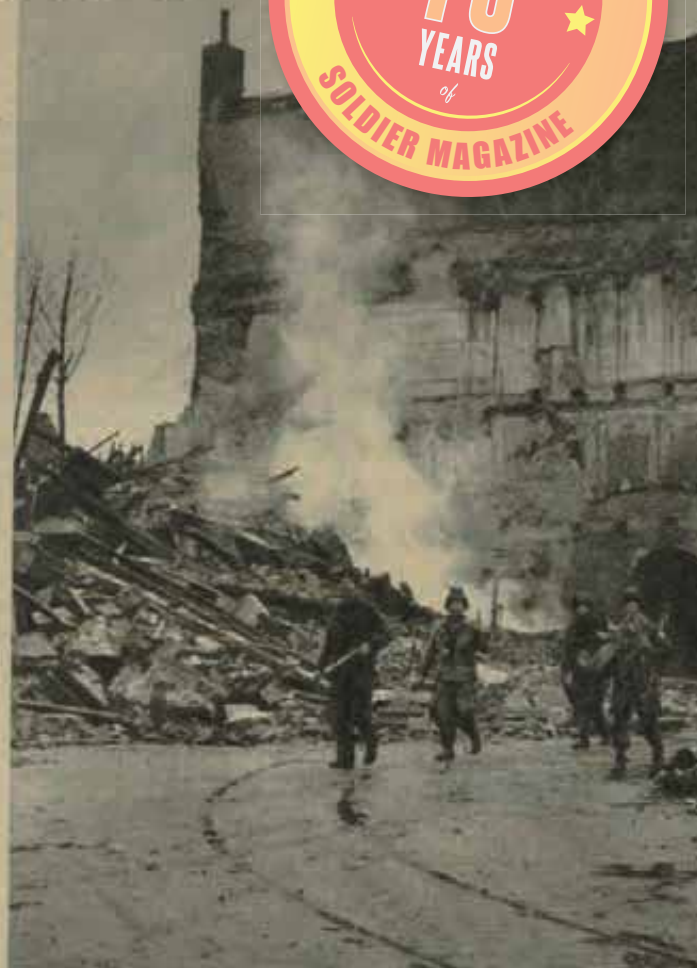
I dug another hole about three feet deep in the bottom of my slit trench (you can guess what for), and then filled it up again. We had no overcoats with us, and it started to rain. We began to shiver and my wound was growing rather painful. Then we were told that the Welsh were relieving us.

Well Bob, we marched back about five miles. We got a hot meal and our overcoats, and slept luxuriously until 0800 hrs next morning.

I forgot to tell you that Sgt... died in my arms during the attack. He got a burst of Spandau in the right breast. Spud from Liverpool copped it with a shell splinter. I had been with Spud for years. It was quite a blow.

Well Bob, how I do go on and on and on...

Harold.



ALLIED PATROL. Adaptability of training methods is being proved in current fighting in Germany. This picture shows a street patrol being carried out by British troops of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade in conjunction with elements of the American 17th Airborne Division in the city of Munster.

TIPS TAKEN

Above: troops of 2 New Zealand Division storm a steep bank over the River Senio in Italy using kapok bridging as scaling ladder. This division under General Freyberg crossed the river between Fossignano and San Severo and advanced 1000 yards beyond.

Left: The extremes of camouflaging cars were taken in concealing the "Adlerhorst" (Eagle's nest), Hitler's former headquarters located west of Bad Nauheim. Here you see a forest road camouflaged with scrim strips.



This page: The standard kit for British troops started to evolve towards the end of the war, with more consideration put towards comfort, increasing protection and shedding weight.

Opposite: A round-up of the European campaign as of April 1945 with some unique photography from the battlefields showing how the Germans were starting to yield on all fronts.



Spring Outfit

THE soldier's load has been lightened by the introduction of a new set of web equipment on which War Office experts have been working for many months.

Weighing appreciably less than the 1937 equipment, the latest type — known as the 1944 pattern — will become a general issue in all theatres as present stocks wear out.

There are two main features in this new light-weight equipment — a four-point brace attachment on to a three-piece waistbelt, and an extremely light alloy water-bottle and cup combined.

All buckles and clips are made of the same special light alloy which has been treated to prevent "shine," and "Double-D Bars" prevent any loosening, and at the same time considerably ease dismantling.

Olive-drab-green in colour, the equipment is in a new fine weave, and men who have worn it in trials describe it as "the most comfortable" they have ever put on.

Strap For Rifle

The three-piece waistbelt incorporates a series of metal-ringed holes — known officially as "grummets" — on which all kinds of things can be hung instead of being placed in the pouches or haversack. On the right-hand front piece is a quick release web strap for securing the rifle when it is necessary to have both hands free.

Another important feature you will appreciate is the new haversack made in three separate compartments. The main compartment is lined at the back on the inside with an oil-bound waterproof material, and the addition of a large pocket on each side enables the mess tin and rations to be taken out without disturbing the contents of the rest of the pack.

Two straps fixed to the base of the haversack secure the groundsheet and blanket, and two other straps on the front are used for holding the pick and shovel in position.

The basic pouches are slightly larger than the '37 type, and have alternative fastenings to allow the carriage of bulky articles. To the left pouch is attached a second frog for carrying the bayonet when the machete is worn on the belt. The pouches are slightly raised to clear the groin and do away with that uncomfortable and sometimes painful feeling of being kicked in a vital spot! A small waist-strap passes through the upper part of the pouches so that they are unable to slip forward.

Wider Braces

The braces are a complete unit, and can be attached at four places on the rear of the waistbelt to allow the belt to be worn loosely while there is not the slightest tendency for the belt to "ride up" in the front. They also permit the waistbelt to be worn unbuckled. The two outside straps join the belt just in rear of the pouches, while the two centre straps support the back of the belt. The width of the braces where they go over the shoulder is three inches instead of the present two inches.

Better Balance

A War Office official who has been engaged on the designing of this and other new types of equipment and clothing, told **SOLIER**: "We have realised the necessity of reducing the weight of every possible item, and have worked to that end all the time. There are only a very few items issued to the soldier which have not been changed and lightened."

"The main features of the new equipment are an alteration in the balance and carriage, and the decrease in weight due to the use of the new fine webbing and light alloys. In spite of the fact that the '44 equipment has larger pouches and a double capacity haversack, it is still lighter than the '37."

BREW-UP HELMET

THE new steel helmet is roughly the same weight as the present "round" tin hat. It is similar to the American helmet, but with a sloping back to prevent water dripping down the neck.

It is also a multi-purpose headgear. A press-button fastener in the centre allows the liner to be removed and the outside casing can then be used for carrying water, washing out your "smells", or "brewing up" a cup of tea!

The longer rear portion provides greater protection for the back of the neck, and the shorter brim allows better vision.

QUART GOES WITH YOU

THE new water-bottle and cup are the chief pride of the designers. Weighing only eight-and-a-half ounces, both the bottle and cup are seamless.

The bottle has a special stainless-steel screw stopper to allow sterilised water to wash the lip of the bottle and prevent the danger of infection. It carries one quart, and the cup, into which the bottle fits when not in use, holds a pint. A wide mouth enables the inspecting officer to see if the inside of the bottle is clean.

Bottle and cup are carried in a wide-flap web container hooked on to the waistbelt grummets.



1. SUNSET AT UELZEN: as a single British Infantryman marches his file of prisoners down the main street, 15th Scottish Division cleared this town after days of stiff street fighting. — 2. The "Ironsides" — Field-Marshal Montgomery talks to Maj.-Gen. L.G. Whistler, Commander of 3rd Infantry Division — nicknamed by the Chief when he commanded the Division in 1940. — 3. The grave of a hero of Arnhem, now in British hands. — 4. Royal Scots Fusiliers bring in German Marine Commandos by Bren carrier at Verdun. — 5. RAF job well done — a German oil train still burning when British troops entered Siederdorf. — 6. Britain's smallest minesweepers swept the port of Ravenna, on the Adriatic coast after it had fallen to the 8th Army.



The Russians, traditionally, know how to enjoy themselves under any circumstances. Here a Kiev theatre group are seen entertaining an enthusiastic audience of tankmen during a lull in action. "Hey! That's our gun, chum."

THE BIG PICTURE

London, SE1

Urgent delivery

SOLDIERS from 4 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps deliver 40,000 surgical masks to St Thomas' Hospital in London.

A troop of around 50 logisticians collected the equipment from a storage facility in Haydock, Liverpool before embarking on an overnight journey to deliver the essential kit to doctors and nursing staff working on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Army is currently operating around the clock to help provide health workers with the personal protective equipment they need, including items such as masks, safety glasses, gloves, aprons and protective suits.

The number of military personnel slated to assist in the delivery of this kit is set to increase from 50 to more than 450, although the situation and requirements are changing daily.

At the time of writing they were scheduled to transport equipment to around 250 NHS locations throughout the country.

See page 7 for more on the coronavirus crisis relief effort.

Pictures: PO (Phot) David Jenkins, RN





'I don't want

After stillbirth devastated his family, this Serviceman decided to speak out on mental health



► **THREE-and-a-half years ago Sgt Ross Sullivan (RA) and his wife Natalie were in Salisbury hospital waiting for the results of their 20-week scan when they were ushered into a side room and given the shattering news that their baby had died in the womb.**

We were at the midwife appointment with our other two children – Thomas, who's five and Caitlin, four – when we were told that our little boy Aaron's heart had stopped, and that Natalie would have to give birth immediately.

She was taken into the Benson Suite, a dedicated unit for the delivery of stillborn babies.

Following a traumatic 12-hour labour, additional complications meant that she required further surgery, totalling 36 hours of treatment.

The medical staff were incredible, but nothing prepared us for the pain of going home without our baby. We had to deal with having to tell people what had happened and, particularly for Natalie, it proved very hard.

Over the next few months I soldiered on, doing the stereotypical male thing, not talking about it and trying to be the strong one for my wife and the rest of my family.

But it wasn't realistic and I began to struggle mentally and physically.

We had counselling and were put in touch with Aching Arms, a small charity run by other bereaved parents, which really helped Natalie, but I was still trying to keep my feelings hidden.

It affected my relationship with both her and my children. I was bottling things up, getting more agitated and snapping at them.

Sgt Sullivan is raising money for child bereavement charity Aching Arms (achingarms.co.uk) and, alongside a team of colleagues, plans to complete the Three Peaks Challenge, run 100km in 24 hours and trek Hadrian's Wall over four days. He also hopes to take part in the recently postponed London Marathon. Go to virginmoneygiving.com/RossSullivan3/1 to donate

it to be taboo'

Eventually, I broke down. I just cried and cried. I had been kidding myself with silly bravado and hadn't realised what an effect that was having on my mental health and well-being.

Until I spoke out, I had no idea how much help was out there, specifically within the Army.

I went to see the padre and began being more open with colleagues. I realised how therapeutic it was to talk and was able to meet fellow soldiers who had gone through the loss of a baby.

There will be lots of personnel who have suffered child bereavement, but don't talk about it because they don't believe others will understand how they feel. I don't want this to be a taboo subject.

I began making a concerted effort to check in on other soldiers. I noticed that someone was acting out of character and seemed to be putting themselves down a lot.

So, I spoke to them and signposted them to welfare. They are now getting help for anxiety and depression and were really grateful that there was someone they could speak to.

Admitting you're not okay is not something to be scared or ashamed of. We, as soldiers and as men, need to realise that it's safe to ask for help.

Natalie says:

"Ross was withdrawn and extremely short-tempered at home.

He had no patience and would get very angry, but if I tried to speak to him, he would almost glaze over.

It was such a relief when he eventually opened up and allowed himself to grieve – it sounds like a cliché but a problem shared is a problem halved.

I don't know what would have happened to us if he hadn't admitted he was struggling. The difference in him now is amazing."



How you can help your colleagues

After having found support himself, Sgt Sullivan wants fellow soldiers to look out for each other...

"I think military personnel still worry that the stigma of mental illness may affect their career and they could be perceived as being weak. So, look out for changes in behaviour and whether people seem to be acting out of character. Make sure they know that someone is there to listen.

"Check in on each other, particularly for those living in single accommodation, who can easily lock themselves away in their rooms at night. Even a five-minute conversation or playing a computer game with them could help a lot."

Pension pluses



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The cost of leaving early

£1,854

Annual Army pension value at state pension age (SPA) for a private who leaves after four years

£7,052 plus resettlement grant

Annual Army pension value at SPA for a corporal who leaves after 12 years

The benefits of serving a full career...

£6,500 + £40,000 + £17,500

Annual income received until SPA, plus lump sum upon departing Army, plus annual pension value at SPA for WO2 aged over 40 who leaves the Service after 24 years

"I HAVE delivered Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) briefings to more than 6,000 Army personnel around the country, however most junior soldiers who I talk to don't want to even think about the issue."

That's the assessment from Maj Richard Sanders (AGC (SPS), pictured above) from the Army Remuneration Policy team. But the officer is keen to bust some myths around the scheme, especially the idea that younger troops don't need to concern themselves with it until they are older.

In fact, he explains, they should make sure they understand their pension fully before making any firm decisions on the length of their careers.

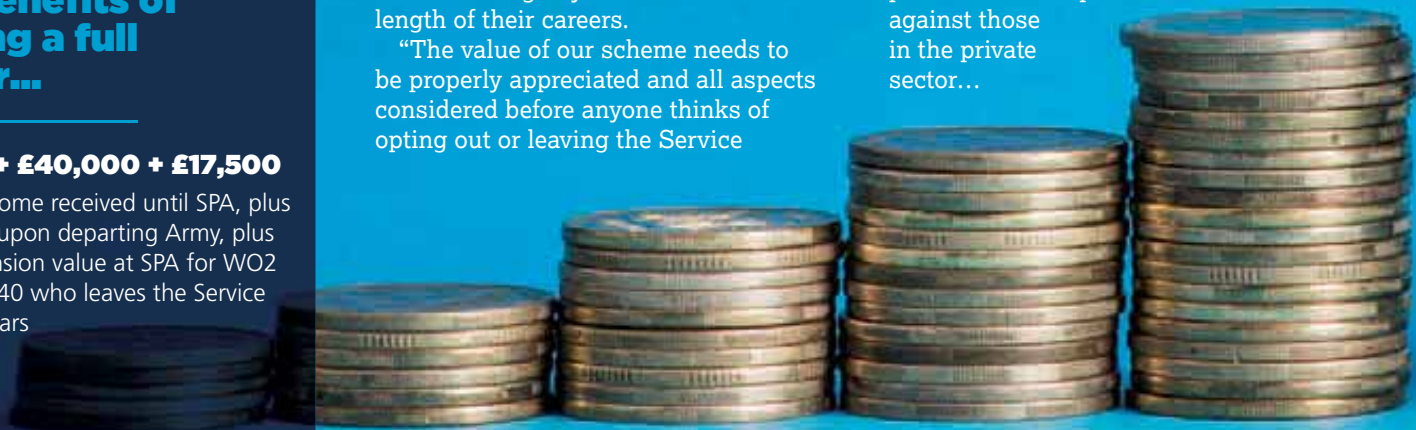
"The value of our scheme needs to be properly appreciated and all aspects considered before anyone thinks of opting out or leaving the Service

altogether," he continues.

"Don't forget that if you have served 20 years or more and are over the age of 40, you'll benefit from significant lump sums, as well as monthly payments from the end of your military career for the rest of your life.

"This money is provided in recognition of your service, compensates those who do not have the opportunity to serve until the age of 60, and assists in the transition to a second career outside the Armed Forces."

Read on to find out about some of the other misconceptions Maj Sanders has heard on his rounds, and how your pension stacks up against those in the private sector...



Myth 1

The current scheme is not as good as the previous versions

Reality:

"Often this comes about because personnel have compared the payment of an annual income (called 'immediate pension' under AFPS 75 and 'early departure payment' under the 05 and 15 iterations), which is smaller under the current scheme. The monthly payments you receive when you reach state pension age are far better than they were."

Myth 2

Military pay is abated or adjusted to subsidise the scheme

Reality:

"Contrary to what I hear being said among some troops, soldiers do not contribute one penny out of their pay packets to it. It has been constructed to reflect the unique sacrifice personnel provide to the nation throughout their careers."

Myth 3

Pensions are so complex – it is hard to understand my Armed Forces Pension

Reality:

"All you really need to know is how much you'll get and when. There are loads of tools out there to assist you; the Discover My Benefits App and AFPS Pension Calculator are two of them. You can also fill out a free yearly pension forecast (AFPS Form 12) and there's your annual Benefit Information Statement. Just read them and if you still don't understand speak to the experts such as Veterans UK or our friends in the Forces Pension Society."

Here's how the numbers stack up

Under **AFPS 15**, if you joined now and were to leave in 2044 at the age of **42** as a warrant officer, second class, on pay supplement two, you would typically receive an early departure lump sum of around **£40,000** plus an annual income of **£6,500** until state pension age.

Then, you would receive an annual pension of around **£17,500** for the rest of your life. At state pension age you could even opt to receive a second lump sum of about **£75,000** in exchange for a reduced annual pension of around **£11,200**.

Civilian counterparts can only receive pension payments from the age of **55** at the earliest – and in order to enjoy income levels of similar magnitude when they currently retire at **68** they would typically have to have paid in around **£500-£600** per month (including employer contributions) from the age of **18**.

Feeling the

How the effects of prolonged pressure could leave you vulnerable to burnout

► IN AN era in which those serving their country have had to get used to doing more with less, “burnout” has become a very real and destructive occupational hazard.

Although the Army has shrunk significantly in just over a decade, troops remain busy at home and abroad. Operations continue apace, demands on time are at a premium and those at the sharp end can shoulder huge responsibilities.

While stopping short of classifying burnout as an illness, the World Health Organisation recognises it as a syndrome relating to chronic, unmanaged workplace stress.

And soldiers could well find themselves vulnerable.

Here Dr Joanna Harvey – principal occupational psychologist at Army HQ in Andover – gives some advice on recognising the risks and staying fighting fit.

Know your character

Soldiers tend to be more emotionally involved and engaged with their work than many people. This is great, but those who care are more likely to experience mental strain because of their mindset. I raise this because you need to understand yourself, appreciate the pressures you put yourself under in day-to-day life and recognise the military environment can be competitive

Be symptom savvy

Burnout is, put simply, a chronic form of stress over a prolonged period – potentially a couple of years. Waking up early and not sleeping properly are two of the classic signs that you could be under too much pressure. You might also find yourself not communicating effectively, prone to anxiety and getting into bad habits such as drinking too much, getting easily frustrated, overly tired or irritable

Act on intelligence

You must be emotionally aware. It might sound obvious, but you need to understand when something is not right – when you are, for example, feeling constantly anxious. Others might spot the signs of stress before you do – make time to listen to them

Seek assistance

There is a support network within the Army to assist your wellbeing – we have some very capable professionals. But in the first instance you could consider approaching somebody to signpost you to specialist help. A medical officer or padre are good initial ports of call

Don't be afraid

Some still see a stigma attached to mental health – don't be one of them. Your wellbeing is important – it affects you and, if you are a leader, those under your command

heat

Hay fever help

Army doc explains why soldiers may be worst affected and what they can do about it

► AS ANY sufferer will tell you, the sneezing, congestion and itching associated with hay fever can make life miserable.

Caused by the body reacting to plant pollen – including from grass, trees, crops, weeds and flowers – it is usually at its worst from late March to September when the pollen count is at its highest.

Staying indoors is one way to ease symptoms, but that's often not an option for troops in the field.

And Maj Anne Gumbley (RAMC) says there are a few other things soldiers should be aware of when they try and manage their symptoms...

- Over-the-counter medicines like antihistamines are pretty effective. But some of them can make you drowsy, so be sure to avoid these if you are driving, operating machinery or on the ranges. Read the labelling carefully
- If the tablets aren't enough, there are anti-allergy eye drops and nasal sprays. Ask the pharmacist for the best option for you
- Make sure you stock up on meds if you are going to be spending a lot of time outdoors or deploying on exercise, especially if the weather is due to be warm and humid
- Some people, for example those with a family history of asthma, may get wheezy with hay fever. Speak to your doctor, who can advise if you need an inhaler

Did you know?

Also known as allergic rhinitis, hay fever results from the immune system misidentifying the proteins found in pollen as a threat – triggering sneezing, a blocked nose and watery, itchy eyes. Different people get it at different times of year depending on which type of pollen they are allergic to. It also varies according to the weather and the local flora in various parts of the country.

INTO THE

Soldier

Words: Georgina Coupe Pictures: Peter Davies; Cpl Paul Watson, RLC; Cpl Robert Weideman, RLC; LCpl Joshua Sims, QDG; Nigel Gidney Photography.

OPINION

Desert Rats use package to prepare for potential deployments in 2020

S NOW, sleet and raging storms formed the backdrop of the fighting conditions for 2,500 Regular and Reserve soldiers from 7th Infantry Brigade (The Desert Rats) on one of the largest tests of its kind in more than a decade.

For certain units, Exercise Wessex Storm provided an opportunity to gain training validation for potential operational deployments to Afghanistan, Poland and Mali.

One of those was 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, who used the serials on Salisbury Plain to explore the light mechanised infantry role they have adopted ahead of a possible mission to the Sahel region of North Africa.

Travelling in no less than two-vehicle packets, platforms including Foxhounds and Jackals were used to transport engineers, medics, dog handlers and casualties, act as decoys, and take part in daring night-time attacks as they confronted a mock enemy employing unconventional methods and tactics.

"It's our first major exercise in four years and has provided a chance for us to be tested against our sister battalion (see page 38), who have provided a realistic enemy," said the unit's commanding officer, Lt Col Will Meddings.

"We've been able to try out new ideas, kit and equipment and

IN NUMBERS

2,500

Regular and Reserve soldiers from 7th Infantry Brigade (The Desert Rats)

600

Vehicles involved in the exercise

134,883

Litres of fuel supplied, enough to drive a saloon car for 1.7 million miles

14,272

Ration packs (29.5 tonnes) consumed

184,000

Blank rounds fired

6,133

Magazines used – enough for one person to fire at rapid rate of fire for four days and six hours



be really innovative.

“We have been living out of the vehicles for two weeks and have identified areas that we can improve on, but our main takeaway from this exercise is that we can afford to be much more aggressive with the assets.”

Cpl Jack Hicks (R Anglian), a Foxhound commander, said he enjoyed being part of the learning curve

“It’s been an interesting experience,” he added. “For example, we were part of a deception plan that included bridges being put across a river at night.

“Noise carries and we used the vehicles to distract the enemy in order to help launch the infantry assault group.”

Preparations for dismounted missions were also on the agenda, with the personnel completing a series of live-firing packages and ground assault training drills, that included a series of house clearances with grenades and other explosives.

Using the tactical engagement simulation system, troops conducted round-the-clock offensive and defensive raids and on one occasion engaged with “enemy” armoured infantry over a lengthy 12-hour battle in and around the backdrop of Copehill Down Village.

Supporting elements included 1st The Queen’s Dragoon

Guards, along with Reservists of The Royal Yeomanry, to provide reconnaissance capabilities.

And 6th Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps supplied medical care (simulated and real), ammunition, food, water, fuel and ensured that more than 600 vehicles were kept battleworthy during the six-week exercise – no mean feat given the added complications of Storms Ciara and Dennis that saw many platforms repeatedly bogged in.

The QDG used the serials to try out innovative gadgets, such as remote camera pods, designed to improve reconnaissance capabilities, and crew sustainability gear including diesel-powered heating systems that can potentially improve turn-around times by enabling personnel to dry themselves and their kit quicker.

“Having The Queen’s Dragoon Guards and 6 Regiment here has raised the bar,” added Lt Col Meddings.

“They have enabled complicated combined arm manoeuvres, brought infantry, medics and REME together in the fight against an unconventional opponent.

“They’ve added value by increasing the realism and complexity, and it’s made this whole exercise much more testing than it might have been.”





“ THEY’VE ADDED VALUE BY INCREASING THE REALISM AND COMPLEXITY, AND IT’S MADE THIS WHOLE EXERCISE MUCH MORE TESTING THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ”





→ RESERVE CONTRIBUTION

DESPITE nationwide flooding causing difficulties in terms of being released from their day jobs, around 300 Reservists from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment and 3rd and 4th Battalions of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment rocked up to form the enemy task force.

These personnel were augmented by some 100 Regular soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, who provided specialist intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance capabilities.

As a result, the opfor had access to mortar, anti-tank and sniper platoons, enabling them to fight in many guises and surprise their foes with unexpected tactics and attacks.

Using counter-insurgency methods, they managed to infiltrate rear battle lines and sneak in snipers while engagements were being fought at the front.

"Exercise Wessex Storm provided us with an opportunity to be more creative than ever before," Lt Col Adam Wolfe (right),

commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, told *Soldier*.

"We were not doing the obvious and sticking to British Army doctrine, we were a free-thinking enemy force.

"We dialled the complexities up and down and deployed different tactics – rather than present four or five problems we looked to overload their headquarters with nine or ten to achieve more casualties."

He added: "This is the first time the Reserves have put together a battlegroup headquarters and fighting company in maybe 20 years.

"By having such a large force we were able to run a full training programme, including the orders and estimates process." ■



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BREAKING



THE ICE

The Army is now developing its own winter warfare training teams



T

HE sense of trepidation was palpable among the soldiers standing on the frozen banks of the River Malselva, one of Norway's best salmon fishing spots, 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

But this was no adventurous training expedition or holiday

for those taking part in the Army's first cold weather instructor course.

The supervisors have cut a large square hole in the frozen surface and the students are facing the prospect of a 90-second dip in the numbing water – part of a practical session showing them how to extract properly should they fall through the ice into a river or lake while skiing.

This is a crucial point in the four-week package's survival stage that, once completed, will enable future Army instructors to deliver training to soldiers deploying to cold weather operational environments such as Poland and Estonia.

Their new-found knowledge will also help reduce the likelihood of cold weather injuries.

Currently, this training is led by extreme weather warfare specialists from the Royal Marines across the whole of defence.

"More than five minutes at this sort of temperature and your muscles will start to cramp up," explains CSgt Cameron Smith (RM), one of the course's training officers.

"Your body will shut down gradually, you will lose dexterity and muscular ability and you won't be able to stay afloat.

"It has happened to me twice for real. We teach this in a controlled environment so people know →

Words: Georgina Coupe Pictures: Peter Davies

“It’s massively important for them to see all the instructors demonstrate the ice-breaking”



→ how their body will react and then if it actually happens they will be able to respond more calmly.”

Wearing only a thermal base layer, socks, gloves and trainers, chief instructor CSgt James Keenan (RM, pictured below) steps calmly into the icy water, leans down to remove his skis and places them on the side of the hole, before stating his name, number, rank and asking for permission to leave the water.

After answering a few more questions to test his mental state he is allowed to pull himself out using his ski poles and rolls in the snow, absorbing excess moisture and providing some insulation to help him warm up.

In line with Royal Navy tradition, those plunging through the ice are issued a swift tot of rum once they are out in return for a salute to the Queen, before exchanging their wet kit for the welcome standard dress of thermal layers and Arctic clothing.

It is a critical pass or fail stage of the training and as the students watch all five

instructors take a turn in the water, they start to look a little more relaxed.

Cpl Richard Cummings (RE, pictured left), an assistant Army instructor, says: “It’s massively important for them to see the teaching staff demonstrate the ice-breaking, to show calmness and set their minds at rest.

“It’s a life-saving drill and is over quite quickly. As soon as you get out and roll in the snow you start to warm up.”

The candidates also learn how to move around swiftly and safely in sub-zero terrain.

“The hardest thing is skiing with a weapon – if you don’t carry it correctly you can easily smash your teeth,” explains Cpl Cummings.

“It’s also a constant battle with the cold and trying to keep yourself warm – and it can take you all night to get up a hill carrying 60lbs of kit and pulling a pulk (sledge) with all the stores.”

He adds: “You’ve also got to make sure you store your kit correctly because if you don’t it will just freeze.”

Nestled among the valleys in the Bardufoss region, these sessions form the second phase of the instructors course.

To qualify, students must have first passed a rigorous pre-selection stage and 14-day mountain warfare package – these





candidates completed it at Capel Curig late last year.

This process ensures the troops are capable of marching in excess of 20km across some of the UK's highest peaks during the winter months and tests their night navigation skills, as well as abseiling, climbing and vertical assault capabilities.

The survival tuition ramps up once they reach Norway's unforgiving backdrop. Moose, deer and wolves are a common site and further north the snowy mountains are home to both polar and brown bears.

However, the Service's 20 trainees are shown how to target much smaller food sources, such as fish, that can be caught easily using any small shiny item as bait, and how to humanely dispatch a chicken.

Good husbandry is key for the prevention of food poisoning and they learn the importance of thinking outside the box in such an austere environment when food is scarce and precious energy is needed to stay alive.

CSgt Keenan advises against foraging for mushrooms but encourages the use of pine needles and moss in tea as they contain high levels of phosphorous and vitamin C.

"Protein and carbohydrates are really important and can be found by searching for root vegetables and berries," the instructor explains.

"Bark can be chewed, and the sap contains lots of sugar.

"People operating in these sorts of temperatures need at least 5,000 calories a day and the freeze-dried foods of the Arctic ration packs provide around 6,000.

"You can't carry water because it just turns to ice in the →



→ container, so they need to stop regularly to melt snow to provide the recommended three to four litres per day.”

The instructor course is open to all cap badges and trades, but candidates must have a commanding officer recommendation, be between the rank of lance corporal and captain and have high levels of fitness and motivation.

“The hardest part has been adapting to the environment and learning to administrate yourself in this weather,” says student CSgt James Massey (Lancs, pictured far right).

“It is about understanding the time it takes to do simple jobs and motivating yourself.”

The troops are also taught the Telemark skiing technique that combines elements of the Alpine and Nordic styles, allowing users to have free heel movement that’s better for carrying weight and flexibility.

“Skiing with a Bergen is really demanding, and just learning to balance and walk in snowshoes is difficult enough,” adds CSgt Massey.

With temperatures in the region dropping as low as -30 degrees Celsius and record-breaking snowfall producing six-foot snowdrifts, conditions were punishing for the personnel, who are taught to not just survive but thrive.

As well as learning camouflage and concealment principles, the programme incorporates lessons on how to construct different types of shelters and build fires.

The prospective instructors are stripped of all but essential warm kit and survival tools before breaking down into small teams, where they are tested on their night navigational skills and making their own shelters.

One of the most junior soldiers on the course, LCpl David Thomas (R Welsh), says: “Regardless of rank, here we all just want to be better at what we do.

“We are taught all about the safety rules for cookers and fires and the carbon monoxide poisoning threat, its signs and symptoms and how to manage the risks.”

The lessons emphasise the importance of constructing

THE COLD FACTS ABOUT WINTER SURVIVAL

- If the ice cracks and you fall through, always swim back to where you came from, never forward, as the ice here has already supported your weight
- Be aware of the undercurrent when walking on frozen rivers
- In general, ice should be a **minimum thickness of 5cm** before a person can walk on it
- It should be **10cm deep** to bear the weight of **two or more people** walking and they should **keep a two-metre gap** between them
- A **minimum 25cm** layer can support the weight of a **light helicopter**
- A **30cm layer of ice** is thick enough for a **heavier support helicopter** to safely land on
- **40cm** can support the weight of a **Viking vehicle**
- Rolling in snow after falling in icy water helps to soak up the moisture and insulate you against the cold



shelters small enough to ensure they can be heated without people putting themselves in danger – by setting fire to the materials used or inhaling noxious gases in an enclosed environment, for instance – but not so big that they are unable to keep warm.

“Never underestimate the importance of a fire because without it you will die,” says Cpl Cummings as he teaches personnel how to create sparks from twigs and wood shavings in order to ignite a mix of cotton wool and feathers.

Over the following three weeks, the training progresses onto more advanced skiing and movement, with an emphasis on military tactics and techniques.

They learn to fight on skis, construct observation posts and conduct recces ahead of the final phase, where individuals are assessed on their ability to teach the lessons they have participated in so far.

With the size of British Army battlegroups expected to increase across eastern Europe in the future, this challenging course will provide the Service with a crucial capacity to provide its own winter warfare training down the line.

“At the moment the Army is heavily reliant on the Royal Marines,” concludes CSgt Keenan.

“But this increase in instructional capability means that in the future we will be able to teach troops in various places such as Poland, Estonia and Batus.

“Developing skills in an extreme environment like Norway is tougher than in somewhere like Poland, which means our instructors delivering training on Op Cabrit, for example, will provide a first-class product.” ■





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A photograph of a family (mother, father, and child) running through a field at sunset. The mother is on the left, the father on the right, and a small child in the middle, all holding hands and running towards the camera.

PRETTYS
FOR PEACE OF MIND

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A photograph of a group of cyclists in various colored jerseys riding on a road.

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ARMY CYCLING

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In a whirl over policy on females

I MUST speak up about the recent articles in your magazine concerning females joining the Infantry and patrolling on the front line.

I enlisted in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) in 1980 and, as a female, I was on the front line from day one.

I went out on patrols in Land Rovers and carried out helicopter operations and foot patrols alongside men. The only difference was that I was not armed with a weapon.

However, when the UDR was amalgamated with the Rangers and became The Royal Irish Regiment in July 1992 I was armed with an SA80 until the unit was disbanded in 2007.

I patrolled alongside my male colleagues, carried out my weapon handling drills and did the same combat fitness tests, so to say that it is only recently that females have been allowed in ground close combat is not correct.

It feels like the operations in Northern Ireland and the people of Ulster are being ignored and airbrushed from history.

– Name and address supplied

Maj Paul Saunders, Physical Employment Standards, Directorate of Personnel, Army Headquarters, replies: Many thanks for your letter. The Army's 2016 decision to formally allow women to enlist into any internationally deployable and

fully operational Infantry unit by no means undermines or detracts from the outstanding work many female soldiers and officers have conducted in the past.

The Service has a very proud history of female soldiers and officers of all cap badges playing an integral part in operations worldwide, including those carried out in Northern Ireland over the tenure of your service.

The recent decision to let women formally undertake the full range of training that allows them to serve in a ground close combat role in any Infantry battalion of the Service, acknowledges the fact that for many years female soldiers and officers have demonstrated the same ability, drive and professionalism as their male counterparts.

It is the exceptional service of female soldiers like yourself that have contributed and paved the way for women to be legally and professionally given an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential in any role within the British Army.

Please be assured that no way will any service (both in peace time and on operations) by any personnel be forgotten, overlooked or undervalued.

“
The
people
of Ulster
are being
ignored
”

Talkback

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas...

but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

🐦 [@soldiermagazine](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine)

HOT FOOD HEAVEN

● MY REGIMENT recently attended Lydd Ranges in Kent to complete our annual training tests.

All of us knew we were going to have a packed lunch and usually that's a meat pastry of some description that contains a multitude of E numbers.

To most of us, they taste vile.

But on this occasion we were provided with a Bombay Brasserie (the Indian restaurant brand) chicken salsa wrap as our main meal.

What a surprise – almost everyone commented on how good it was.

I did not witness any wastage and some soldiers even had seconds.

Could you be kind enough to find out if the British Army will be getting some more of these delicious items for our packed lunches?

Also, compliments to whoever managed to secure this contract. – Maj Alexander Masson, RLC



Maj (Retd) Ritchie Player, Food Services, replies: It is good news to see a compliment on food for a change and I will pass your comments on to the contractor.

The local contractor dictates its own feeding plans, including packed meals, so there is no guarantee that what is served in Lydd would also be offered in Tidworth, for instance.

If anyone does have a complaint about their food they should make it on the day the meals are issued so the problem can be logged and hopefully sorted out.

All contractors have a customer feedback system where personnel can suggest likes and dislikes on meals so I suggest you leave a comment and hope it encourages the company to procure these tasty items again.

“I was told I couldn't train there”



Pumped up over gym times

I HAVE served for 16 years and have a very active family with two children.

For me, one major selling point of the Army is being able to access a gym.

I recently made it into the Service's weightlifting team and am a very competitive warrior fitness athlete, so I need to train hard to uphold my strength and conditioning for major military and civilian competitions.

The gym on my camp changed its operating hours so it now closes at 1700, which means I can't train properly because we finish work at 1630 and I take my daughter to and from school.

I can train at lunchtimes but my unit is very busy so that's not always possible – and why should I sacrifice a meal break in order to stay fit?

Friends in the physical training school invited me to work out with them from 0545 until 0730, which was great.

I managed to train for about two weeks until I was told I couldn't carry on as I wasn't a PT instructor or on a course held there.

As a result, I have to pay for a civilian gym costing £65 per month to be able to perform for the Army at a high standard, which is ridiculous. – Name and address supplied

Lt Col Ian Phillips, Individual Training, Professional Development, Personnel Policy (Army), replies: The policy is clear – station commanders and commanding officers should ensure their gymnasiums are available to all personnel, not just those based in that unit.

Also, facilities should be open for use outside of normal working hours, including weekends.

To reduce the risk of uncontrolled access out of working hours, a swipe card system should be installed.

The use of CCTV is also recommended to boost security.

Improving access empowers troops to train at a time that suits them and can only lead to greater fitness across the Service.

Civilian gymnasiums now operate flexibly and it makes perfect sense for the Army to do the same.

NO MEDAL NEWS?

● I APPLIED for the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal last year. However, my unit has informed me that they have not been issued since the end of 2018 and the Defence Information Notice relating to this topic is currently under review.

A new one isn't expected until later this year so why is it taking so long, and what are the proposed changes? – Maj Tim Duncalfe, R Anglian

Kevin Summers, Defence Services Secretariat, MoD Main Building, replies: Concerns have been raised that the medal's qualifying service has been calculated incorrectly, so some individuals may have received it later than they should have, or not received it at all.

A decision was taken to suspend the issue of this award pending an investigation which will hopefully be concluded in the next few weeks.

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

Interested in a career as a personal trainer? Ultimate Performance is expanding and on the lookout for more ex-Service personnel to join its growing ranks. Visit www.upfitness.com/en/careers for more information on the opportunities available.

Linx Security Training is offering a 20 per cent reduction on 28 courses for serving and former personnel through the MoD-approved Defence Discount Service. The courses on offer range from technical skills to management with industry-approved qualifications. Visit www.linxtraining.co.uk



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Sgt Chilvers, Dereham, Norfolk.



DIARY

All these events may be subject to delay or cancellation due to the coronavirus pandemic so please check the relevant websites for details

May 2: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo. Held at King's Hall, Kingsway, the event features concert bands, marching displays, a beating retreat sunset ceremony and a lone piper. Doors and bars open at 1730, with performances from 1830. Tickets cost £10. Visit www.musicmaniauk.com or call 01782 206000.

May 8: National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire will be commemorating VE Day, starting a three-day activities programme. The free event will also remember those who fought in the Far East until August 1945. Further information is available at www.thenma.org.uk.

May 9 to 10: National Memorial Arboretum vintage fair, held as part of the VE Day commemorations. The event will feature live music and family activities. Visit www.thenma.org.uk

May 16: Colchester,
September 5: Catterick:
Paras' 10 – the ultimate ten-mile endurance race from Parachute Regiment training. Run or tab, team or individual, canicross and Paras' 2 for children. Enter at www.paras10.com

May 23 to 24: Duxford Air Festival. The event will mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day with a vintage funfair, complete with original 1940s rides, as well as live music and entertainment inspired by the era. A range of Second World War and contemporary aircraft will also take to the skies. Visit www.iwm.org.uk/airshows

June 10 and 11: The Household Division Beating Retreat on Horse Guards Parade. This year's theme is The Sword and The Crown and will feature a spectacular evening of music and military precision drill, including horses, cannon and fireworks. Tickets from £20, with ten per cent discount on purchases of ten or more. Visit www.tickets.householddivision.org.uk

July 18: The Rifleman's Gathering at Allianz Park, London. Organised by The Rifleman's Association, the day will feature sporting events, a sounding retreat and many more activities. Open to Regulars, Reserves and veterans. Visit: www.theriflesnetwork.co.uk

July 18: The North East Military Ball at The Hilton, Bottle Bank, Gateshead. Open to tri-Service personnel, Regular and Reserve, plus friends and family, it features a three-course dinner, live entertainment, raffle, auction and disco. Proceeds go to local military and children's charities. Email: info@nemb.co.uk or visit www.nemb.co.uk

November 21: The North East Military Christmas Ball will be held at The Ramside Hotel, County Durham. Open to tri-Service personnel, Regular and Reserve, plus friends and family, it is raising money for local military and children's charities. Email: info@nemb.co.uk or visit www.nemb.co.uk



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REUNIONS

The Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland (RAVC) Association annual AGM and reunion is on Saturday, May 2 at the Holiday Inn Express in Burton upon Trent, from 1500. A memorial service will be held at the National Memorial Arboretum the following day. Contact John Tucker on **07734 113077** or email johnatucker70@yahoo.com

The 86th Artillery Clerks' Reunion and Association dinner is at the Royal Artillery Sergeants' Mess, Larkhill, on Friday, June 5 to Sunday, June 7. Attendance forms are at www.artyclerksassn.org

The 8 Regiment, RASC/RCT/RLC reunion weekend and dinner. All past members, irrespective of cap badge, as well as wives, partners and guests, are invited to The Village on the Green Club, Aspull, Wigan for the dinner on Saturday, October 24 – tickets cost £30. A pre-reunion event will be held at the Wigan Army Reserve Centre from 1930 on Friday, October 23. For more details email jimmyasp@hotmail.com or dcsouthall@aol.com



SEARCHLINE

Former gunner Chris Dunham and four other Royal Artillery veterans want to hear from survivors of Op Dynamo in Dunkirk. The ex-soldiers are travelling to France on May 27 to mark the 80th anniversary of the evacuation and intend to present a plaque listing the present-day survivors to the Dunkirk Museum. Email chridunham@aol.com or call 07545 094909

Hugh Corby is trying to trace the military medals and citations of his late father, Capt Eric Corby (RA), who served as a forward observation officer during the Second World War. Anyone with information is asked to contact him on 07961 606766.

Ben Fielding, the grandson of Korean War veteran Eric Thomas Fielding, who served in The Royal Welch Regiment, is researching an article intended for publication in June to mark the 70th anniversary of the conflict's outbreak. He would like to interview some of his late grandfather's fellow veterans, so that their testimony may inform the finished article. Email benf10383@gmail.com

Retired Royal Air Force

Serviceman Andrew Clark is a collector of British Military Tokens used in Iraq and Afghanistan and is seeking examples of pre-2007 issues to boost his collection. If you can help email amcpapermoneyman@aol.com

The Air Training Corps, now part of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets, will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2021. To help mark the occasion, they would like to identify those who were cadets when the formation launched in 1941 and interview them to capture memories of those early days. Email al.munns@btinternet.com

The Women's Royal Army Corps Association has launched a campaign to find the oldest British female Second World War veteran. To nominate someone you think may meet the criteria visit www.wraccassociation.org or use #FindOurOATS on social media.



ROADSHOWS

The Forces Pension Society is staging a number of roadshows at garrison locations throughout the year, as well as FAR (financial aspects of resettlement) briefings. See www.forcespensionsociety.org/news-events/events for the latest dates and details.

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of members of the 7th Infantry Brigade during Exercise Wessex Storm on Salisbury Plain. Circle all the differences in the left image and send the panel to HOAY 941, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than April 30. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be



submitted. The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a carbon fibre Sitpak ZEN portable chair. A sustainable alternative to festival chairs, it is also ideal for a range of outdoor pursuits such as camping, photography, hunting, fishing or hiking. The winners' names will be published in the June issue. All the usual rules apply. **February's winner:** Emeka Igboke, London





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ARMY



13 & 14 MAY 20

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What	Training day Apply separately from Champs; individual or team	Training day Apply separately from Champs; individual or team	Inter Unit Orienteering Champs Day 1 – Spanish Score	Inter Unit Orienteering Champs Day 2 – Team Harris
			AOA / BAOC AGM	
Where	Army Orienteering Association Centre of Excellence Longmoor Camp and Training Area			
Why	Orienteering can be used to develop many of the qualities that are essential in a good soldier. At its most demanding, orienteering provides the challenge of navigating at speed, testing navigational skill and aerobic fitness. The skills required of a good soldier are very similar to that of an orienteer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rapid map interpretation & confident compass work• continuous terrain analysis & option reassessment• all while under physical duress and mental stress			

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Currently all Army Reserve personnel who are members of the Army Sports Lottery can pay for their lottery tickets annually in advance.

Good news, from 1 April 2020 all Army Reserve personnel will be able to pay for their tickets (which also allows access to the membership grants of the Army Sports Lottery) monthly through their Army salary, exactly the same as their Regular counterparts.

Full details of the monthly cost for tickets, and the benefits of membership, can be found in the Army Sports Lottery (ASL) which can be found on the Army Sports Lottery website www.armysportslottery.com

Weekly prize money is **£30,000** with members having the opportunity to win the following prizes:

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REVIEWS

MUSIC

I Am Not a Dog on a Chain

Morrissey continues to deliver

➤ HE MAY now be 60, but **Morrissey** is showing no signs of slowing down or even considering his musical retirement.

The former **Smiths** frontman is as active as ever and after an acclaimed 30-date US tour last autumn he has maintained the momentum with the release of his 13th solo effort – *I Am Not a Dog on a Chain*.

Produced by the Grammy award-winning **Joe Chiccarelli** (Beck, **Tori Amos**, **The Strokes**, **The Killers**, **The White Stripes**), and recorded at Studio La Fabrique



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BOOKS

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GAMES



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Army Cycling will be running a series of 8 events in 2020. Events are open to all Regular & Reserve Service Personnel.

These races are for all levels of experience from beginners to seasoned racers, with prizes for individuals, Major/Minor Units and Corps. Unit affiliation to the series is £70/£50 for Major/Minor Units respectively and enables all personnel within that unit to race in all ACRRS events throughout the season.

Dates and Venues:

Spring Cup: 22 Apr 20 | Lee Valley

Round 1: 6 May 20 | Milton Keynes Bowl

Round 2: 13 May 20 | Upavon

Round 3: 27 May 20 | Aldershot

Round 4: 3 Jun 20 | Mallory Park

Round 5: 17 Jun 20 | Bovington

Army Champs: 1 Jul 20 | Gravesend

Round 6: 15 Jul 20 | Harvey Hadden, Nottingham

Round 7: 29 Jul 20 | MOD Lyneham

Inter Service Champs: 5 Aug 20 | TBC

Round 8: 2 Sep 20 | Brownlee Centre, Leeds

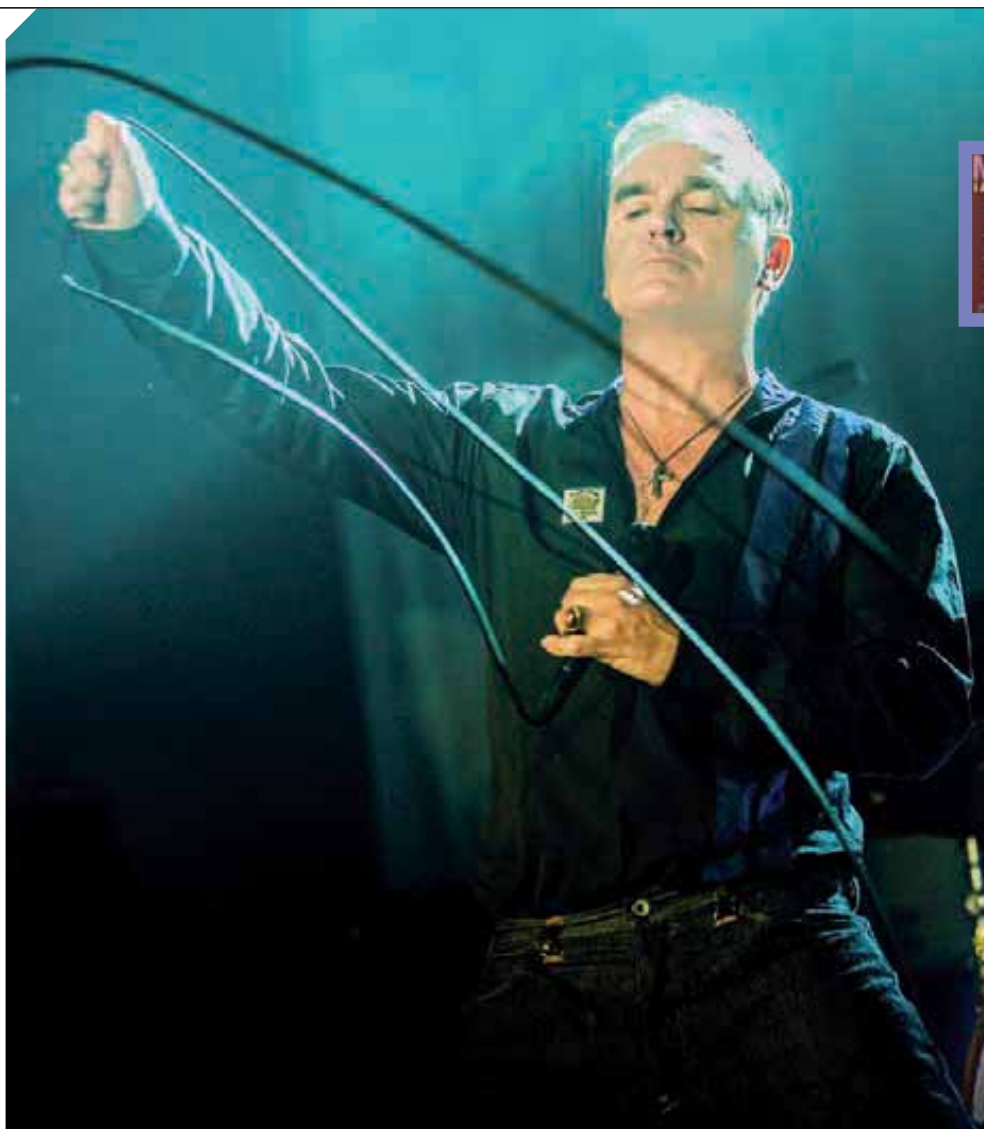
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ONLINE ENTRY - Visit Defence Connect or www.armycycling.org for more information.



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in Saint-Remy-de-Provence, France, and Sunset Sound in Hollywood, California, it marks an experimental diversion for an artist who has become as equally famed for his outrageous outbursts as he is for his efforts on stage or in the studio.

Early singles *Bobby Don't You Think They Know* and *Love Is on Its Way Out* were met with great critical and fan response, so the excitement surrounding the full album has been palpable.

However, cult fans may take umbrage at the star's bold new path, which marks a departure from the indie formula that has served him so well in the past.

Opener *Jim Jim Falls* signals Morrissey's intentions, with its electronica and string synths stretching beyond the safe confines of the traditional guitar-driven approach, while the aforementioned *Bobby Don't You Think They Know* – the record's standout offering – boasts bursts of electro-rock and psychedelic saxophone solos, all of which are underpinned by powerful backing vocals from Motown legend **Thelma Houston**.

Greater familiarity can be found on the title track

and *What Kind of People Live in These Houses*, which are awash with **Johnny Marr**-like riffs – musicianship that blends perfectly with some classic Morrissey wordplay.

But after a storming opening, proceedings start to tail off as the album reaches the back end. *Darling I Hug a Pillow* is let down by infuriating trumpet interludes and the one-paced *Once I Saw the River Clean* – with a beat that sounds like the theme to a 70s sci-fi series – is just plain annoying.

That said, these minor indiscretions should not detract from what is, on the whole, a triumphant record which is brimming with innovation and energy – proving there is plenty of life left in a career that now spans five decades. ■

VERDICT:

Experimental approach pays off in style

★★★★★

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*

MUSIC RELEASES

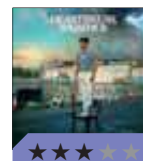


Mixing Colours

Brian and Roger Eno

FOLLOWING the expanded re-release of his classic *Apollo* masterwork to commemorate last year's 50th anniversary of the moon landings, musician and producer **Brian Eno** joins forces with his brother for this latest outing. Apparently more than a decade in the making, *Mixing Colours* is an altogether different offering from the ambient soundscapes depicting the emotions of the lunar astronauts. Inspired by the impressionist movement, this is a free-floating yet melodic adventure with tracks named after hues such as *Burnt Umber*, *Blonde* and *Celeste*. Eno rarely disappoints, and this collaboration is no exception. Beautifully performed, the delicate arrangements are as well crafted as they are emotive listening.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Heartbreak Weather

Niall Horan

NEVER one to be centre stage in the pop juggernaut that was

One Direction, **Niall Horan**

surprised many with a successful debut solo offering in 2017. The fact the record came from one of the band's second-tier stars meant expectations were not particularly high, but with single *Slow Hands* generating huge airplay and the album topping the charts in the US, the music community suddenly sat up and took notice. It is no surprise to see the singer maintaining the same PG-friendly, pop-rock formula here as acoustic guitars, ballads and warm stadium singalongs dominate proceedings. There are hints at experimentation in places but, on the whole, this lands firmly in safe territory – a characteristic that is perfectly exemplified on the title track. While far from breaking any new ground, *Heartbreak Weather* is a solid enough effort that sits comfortably alongside the recent efforts of his fellow former group members.

Richard Long, *Soldier*

BOOKS



● *Cameras, Combat and Courage*, by Dan Brookes, is published by Pen and Sword, priced £25

PICK OF THE MONTH:

Cameras, Combat and Courage

Military photographers deliver their take on Vietnam

➤ FOR many, the Vietnam War conjures up haunting visions of shell-shocked US Marines, the expression of a Viet Cong prisoner moments from death or perhaps a naked young girl fleeing from a napalm attack.

Iconic imagery captured by award-winning photographers such as Don McCullin, Eddie Adams and Nick Ut appeared on television screens, magazines and newspapers around the world. But less familiar are those taken by American servicemen who documented the 20-year conflict with camera in one hand and weapon in the other.

The US government destroyed nearly 90 per cent of its Vietnam archive but in a new book – *Combat, Camera and Courage* – published to mark the 45th anniversary of the end of the war this month, images taken on military photographers' personal cameras are revealed for the very first time, along with first-hand accounts.

Author Dan Brookes, who himself deployed, told *Soldier* what it was like to be sent to Vietnam as a "lab rat" (photo lab technician) in the 69th Signal Battalion 50 years ago.



"I was 19 years old, naive and didn't really want to go" he recalled.

"I was a technician, so I wasn't taking pictures of the combat up close, but it was a real shock to print those photographs of bodies coming from the mortuary.

"Eventually you got compassion fatigue, if you didn't then you would become so emotionally ravaged you couldn't do your job."

Far from covering the US military in glory, the book instead shows the human cost of conflict, documenting the deaths of both military comrades and innocent civilians as seen through the eyes of young men who sometimes had to put their cameras down in order to kill.

"It wasn't easy to get these guys to talk about it and some refused," explained Brookes (pictured left). "They just couldn't go back over those experiences."

This is the second title he has created with his former colleague and co-author, the late Bob Hillerby, to pay tribute to the combat cameramen whose work played a part in ending the war.

The relentless stream of coverage showing the horrors and atrocities occurring in Asia helped to turn the tide of public opinion against military action in Vietnam, and it is unlikely that there will ever again be a conflict that allows such unrestricted media access.

Brookes believes it is important the photographers' stories are known and talks

candidly about his time serving his country, as well as the disorganised manner in which he and his comrades felt the war was conducted.

But despite some 58,000 soldiers losing their lives in the campaign, Brookes also wants to remember the good times that he and many of his colleagues had in Saigon and nearby areas.

"I was able to visit the villages, see the countryside and meet people," he remembers.

"I had never really travelled before – it was different and gave me the travel bug.

"Vietnam was beautiful and for me it's a country, not just a war." ■

INTERVIEW: GEORGINA COUPE, SOLDIER

BOOK RELEASES



Dar Al Salaam by Douglas Blackburn

THIS is a fictional story of a newly formed, multinational UN task force and various characters whose common goal is to prevent

the sabotage of the world's oil supply. It pits global superpowers against each other in a potential nuclear war. The story is set in the present day, but also includes future technologies and references several historical points, including Baghdad 800 years ago and the Second World War. If you enjoy political thrillers then this will tick the right boxes for you. The many interconnecting storylines definitely provide lots to think about, and the ending suggests a sequel is on the cards.

Sgt Adam Jackson, Para



Harrier 809 by Rowland White

THE Falklands War is familiar territory for author Rowland White. Having previously written

about the Vulcan bomber crews, his latest foray south approaches the story from a different perspective – notably the Sea Harrier pilots squaring up to the Argentine forces. This offering certainly delivers, laying bare the enormity of the task faced by a British military decimated by defence cuts in reclaiming a territory some 8,000 miles away. It also sets out the wider context of political miscalculations, failed diplomacy and bizarre accidents of history that led to conflict. The result is a compelling narrative, brought to life through vivid personal accounts and told in the author's usual lucid style.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



ARMY TLB CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

PEOPLE PLAN 2020/2021

The new Civilian Workforce People Plan sets out a programme of work designed to bring the TLB's vision of a supported and engaged workforce to life.

The four key strategic goals act as pillars in the TLBs aim to ensure:

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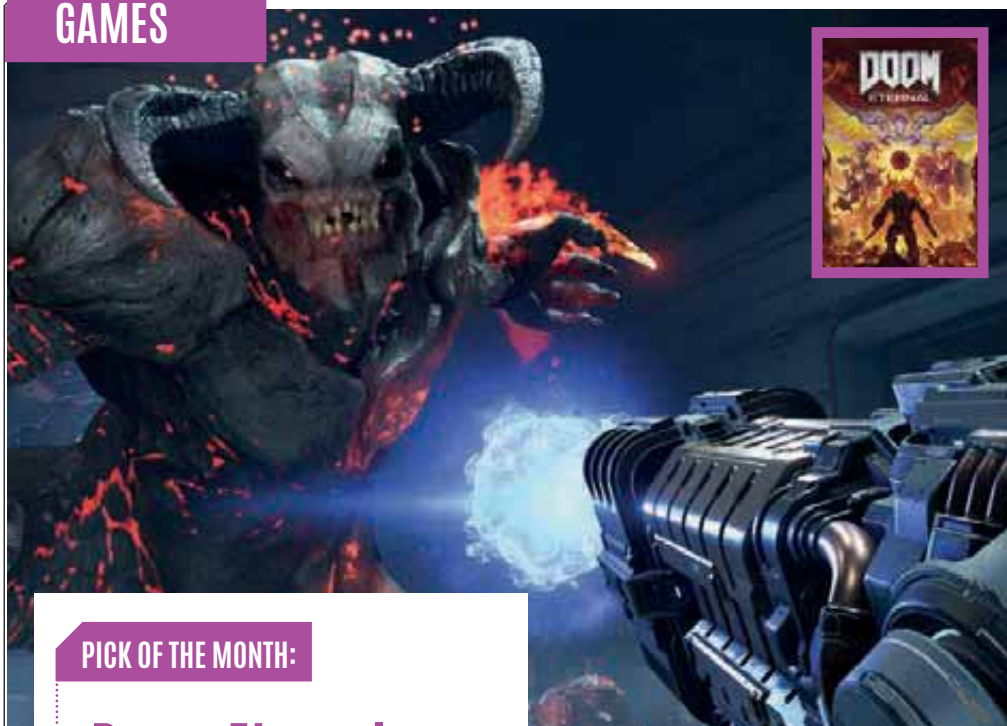
Read more in your Civilian Insight newsletter, available on MODNET and Defence Connect.

CONTACT US

For more information, please contact the Army Civilian Workforce team on:
Army Res-CWT-Group (MULTIUSER) <ArmyRes-CWT-Group@mod.gov.uk>

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GAMES



PICK OF THE MONTH:

Doom Eternal

Slayer returns on a mission to save humanity

Available now for PC, Xbox One, PS4 and Nintendo Switch

► I'VE longed to play this game since it was first revealed at the E3 electronic entertainment expo in 2018.

Set two years after events in the last title, Earth has been overrun by demons who have wiped out the vast majority of the population and the Doom Slayer has returned with a new arsenal of weapons to save the human race from extinction.

Visually, it looks superb and up close everything checks out – especially the lead character and his enemies. Some of the surrounding terrain appears a little unloved as far as the graphics are concerned, but then you're meant to be bludgeoning your way through this at a thousand miles an hour, so taking in the view isn't always required.

That being said, some of the later levels are jaw droppingly stunning.

The gameplay is fast and frenetic and there's little time for rest. Your health doesn't automatically restore itself, so you heal by beating your enemies to a pulp.

And there are many enemies, of all shapes and sizes, each requiring their own varied approach, though you can still pound them into oblivion with your assortment of impressive munitions.

Fortunately, you are introduced to proceedings slowly, meaning you can get a feel for the gameplay and weapons, and the provision of a test environment when you upgrade allows you to practise in safety.

The audio is also an assault on the senses, but in a good way. A plethora of track and sound effects will help to convince you that nothing can stand in your way, however, and depending on the difficulty setting, that's not always the

WIN >>

For Xbox One, PS4 or PC

● ACCLAIMED developer Rebellion has released a host of downloadable content for *Zombie Army 4* – offering action aplenty against the undead hordes. Players of the shooter are now able to embark on the three-part Hell Cult mini campaign – with new scenarios, extra characters, striking outfits and powerful weapons available to use across the coming months. A special season one pass provides access to all content, while the entire package is also included as part of the title's super-deluxe edition. *Soldier* has teamed up with Rebellion to offer one reader a copy of the game. To stand a chance of winning, tell us which famous filmmaker directed *The Night of the Living Dead*? Send your answer to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30. Usual rules apply.



case. But the music is great.

Overall, *Doom Eternal* is a constant assault on the senses, both visually and aurally, and I can't really find fault with it. There's no obvious stick in the mud – so get out there and play it. ■

REVIEW: DAVID MCDUGALL, CIVVY

VERDICT:

Great gameplay and stunning visuals make this a winner

★★★★★

GAMES RELEASES



Resident Evil 3 For PS4 and Xbox One

CAPCOM continues its re-master of the legendary survival horror series, with the third instalment now given a fresh look – two

decades after it first appeared. Following the fortunes of Jill Valentine and Carlos Oliveira, players are pitted against an undead apocalypse and hunted by a bioweapon called Nemesis. Fans of the titles will be pleased to hear there is more of the same action and puzzle solving combo that characterised the remake of the series' second game last year. An online multiplayer mode – *Resident Evil Resistance* – completes the experience, making this a thoroughly enjoyable and recommended reboot.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Dead or School For PS4 and Switch

ORIENTAL manga has long been an influence on the video game industry – with the distinctive

artwork carrying forward the likes of the *Final Fantasy* series in style. But *Dead or School*, which was released in Japan last year, is an altogether more curious offering. Blend distinctive anime with combat action and a bizarre story about a girl who sees school as the answer to repelling a zombie invasion of Tokyo and you have something of a flavour. If you manage to suspend disbelief beyond this point, you essentially have a role-playing game in which building a team to defeat the enemy and amassing the required kit is the order of the day. Having sampled the Switch version, *Dead or School* is an acquired taste but curiously compelling in its own way.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

SOLDIER SPORT



« SHARP SHOOTER

GOAL shooter LCpl Dee Bolakoro (RE) was in red hot form as the Army claimed a fourth successive Inter-Services netball title. The Celtic Dragons star converted 24 times as the Reds downed the Royal Navy in the tournament final. Read the full court report on page 71...



POSTPONEMENTS APLENTY AS VIRUS HITS HARD

IT IS supposed to be one of the busiest periods in the Army's sporting calendar, but the coronavirus outbreak has led to the postponement of a raft of key fixtures and tournaments.

As this issue went to press hockey and football players should have been in Inter-Services action, while the boxers were set to defend the Forces crown they regained last season (pictured above).

However, with the government implementing stricter measures to contain the spread of the virus these crunch clashes were put on hold. The Army Sport Control Board has since announced that all representative sport will now be suspended until April 20 at the earliest.

The Army managed to play their opening Inter-Services football ties with the Royal Air Force earlier in the month, with the men winning 1-0 and the women losing by the same

scoreline, but the home matches against the Royal Navy in Aldershot were postponed.

And a similar move was made in relation to the lower levels of the Service game.

"Following the government's announcement for people to avoid social contact and gatherings where possible, the advice provided by our governing body is that all grassroots football in England is postponed for the foreseeable future," an Army Football Association spokesman said. "The risk to our players, coaches and officials must remain the primary consideration throughout this period."

The Army Rugby Union has also moved to postpone fixtures, with last month's Community Finals Day – including the Premiership final between 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps and 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment – set to be rescheduled.

"Bringing more than 600



**"IT
HOLDS
TOO
MUCH
RISK"**

people to Aldershot to then disperse back to the far corners of the UK holds too much risk for the health and wellness of everyone involved during this difficult time," a spokesman said.

The Reds' Inter-Services clashes with the Royal Air Force on April 4 have been cancelled – an outcome that was later repeated in relation to the Army-Navy games at Twickenham.

Elsewhere, the Army Fencing Championships have been postponed, as has the Inter-Unit Volleyball and Inter-Services Basketball. The Army Tug of War set-up has put its season on hold and the Army Cycling Union has halted all activities until the end of April at the earliest.

Visit the Army Sport Control Board website (www.armysportcontrolboard.com) for an amended fixture list.

Regular updates are also being posted on social media – search [@ArmySportASCB](#) ■



CHIEFS CURTAILED

THREE first-half tries laid the foundations for a comfortable win for the Army women's rugby union team over the Exeter Chiefs.

After suffering an early setback, the soldiers quickly seized control and scores from Capt Gemma Pearson (RLC), Maj Chantelle Miller (AGC (RMP)) and Capt Gemma Rowland (RA) saw them open a 17-7 lead at half-time.

Bdr Beth Dainton (RA) added a fourth try in the second period as the Reds sealed a 27-7 win.

However, there was disappointment for the men as they suffered a 22-21 loss to Coventry – in which a superb individual effort from Harlequins ace LCpl Lloyd Wheeldon (Para) proved to be the highlight.

Elsewhere, Army star LBdr Connor O'Reilly (pictured below) was among the scorers as the Royal Artillery claimed a slender victory in the Inter-Corps final.

The winger's effort helped the Gunners to a 16-15 win over their rivals from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

The Royal Logistic Corps defeated a combined REME/Army Medical Services team to claim the women's crown, while the Royal Armoured Corps triumphed in the men's league two final.



HORNETS STRIKE

THE Army's history-making run in rugby league's Challenge Cup came to a crashing halt as they suffered a 54-10 defeat to the Rochdale Hornets.

Victories over Oulton Raiders, Skirlaugh and Ince Rose Bridge saw the soldiers reach the competition's fourth round for the first time, but an away clash against Championship outfit Rochdale proved to be a step too far.

"It's been great," Army skipper LCpl Pete Holmes (REME) said. "If we look back on ourselves in a few years we'll realise not many teams can do this."

"It has been a massive achievement for this group of lads and what a stepping stone it is to go forward to the Inter-Services."

Elsewhere, the Army women progressed to the second round of their respective Challenge Cup competition and were due to lock horns with Leigh Miners Ladies before the coronavirus outbreak eventually saw the fixture postponed.

However, two Reds' players did see some action on the pitch before the season was halted, with Sgt Carrie Roberts (REME) and Gnr Abby Eatock (RA) representing Lancashire in a 23-0 win over Yorkshire in the Origin Series.

The duo are part of the England national performance squad for 2020. ■

**"THERE
ARE NOT
MANY
TEAMS
WHO
CAN DO
THIS"**



● OLYMPIC hopeful Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) saw her Games push put on hold as the coronavirus outbreak prompted a last-minute postponement to her qualifying bid.

The Road to Tokyo event at London's Copper Box Arena had hosted two days of action before organisers called a halt to proceedings as the crisis worsened.

The featherweight was handed a bye in the opening round and had been due to face Helina Bruyevich, of Belarus, when the decision to cease the competition was made.

"Initially I was gutted, but health comes first," she told *SoldierSport*.

The International Olympic Committee's Boxing Task Force later suspended the world qualifying event that was scheduled for next month in Paris.

A decision was then made to switch the Games as a whole to the summer of 2021.

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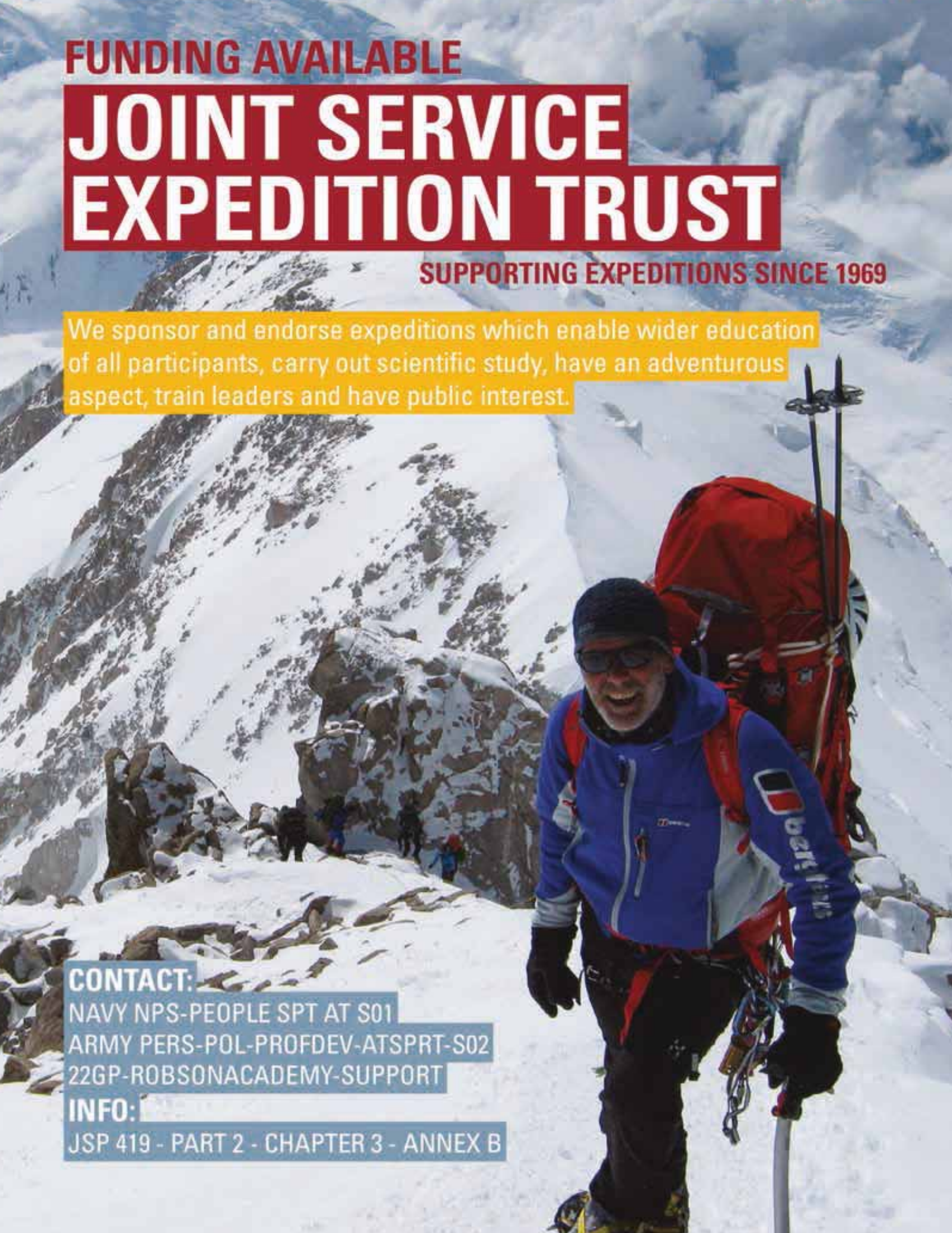
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JSP 419 - PART 2 - CHAPTER 3 - ANNEX B





MAT CHAT: FOR MORE NEWS FROM THE SPORT FOLLOW [@BRITISHARMY_BJJ](#) ON TWITTER

ICE SPORTS



MEDALS MOUNT UP

THE Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu set-up built on its growing momentum by welcoming more than 100 athletes to the mat for the Army Championships in Aldershot.

Coming on the back of a strong showing at the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) European Championships in Portugal, the event featured contests from white belt through to brown and formed selection for this year's Inter-Services squad.

Among the winners on the day were OCdt Charlotte McIntyre in the women's competition and ultra-heavyweight Bdr Josh Gibbs (RA), who took a double gold.

The result was particularly sweet for Gibbs, who had earlier claimed bronze in Lisbon to become the first Army athlete to win a medal at adult level in world or European competitions.

He was part of a 12-strong Service squad that fought at the contest and they returned with a healthy haul of eight medals.

Super-heavyweight Cpl Leon Hinds (RLC, pictured below in white), the number one ranked masters athlete in the world at purple belt, secured gold and there was a double silver for Pte Denise Webb (AGC (SPS)).



Picture: International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation

POWER PAIRING REACH PODIUM PEAK



**"WE
HAD TO
BUCK
OUR
IDEAS
UP"**

B OBSLEIGH duo LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds) and Pte Olly Butterworth (Para) ended their season on a high with victory at the annual Inter-Services ice sports showdown in Germany.

Fresh from representing Great Britain at the IBSF World Championships in Altenberg (pictured above), the pair found themselves trailing after the opening day of action but fought back in style to complete a much-needed win for the soldiers.

"This is a fierce competition," double Winter Olympian Deen (pictured left) said. "When you come back to the Inter-Services everyone wants to beat you."

"After the first day we were in second place, so we had to really buck our ideas up."

For Butterworth, the contest represented a welcome return to familiar surroundings after a lengthy campaign.

"This is a much more relaxed environment and it's great to be back among the blokes," he explained. "We're delighted to finish the season on a high."

However, their efforts could not prevent the Royal Navy from sealing the team honours, with the Royal Air Force taking the women's equivalent prize.

Success in the two-man bobsleigh represented the highlight for the Army, who saw their military rivals perform strongly across the other events.

The RAF dominated the podium places in the men's skeleton and they also claimed gold in the women's race, with Sgt Amie Kirwin (REME) second. Unsurprisingly, the light blues collected both team titles.

And they celebrated more success in the luge – beating the soldiers by just one second.

Army ace Sgt Dani Scott (QARANC) was the top female and finished third overall, results that proved surprising given her inactivity this year.

"I'm made up with it to be honest," she said afterwards. "After not sliding all season I didn't know how it would be."

"It all came back to me and over the past two weeks I got more confident." ■





GENERATIONAL APPEAL

BMX TEAM TARGET FRESH INFUX OF TALENT WITH OLYMPICS SET TO INSPIRE NEW BREED OF RIDERS

THE Army BMX team is hoping an array of high-profile fixtures during the new season will help them build on the growing momentum in the sport.

Leading lights Pte Kieran Binner (PWRR), Cpl Darryl Tate (REME) and Sgt Ady Rumsey (R Signals) are all lining up in this year's national series and with emerging riders set to compete at regional level the set-up is establishing a clear development pathway.

The opportunities available were highlighted at the squad's 2020 launch event in Manchester – where athletes of all abilities were tested to the limit at the National Cycling Centre's BMX Arena.

The fact the soldiers were able to showcase their skills in such prestigious surroundings is testament to the progress made since the team's launch in 2012 and, with the discipline set to again feature at next summer's Olympic Games, it is hoped a fresh influx of inspired talent will join the fold.

"I think this really appeals to the younger generation of soldiers," secretary Maj Matt Swales (PWRR) told *SoldierSport*.

"The people who BMX have a lot of the values we are looking for in the Army, such as courage, fitness and discipline. You have to have all three of those to be a good rider.

"If you take the other disciplines within the Army Cycling Union (ACU) – road and mountain biking, for example – they are really expensive. But we have team bikes that we use at taster days throughout the year and you can pick one up second hand for £150.

"We have already seen more people competing in the regional races and since 2012 the sport of BMX has gained a lot of traction.

"Its future in the Army is looking great. We are building, developing our coaches and have aspirations to have our own track. We have football and rugby stadiums, so why not have a BMX track?"

Binner (pictured right) is a perfect example of how the set-up appeals to the Service's new generation. The 22-year-old enjoyed considerable success at youth level but briefly moved away from the pursuit to consider his future career path.

On joining the Army he was surprised to learn that he could resume his sporting ambitions and has made rapid progress since, earning a place on the talented athlete scholarship scheme (TASS) and qualifying for next month's UCI World Championships in Houston.

"I'm the only BMX rider on TASS so I pretty much get one-to-one support," Binner, who was victorious in his opening national series event of the season, added.

"I've been in full-time training since January and already feel fitter and stronger. I've also been working on my technique and speed from the start and it is definitely working.

"My whole training programme is aimed at the World Championships and my aim is to reach the semi-finals at least. I'm confident, but I also feel there is a bit more pressure on me. I don't want to let anyone down but at the end of the day it is BMX racing – anything can happen.

"Hopefully I can meet my full



**"IF IT
WASN'T
FOR THE
ARMY I
WOULD
NOT BE
WHERE
I AM
TODAY"**

potential in the next few years and if it wasn't for the Army I would not be where I am. They have sacrificed a soldier so he can pursue a sporting career; I cannot thank them enough."

While Binner is already experiencing the sport's highs, Cfn Jake Diprose (REME) is at the other end of the spectrum.

He joined the team in December after excelling in mountain biking – winning the men's junior title in last season's Army cross country series.

"I borrowed a bike, came to a taster day and was instantly hooked," he explained.

"Mountain biking is fun, but this is completely different. It is not a massive team, which is good, and I want to do well before others get on board.

"This year is all about impressing at regional level. I need to improve as I am quite far behind the likes of Cpl Tate and Pte Binner.

"Eventually I'd like to compete at the World Championships. I'm not setting any goals but that could be a possibility in the next four years or so."

Diprose's path is similar to that of team manager Tate, who progressed to the sport from motocross, and he believes more will follow.

"People are gradually coming out of the woodwork," he said.

"It is steadily building. BMX is fast paced, and you must have confidence in yourself. Fitness is also a key part of it as the races can be a 40- or 50-second sprint; this is something that really appeals.

"The taster days have been a real success and if anyone wants something to happen we can bring the bikes and put it on for them." ■

NEW KING CROWNED

NEWCOMER LCpl Andy Benjamin (AGC (RMP), pictured) broke the dominance of LCpl Bibek Karki (RLC) to top the men's standings at this season's Army Table Tennis Championships.

The Reservist powered his way to a 4-1 win in the final, which ended Karki's impressive run of four consecutive titles.

Benjamin's triumph capped an encouraging week for the Service set-up as more than 70 personnel took to the tables – a record turnout in recent years.

"I'm ecstatic," the newly crowned champion told *SoldierSport*. "I've not played as much as I wanted to over the past few months, so this is a great win.

"He stuck in there and made life difficult. I was 8-2 up in the fifth game but he managed to get back to 8-8. Thankfully I was able to get over the line."

Elsewhere, Karki was victorious in the men's doubles alongside Spr David Wong (RE) and he claimed another trophy in the mixed doubles, where he successfully joined forces with Rev Nicola Frail (RACHD).

Sgt Hilary Greig (AMS) was another player with reason to celebrate as she secured the women's individual and doubles' crowns, the latter with teammate LCpl Rose-Marie Coetzer (CAMUS).

"We are now at the stage where we have a really strong top-ten," explained Army lead coach WO2 John McFaul (R Irish).

"We've also had Welsh national coach Ryan Jenkins here working with the senior players. He was looking at technical aspects of the game and ran some multi-ball drills – it was a real coup to have him.

"This competition is geared towards selection for the Inter-Services Championships and we should have another strong squad.

"The women are looking good, but for the men the Royal Air Force will be the team to beat. They won the competition for 33 years in a row before we finally beat them in 2016 and we are keen to get another win on the board this season." ■



● DISTANCE runner Sgt Danielle Hodgkinson (QARANC, pictured) added another accolade to her growing haul when she was crowned the UK Armed Forces sportswoman of the year.

Having scooped the Army's equivalent award in November, the athlete successfully overcame the challenge of Royal Air Force triathlon star Fg Off Hannah Dodwell and Royal Navy golfer Lt Cdr Lauren Hulston to claim the title.

Hodgkinson's nominations came on the back of some stellar form in 2019, which saw her earn England selection for both road and track running. She also finished eighth in the 5,000 metres at the annual British Championships.

There was further Army success elsewhere at the ceremony, as a strong Service contingent helped the UKAF's netballers to the team of the year prize.

The squad enjoyed a terrific run at last season's Netball Europe Invitational, where they won every match on the way to lifting the trophy.

"Achieving that as a team was a great feeling," said Army ace Sgt Nordia Masters (AGC (SPS)).



REDS' SECOND-HALF SURGE SETS UP TITLE SUCCESS

THE Army produced a second-half masterclass to pull clear of the Royal Navy and claim an emphatic victory in the final of this season's Inter-Services Netball Championships in Aldershot.

Having opened a 20-14 lead at the midway point the outcome remained in the balance.

But the soldiers spectacularly raised the tempo at both ends of the court after the break to leave their shell-shocked rivals firmly in the slipstream.

Fijian international LCpl Dee Bolakoro (RE, pictured right) was in ruthless form at the net, plundering nine goals in the third quarter, and with attacking partner Sgt Ellie Nawele (AGC (SPS)) adding three further efforts the Reds opened a seemingly decisive lead.

This feeling was boosted by the fact they conceded just three goals in return and their defensive stranglehold was

tightened in the final period, when their miserly rearguard was breached on just two occasions.

With the damage done, Celtic Dragons star Bolakoro took a deserved break but she returned to the action to add three goals late on to take her personal tally for the day to 24.

Nawele finished on 13 goals as the Army recorded a 40-19 win – a result that followed on from an equally impressive performance against the Royal Air Force, who were demolished 61-17.

“Over the years the third quarter has always been the Army’s,” skipper and defensive linchpin Sgt Nordia Masters (AGC (SPS)) told *SoldierSport*.

“We proved that again today as the Navy only managed to score three times.

“It is part of the game plan; yes, we are fit, but we are also very good at what we do.”

Victory in Aldershot means the Army have now won the title

INTER-SERVICES
NETBALL

ARMY

40

NAVY

19



for four consecutive years and Masters believes the foundations are in place for a prolonged run of success.

“Our coach has created a netball academy so players can keep moving through the system as the seasons progress,” the former Northern Ireland international added.

“We are going to have injuries or people missing through deployments, so it is important to have that in place.

“We are extremely proud of how far we have come this year. We have international and Superleague players in the squad, but they have not always been available.

“It was great for everyone to come together and play so well.”

The Army celebrated a clean sweep at the tournament as their development and masters teams both recorded back-to-back victories to secure their respective titles. ■





PUNCHING IN THE PROS

RESERVIST EMBRACES PHYSICAL CHALLENGE AS SHE PLOTS HER PATH THROUGH BOXING'S PREMIER RANKS

BOXER Rfn Bec Connolly (Rifles) has set her sights on securing a Commonwealth title as she continues her progression in the sport's professional ranks.

The 35-year-old was denied the belt in November when she lost on points to Rachel Ball after ten punishing rounds of a home show in Swindon.

Connolly was due to return to the ring this month but the coronavirus outbreak saw the bout cancelled. The featherweight will now look to resume her quest for honours once the crisis is under control.

The Reservist, who became one of the first females to qualify as an Infantry soldier when she passed through ITC Catterick last summer, boasts a fine boxing pedigree having won the majority of her 32 amateur bouts and has tested herself against some fierce opponents since turning professional.

"I've fought at super featherweight and lightweight just to gain experience," she told *SoldierSport*.

"I had a bout with Olympian Natasha Jonas just ten days after leaving Catterick. I've been a professional for three years now and have a record of four wins from ten fights.

"In my second contest I found myself up against the WBF featherweight champion. At the time we thought that might be a bad decision, but I only lost on points and that spurred me on.

"From that point onwards I've only wanted to face high-calibre opponents. It is what I need to do to get title shots."

Connolly started out in martial arts but in her last contest she suffered a broken collarbone and dislocated

shoulder – injuries that ultimately saw her walk away from the discipline.

But her love of combat sports eventually led her to boxing and Paddy Fitzpatrick's gym.

"I was going through my divorce and just wanted to get back into fighting," the mother-of-four explained. "I met with Paddy and we just clicked.

"I didn't have any aspirations at the start. George Groves was training in the gym at the time and that was a real bonus.

"After doing well as an amateur I was offered a professional contract and I would have been crazy to turn that down.

"Women's boxing is really taking off and I'm growing in every fight. My coaches were saying I've probably only got five years at this – so they've chucked me in at the deep end.

"Professional boxing is such a different sport. The gloves are smaller and there's so much power in each punch.

"Now, the training has taken over my life and I've had to go full time."

Connolly's punishing schedule sees her tackle three training sessions and a run each day, before taking on a coaching role in the evening.

She's clearly no stranger to physicality, so when the Army moved to open close-combat roles to women she was quick to apply and now serves with 7th Battalion, The Rifles.

"I wasn't really interested in the technical trades or becoming a medic," she said. "The country has been good to me so I thought it was time to give back.

"The Infantry is completely different to anything I have



**"I'VE
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AT THIS -
THEY'VE
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ME IN AT
THE DEEP
END"**

done before. Physically, I knew it would be a test as they have to make sure you can carry and run with the weight.

"Given my size, it was on the cusp of my capabilities.

"When the gates shut there were thousands of men on the course and I was the only woman. I was wary at first, but the guys didn't bat an eyelid.

"It was a challenge as I didn't have a military background or any idea of what it would be like.

"But I surprised myself. I fight at 57kg and was running around with 40kg on my back. For the men that's about a third of their body weight, however, it was a lot more for me.

"The tactical side of things and handling weapons was also new, and I've gone from being nervous to confident in this area.

"I'm really enjoying it and I can see myself staying in the Reserves as it fits around my lifestyle and children."

Connolly was part of the 7 Rifles contingent that completed a trench warfare exercise in Norfolk earlier this year, but she missed out on the battalion's recent Op Tosca deployment due to her now postponed bout.

With her commitment to the cause firmly established, she hopes to serve alongside her Service colleagues on future postings and, given the rewards that stem from a career in uniform, believes more women should follow in her footsteps.

"I think the Army has made the right call and we've got to move with the times," she explained. "The lads have never had an issue with me out on the ground – as long as I can do the job it's not a problem.

"But if I was being a princess it would be a different story." ■



I've really enjoyed learning military skills and how to shoot. This exercise has been good and we have been working more with Regular soldiers; it's been interesting to see how they operate in comparison to Reserve units.

Pte Gareth Goodge



The social aspect in the Army has been brilliant. You get to speak and work with people from all walks of life and understand other cultures. I've been snowboarding, which is much cheaper than as a civilian, and experiences on exercises teach you to adapt quickly to different environments."

Pte Jesse Hemmings



The Army has given me the chance to travel abroad and train with other nations and do incredible things like mountain climbing in Italy. The camaraderie in the Army is so much better than anything you experience in civvy street.

Pte Joshua Paul Bakewell



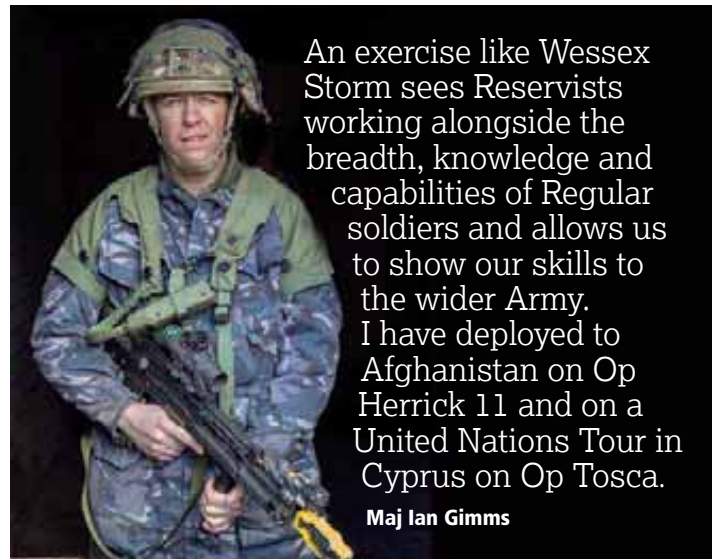
In my civvy job as a chief executive in veterinary orthopaedics I get to employ military doctrine in a civilian environment. You also learn a lot about self-discipline and self-motivation in the Army. This exercise has been challenging with the cold and wet weather and I've had to keep positive to help the troops stay focused.

Sgt Greg McGarell



The Army gives you more confidence and the values and standards you learn makes you more professional in the civilian world. I've had the chance to travel a lot. I've been to Cyprus twice, Italy and also spent a month in Adelaide, Australia to train with their reserve forces.

LCpl Jessie Mason



An exercise like Wessex Storm sees Reservists working alongside the breadth, knowledge and capabilities of Regular soldiers and allows us to show our skills to the wider Army. I have deployed to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 11 and on a United Nations Tour in Cyprus on Op Tosca.

Maj Ian Gimms

Reservist reflections

Troops from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment discuss Wessex Storm and the experiences the Army has given them

You push yourself much more in the Army than you do as a civilian. This exercise is two weeks and it's full on. I've had the chance to act as 2iC, which has been a good experience for me.

Pte Sean Horstwood



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