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# SOLDIER

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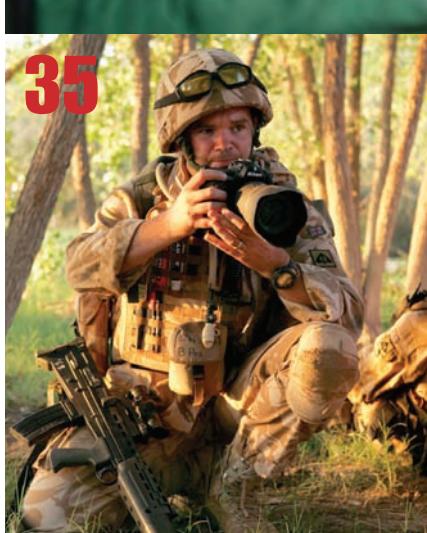
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**Cover picture (left): Forces Sweetheart**  
**Katherine Jenkins** vows to keep visiting  
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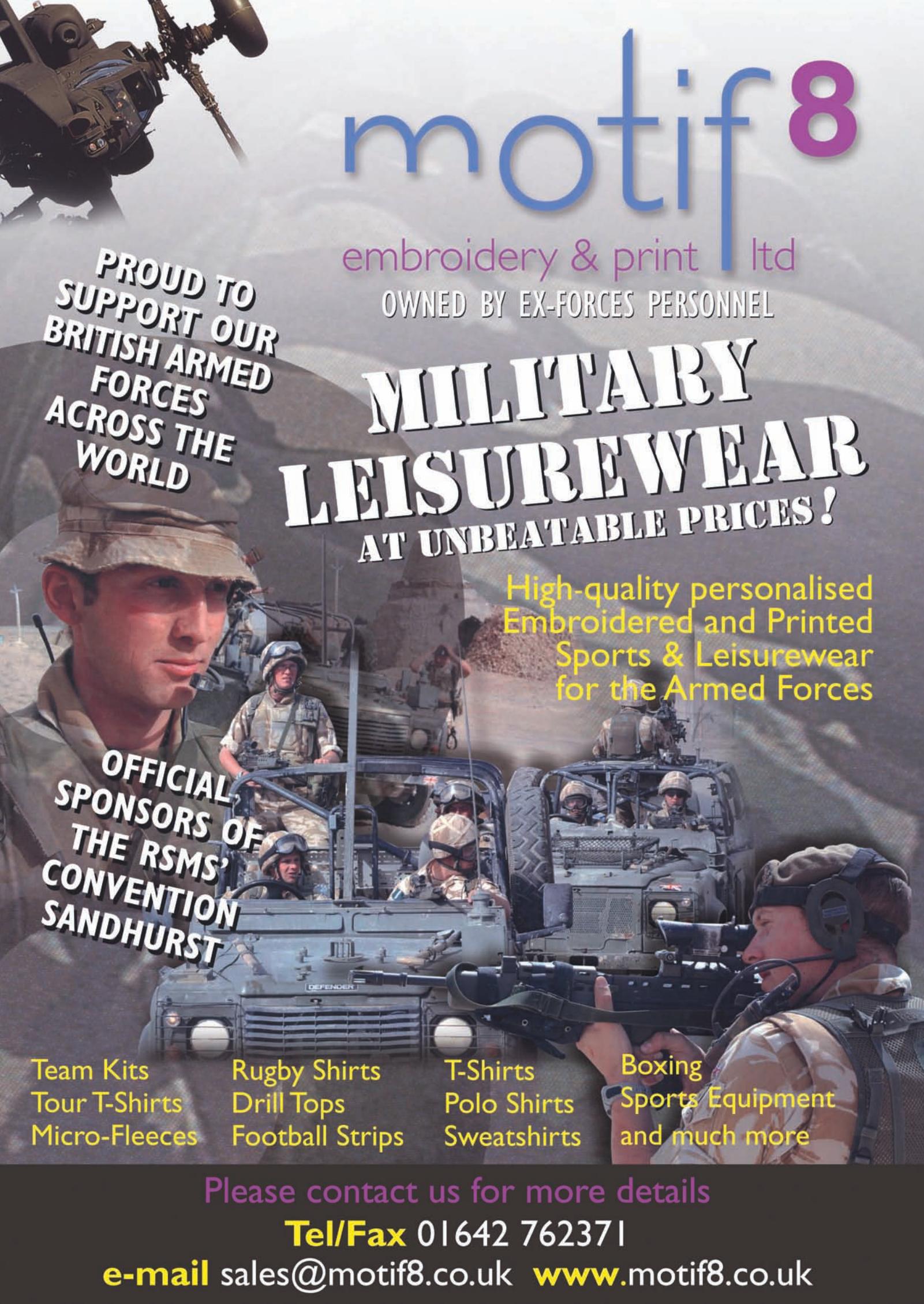
**Background image: Troops hone their tracking**

**skills in Brunei. See Pages 17-19** Picture: Mike Weston



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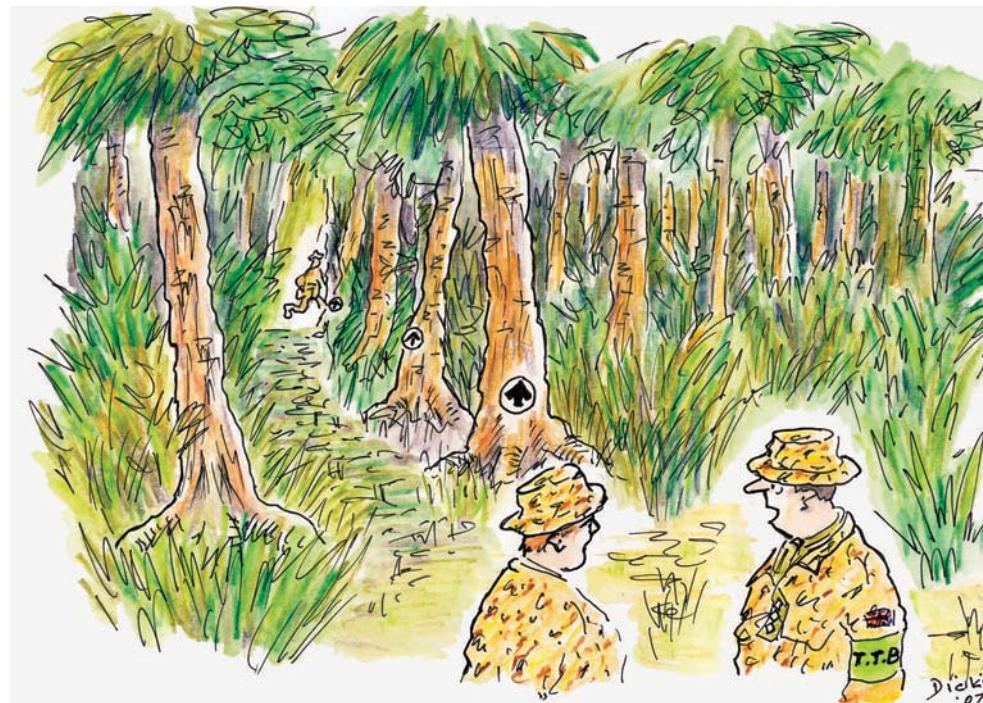
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**"Not very subtle track marking, Jenkins . . . rather set in their ways these RMP wallahs."**

● Hot on the trail – Pages 17-19

# Celebrities salute Britain's bravest

**G**ENERAL Sir Richard Dannatt's rallying call to the British public to support, value and thank its soldiers for their heroic efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan didn't fall on deaf ears.

Since the Chief of the General Staff made his plea, the MoD has been bombarded with goodwill messages and offers of assistance. And the ripple effect of Gen Dannatt's call to arms has not gone unnoticed here at *Soldier* HQ, where the previously occasional brush with celebrity is fast becoming part of daily routine.

Famous names, whether chart-topping musicians, actors or international sportsmen, have been queuing up to tell us they're star-struck – in awe of those in the ranks of the British Army. This month's cover star, Classical Brit-award winner Katherine Jenkins, has never been shy about voicing her support for the forces, but the Welsh beauty has been joined by a stellar supporting cast.

When *Soldier* bumped into Jenkins's record company stablemate Hayley Westenra at a memorial service at Tyne Cot, the Kiwi singer was only too happy to wax lyrical about her deep appreciation for those in the firing line (see Pages 76-77). And it's not only those with an operatic bent singing the praises of troops. During an interview for December's



## FIRST SIGHT

issue, Arctic Monkeys ally and Reverend and The Makers frontman, Jon McClure, was quick to mention his "100 per cent respect" for those on the front line.

Familiar faces from the small screen have also been impressing on *Soldier* the many virtues of Britain's fighting men and women. Duncan Bannatyne, multi-millionaire and star of *Dragon's Den*, believes the courage and guile shown by soldiers on ops would make light work of conquering the business world, and *Eastender* Ian "Pte Pike" Lavendar paid tribute to soldiers past and present for their selfless dedication.

From the world of sport, cricketer Monty Panesar, fresh from helping England beat Sri Lanka, shrugged off jet lag to tell of his respect for the "awesome job" being done by British troops (read the full interview next month).

It is refreshing to know that even in the often self-obsessed world of celebrity, there is a realisation that those most worthy of admiration are the men and women of our Armed Forces. ■



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Further reductions: Prime Minister Gordon Brown, pictured during a visit to soldiers in Basra, says that troop numbers in Iraq will be cut to 2,500 next year

# Drawdown continues

**British presence in southern Iraq to be halved, announces Prime Minister**

**T**ROOP numbers in Basra will be slashed in half next year as the Iraqi Army takes full responsibility for security, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has revealed.

Addressing MPs in the House of Commons, Mr Brown announced plans to withdraw all but 2,500 soldiers next year, when a further decision on the future of the mission would be made.

But he emphasised that troops still had an important role to play in mentoring Iraqi counterparts and could re-intervene

if the security situation deteriorated.

Mr Brown added: "As part of the process of putting the Iraqi forces in the lead in Basra, we have just gone through a demanding operation, which involved consolidating our forces at Basra airport.

"The next important stage in delivering our strategy to hand over security to the Iraqis is to move from a combat role in the rest of Basra province to overwatch."

This two-phase operation would initially involve securing supply routes

and policing the Iranian border before drawing down to solely a training role. While troops would also have "a limited re-intervention capacity", the British premier added that 30,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers were now based in southern Iraq.

Mr Brown said troop numbers would drop by 1,500 to 4,000 by the end of the year following the handover of Basra to Provincial Iraqi Control, and it was envisaged that just 2,500 troops would remain when the second phase of the overwatch op started in the spring.

Mr Brown paid tribute to the British soldiers and officers who had paved the way for the Iraqis to take control of security themselves.

He said: "It is important to remember what has brought us to this stage – it is the determination, professionalism and sacrifice of our Armed Forces.

"They have protected the Iraqi people while training their security forces to bring peace to their cities, towns and districts. The scale of their achievement should not be underestimated."

## Mastiff boost to morale

**SCORES** of extra Mastiff troop carriers are being dispatched to British soldiers in Iraq and southern Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that the MoD was placing an order for 140 more of the US-built vehicles, which are proving invaluable in the battle against roadside bombs and terrorist attacks.

There are currently around 100 Mastiffs

deployed in both theatres. The troop carrier has become a favourite with soldiers for its high levels of protection and firepower.

● Mr Brown also confirmed that British soldiers are to get more web access in theatre. The Prime Minister announced plans to double the number of internet terminals in Iraq and Afghanistan and for the provision of wireless access.

## IN BRIEF

● SERVING parents could soon save more than £1,000 a year thanks to the long-awaited introduction of the Childcare Voucher Scheme.

The salary sacrifice initiative, scheduled to be introduced next month, will allow families to change up to £243 of their monthly pay into special tokens, and consequently save cash by parting with tax and national insurance contributions only on their reduced salary.

Although the scheme will save money for most, soldiers are warned that lower take-home pay may impact on other earnings-related benefits.

The vouchers, which are either paper or electronic, can be used to pay for childcare costs from a regulated and registered provider.

The MoD is currently working on setting up the JPA system to manage the scheme.

● SOLDIERS on high intensity ops in Iraq and Afghanistan are set to have extra cash in their pockets following the announcement of a council tax rebate.

In a package outlined by Defence Secretary Des Browne, all troops who pay the charge for a UK property will get a flat rebate of £140 during the six-month tour. The windfall, which is worth around a quarter of the average council tax bill, will be paid at the end of tours with the first cash set to land in pay packets from April next year.

● See Home Truths – Page 57

● BOOK lovers can save 30 per cent on the cost of the latest releases thanks to a festive offer from publisher Random House. Soldiers looking to get a head start on their Christmas shopping can claim the discount on more than 10,000 books by logging on to the publisher's website.

To take advantage of the offer, which also includes free postage and packing, visit [www.rbooks.co.uk](http://www.rbooks.co.uk) and enter the code COMMANDO during checkout. The offer expires on November 30.

● A NEW charity aims to raise £5m to help speed up the rehabilitation of soldiers injured on operations.

Help for Heroes, launched by former Royal Green Jacket Bryn Parry, set itself the ambitious fundraising target to provide additional facilities at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court.

Mr Parry said he hoped the charity's efforts will eventually allow the centre to build a new combined gymnasium and full-size swimming pool to complement its existing specialist hydrotherapy pool.

For more information visit [www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://helpforheroes.org.uk)

# Wounded get payout boost

## Legion hails change as win for Military Covenant

THE head of a leading military charity has welcomed Government moves to beef up payouts given to injured personnel but insisted that more needs to be done.

Chris Simpkins, Director General of the Royal British Legion, described proposed changes to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to reflect the trauma of multiple injuries as an important step and "a win for the Military Covenant". But he stressed the charity remained concerned that the "vast majority" of injured troops would not benefit and called for a full public consultation on the move.

Defence Secretary Des Browne announced planned changes to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme last month following a far-reaching review of the initiative.

Under current rules, the most seriously injured personnel receive lump sum payments for only the three worst wounds sustained in a single incident.

The full 100 per cent of the sum is paid for the first while the second and third injuries are discounted to 30 and 15 per cent. Under the new proposals, however, all wounds would be compensated by a full lump sum.

The immediate payment, while still in service, would be capped at £285,000, while the most seriously injured troops would continue to receive a tax-free, index-linked, guaranteed income payment on their discharge.

Those with multiple injuries, whose

claims have been paid since the start of the compensation scheme in April 2005, would also get extra money to bring them into line with the amendments.

As this issue went to press, the planned changes had been put to the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions – an organisation that includes representatives from Forces charities – for a four-week period of consultation.

Chris Simpkins said the Legion would be an "enthusiastic participant" in the discussions on the changes but admitted he had some concerns about the initiative.

He added: "As the proposed changes now stand, only the most serious cases will benefit. We will be seeking to improve conditions for those who have suffered a single debilitating injury, who are not affected by this change, and those who have suffered multiple injuries to a lesser degree.

"We believe there should be a public consultation so Service personnel – those most directly affected by the changes – can participate," he said.

As previously reported in *Soldier*, the Royal British Legion recently announced its Honour the Military Covenant campaign amid concerns that the commitment of the UK to its soldiers had broken down in some areas. The charity had called for an immediate review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to provide more generous payouts for injured soldiers as part of the campaign.

## Charity's house hunt

SSAFA Forces Help has announced plans to create a second "home from home" for the families of wounded military personnel.

After successfully purchasing a house in Surrey close to the Headley Court rehabilitation centre, the charity is now to buy a property to house loved ones visiting casualties being treated at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

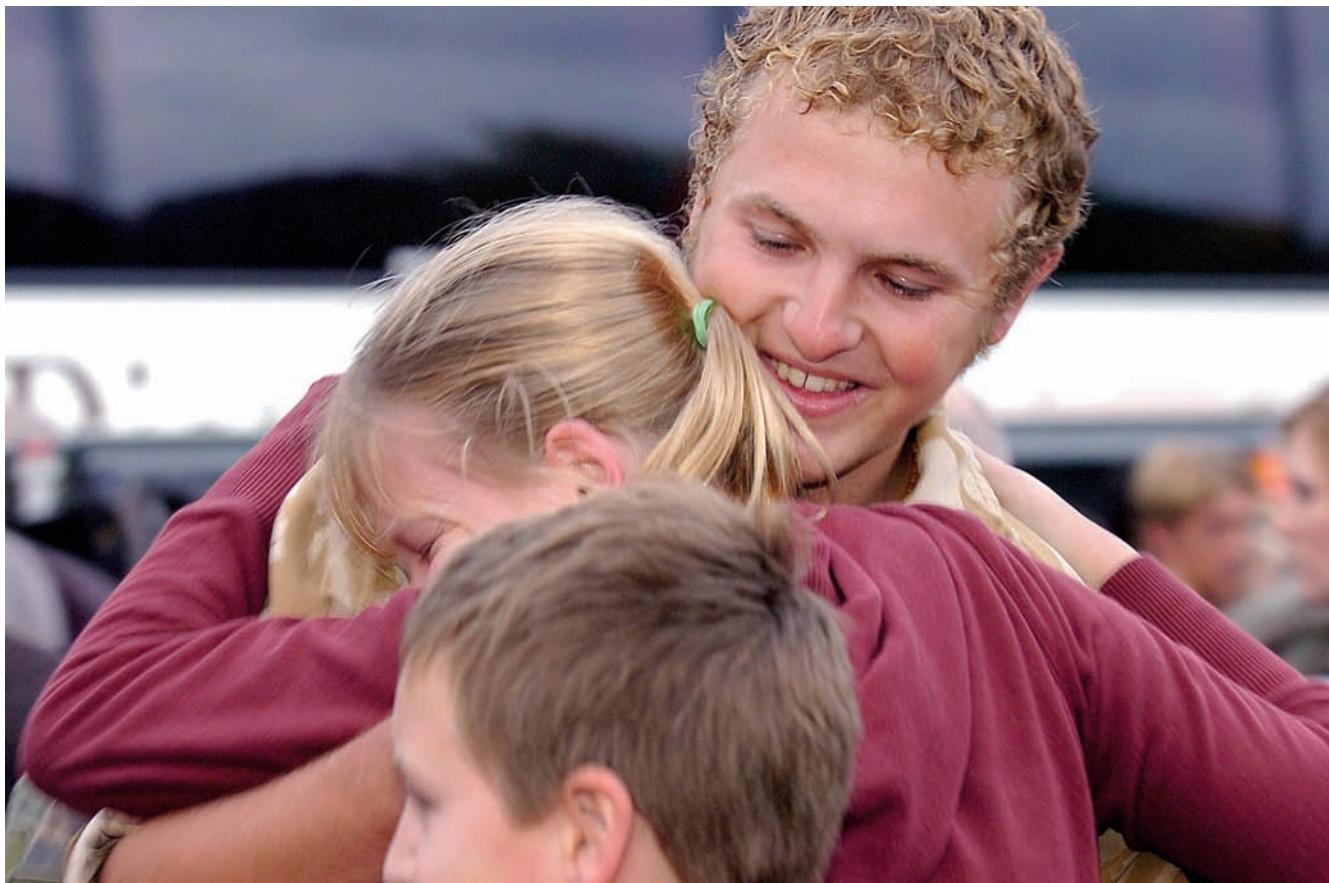
The move comes just months after the charity found itself locked in a planning battle after several local residents objected to the Headley Court scheme.

But following a public outcry and a peti-

tion of 43,000 names, Mole Valley District councillors rubber-stamped the initiative during a meeting in August.

SSAFA chief executive Maj Gen Andrew Cumming told *Soldier* that the charity had identified potential homes for the Birmingham scheme, adding that a fundraising drive to raise £5 million to run both properties was under way.

Maj Gen Cumming stressed: "We desperately need to establish these home-from-homes and hopefully this appeal will allow us to do so. It will enable us to provide second-to-none support."



Families and friends reunited: Emotional scenes greeted the soldiers of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment on their return to Elizabeth Barracks

# Back on home soil

**Op Herrick soldiers return to UK leaving Helmand province 'a better place'**

**C**ELEBRITIES Ross Kemp and Tony Hadley joined families in Pirbright to welcome soldiers from the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglians home from Afghanistan.

The former *Eastenders* star and lead singer of 80s band Spandau Ballet

mingled with children proudly waving banners for their Viking heroes. Kemp had joined the soldiers during their tour, filming a documentary of life and work on Helmand's front line that will be screened on television in January.

The Vikings were among other units

from 12 Mechanized Brigade returning to home soil after 52 Infantry Brigade assumed responsibility of operations in southern Afghanistan.

Troops from The London Regiment's Somme Company – the first Territorial Army company to take command of Regular soldiers on operations – were greeted by scores of well wishers at a parade in front of London's Guildhall.

The Grenadier Guards were given a heroes' welcome back to their Aldershot base while the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment were greeted at East Midlands Airport.

Lt Col Stuart Carver, CO of 1 R Anglian praised those who had taken part in the tour. He added: "There is a real sense of pride and achievement. We can hold our heads high and say we left Helmand a better place."

Lt Col Stuart Carver also thanked the press and public for their support and was especially grateful for the letters of condolence when there were casualties.

Brig John Lorimer, Commander 12 Mechanized Brigade, formally handed control of Task Force Helmand to 52 Infantry Brigade last month.

## Allies praise medics

**SENIOR** Estonian Army officers have praised British medics for their professionalism after they gave life-saving treatment to the Baltic state's troops in Afghanistan.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, Lt Col Indrek Sirel, Chief of Staff at Estonia's Land Forces HQ, singled out the handling of wounded as a key asset of UK Forces.

The officer was speaking after the rapid medical evacuation of four badly injured Estonian soldiers from southern Afghanistan to Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

Praising the way the two Nato allies had worked together in treating the injured, he added: "I was able to visit the hospital for myself. The medical staff were extremely

professional and there was a very high level of care provided. I would like to place on record how grateful I am to the doctors and the personnel who were responsible for my soldiers. The way they were looked after was extraordinary."

Estonian troops have been working with the British in Helmand province from the early days of Op Herrick and a further company is joining the Royal Marines in theatre this month.

Drawn from the Baltic state's professional Scouts Battalion, the personnel will be under British command as part of Nato's International Security Assistance Force.

● Blast from the past – Pages 21-23

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

## PM pleased with progress in Iraq

ATTEMPTS to revive the economy in southern Iraq can now be made because of the work carried out by British troops over the past three-and-a-half years, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has told MPs.

Speaking during a high-profile debate, Mr Brown said that levels of violence in British areas of operations had reduced and Iraqi security forces were increasingly capable of taking responsibility for their own affairs. An action to police the Iranian border had also had "some success", he revealed.

Mr Brown stressed that the Iraqi government wanted the continued help of UK personnel and was confident that a strong democracy would take shape if there was further progress towards peace.

**Fire mission:** Troops in Afghanistan blasted off nearly three million 7.62mm and 5.56mm rounds between June last year and September 2007. Responding to a question from Conservative defence spokesman Dr Liam Fox, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth revealed that soldiers also fired around 12,000 rounds of 105mm high explosive ammunition.

**Base questions:** Defence Secretary Des Browne declined to be drawn on the fine detail of discussions about British use of an American military base in Kuwait. In reply to a question from Dr Fox about Camp Arifjan, Mr Browne confirmed only that he had regular discussions with his US counterpart "on issues of mutual interest, including the deployment of British Forces in support of Op Telic".

**Afghan injuries:** Troops wounded in action account for around a quarter of those admitted to field hospitals in Afghanistan during the past year. Nearly 250 of the 840 personnel treated by doctors were injured by enemy activity while the remaining 590 were admitted for "disease and non-battle injuries", Veterans Minister Derek Twigg told MPs.

# Drive to reduce off-duty deaths

## Expert tuition offered to 'vulnerable invincibles'

**C**ONCERNED military chiefs have been offering soldiers subsidised driver training in a move to cut down a rocketing number of deaths in off-duty road accidents.

Troops based with 145 Brigade in the south of England have been given access to specialist motorcycle tuition from top civilian instructors in a direct effort to apply the brakes on the fatalities.

According to the MoD, road death figures for off-duty Service personnel showed a sharp rise during 2006, with bikers accounting for nearly half of the 52 fatalities. Overall there were nearly a dozen more off-duty road deaths last year than in 2005, with the high operational tempo cited as one of the possible causes of the 30 per cent increase.

WO2 Graham Holder, master driver with 145 Bde, believes that troops coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan are more vulnerable out on the road.

"They feel they are invincible," he told *Soldier*. "We have to make them aware they are returning to a civilised country, where there are rules and regulations, so

that they don't drive at 80 to 90mph."

But by giving bikers the chance to get expert tuition from assessors at the Thames Vale Advanced Motorcyclists organisation, the master driver believes risks could be reduced.

He added: "We have a duty of care towards the troops and have a variety of different ranks taking part on the course, from a lieutenant colonel downwards. Off-duty accidents on motorcycles are unfortunately a trend area. There is no protection if you have an accident on a bike, but we can do something to help."

In addition to the week-long courses, which are held in Aldershot and earn riders an Institute of Advanced Motoring qualification, there are briefings planned for all units returning from theatre.

● Despite the rising numbers of off-duty road deaths among Forces personnel, there was better news in the latest Defence Annual Road Safety report. Overall there were 11 per cent fewer accidents in 2006 than the previous year, and there was also a reduction in those injured in smashes.

# Heritage unharmed

THE strong links between The Royal Regiment of Scotland and its predecessors will be retained in the future, MoD officials have vowed.

In a statement, the department insisted that the history of individual battalions was being preserved and that serving soldiers were proud of their heritage.

The pledge came after stories in newspapers claimed the so-called Golden Thread linking the old regiments to their modern equivalent was being broken, and that recruits were no longer allowed to choose the battalion in which they wanted to serve.

It also emerged that Alex Salmond, the First Minister for Scotland, had written to Defence Secretary Des Browne expressing concerns about heritage issues.

Mr Salmond said the permanent basing of Scottish battalions outside the country was "regrettable", claiming that the move was encouraging fewer soldiers to settle in Scotland after completing their military careers.

But a spokeswoman for the MoD stressed the Army was committed to preserving the rich heritage of Scottish troops. She added:

"As part of that commitment, the Army retained regimental museums, home headquarters and hackles.

"The names of the antecedent regiments continue in the new battalion names and The Royal Regiment of Scotland continues to actively preserve links and battalion footprints with Scottish communities and regions," she added.

The spokeswoman emphasised that there were now three Scottish battalions – The Royal Scots Borderers, The Royal Highland Fusiliers and The Black Watch – based in their home country "for the first time in many years".

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and The Highlanders were based permanently in Canterbury and Germany so they could work and train with their brigades.

The spokeswoman said: "The Royal Regiment of Scotland has been formed for well over a year – the Army has moved on and our busy Scots soldiers look to the future. They are also taking advantage of the new and varied career opportunities that the new, more flexible regiment provides," she concluded.

# A nation's thanks

## Memorial honours Britain's fallen heroes

**H**UNDREDS of veterans and their families joined dignitaries led by the Queen to commemorate the 16,000 Service personnel killed since the Second World War.

In an event to mark the unveiling of the new Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire there were tributes to the fallen and time to reflect on operations past and present.

The VIP guest list included Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Defence Secretary Des Browne, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

Also at the ceremony was five-year-old Alex Wall (pictured right), whose father Colin Wall, a warrant officer in the Royal Military Police, was killed during an attack by gunmen on a British Army vehicle in Basra in August 2003.

In leading the tributes during the unveiling ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, the Chief of the Defence Staff, said the Forces had an "unmatched reputation" and that people were proud of them.

He added: "Over the last six decades the men and women of our Armed Forces have faced unceasing challenges – in diverse, difficult and often dangerous circumstances, they have operated across the full spectrum of conflict.

"But such success does not come without cost and in military operations the price can be very high indeed; for some it involves the ultimate sacrifice."

ACM Stirrup said loved ones of fallen Service personnel should also be remembered. The nation owed them a debt of thanks that could "never be adequately met".

He added: "But I hope this memorial offers them a place of solace, and a sense that we have a tangible reflection of, and focus for, the nation's remembrance and gratitude."

Designed by architect Liam O'Connor, the Armed Forces Memorial is inspired by the ancient landscapes of the UK as well as influences from classical Rome.

It bears the names of the 16,000 men and women lost in conflicts including Korea, Aden, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, with space for 15,000 more.

The opening ceremony at the 150-acre Arboretum included a flypast by more than 20 aircraft and a display by the Royal Air Force Falcons parachute display team.

● Remember – Pages 46-47



Not forgotten: Alex Wall, whose father was killed in Basra, points to his dad's name on the memorial

## Veterans' cash heads east

**B**IG-hearted Aden veterans continued to help civilians in their former area of operations as they gathered to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the British withdrawal.

The troops who served in the former protectorate, now part of Yemen, donated £200 to a campaign dedicated to assisting less fortunate civilians in the Middle East state. Association chairman Capt Alastair MacDonald said: "With their connection to Aden, they felt this was a good cause to support."

Capt MacDonald was speaking after a weekend of activities to commemorate the Aden withdrawal, which included a formal dinner and service of remembrance.

There were special messages from dignitaries led by the Queen and Ali Abdul-

Iah Saleh, the President of Yemen, who extended his warm wishes to the veterans and reflected on the developing relations between his country and the UK.

The Aden campaign saw British troops battling an insurgency sponsored by Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul Nasser. By the time of the withdrawal, scores of personnel had lost their lives.

Capt MacDonald said: "The service of remembrance was particularly poignant and was an opportunity for us to reflect on those who did not come back. The weekend was also a very positive occasion. Notwithstanding the problems they had, the veterans are still very fond of both Aden and its people."

● Aden tales – Pages 39-41



● Sgt Mark Stansfield



● LCpl Sarah Holmes

## Tragedy on two fronts

FRIENDS and colleagues of an experienced NCO who died following an accident in southern Iraq have been reflecting on his life and achievements.

Sgt Mark Stansfield, who was serving with 32 Close Support Squadron, UK Logistic Battalion, was seriously injured in an incident with a forklift truck in Basra on September 19, a day before he was due to return to the UK on R&R. The 32-year-old was treated at the field hospital at the Contingency Operating Base before being evacuated to the UK, but later died of his injuries at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

Sgt Stansfield, whose wife had been expecting their first child on his return from Iraq, joined the Army as a teenager in 1992 and trained as a driver. He had served in Iraq, the Balkans and Northern Ireland.

His commanding officer in Iraq, Lt Col David Roberts, said: "It is with enormous sadness that we mourn the loss of Sgt Mark Stansfield. He was a first-class soldier with a bright career ahead. We are very proud and privileged to have served alongside him and we will be much less in the future without Mark in our ranks."

● A WARM-hearted and sensitive soldier with the Forces Postal Service died in a road traffic accident while delivering mail at Al Udeid military base in Qatar.

LCpl Sarah Holmes, who was attached to 3 Logistic Support Regiment RLC, was injured when the car in which she was a passenger was in collision with a truck on October 3.

The 26-year-old, who was from Wantage in Oxfordshire and had served in the Army for ten years, was evacuated back to the UK but later died of her injuries.

Remembered by colleagues in 29 Postal Courier and Movement Regiment as a capable NCO, LCpl Holmes had served in Bosnia, Kuwait and Northern Ireland. Normally based in South Cerney, Gloucestershire, she had initially deployed to Basra's Contingency Operating Base as part of Op Telic 10 with 80 Postal and Courier Squadron. She moved to Qatar at the mid-point of her tour.

Lt Col Iain McKend, CO of 29 Postal Courier and Movement Regiment, remembered LCpl Holmes as "a perfectionist" whose loss had been keenly felt. "Her helpful and friendly presence will be sorely missed in South Cerney as much as by her loving family," he said.

# Royal regret

## Prince pays his respects to inspirational leader

C ORNET William Wales has spoken of his shock and sadness after one of his former Sandhurst mentors was killed while serving in Afghanistan.

Maj Alexis "Lex" Roberts, of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, died after a bomb detonated while his convoy was returning to Kandahar after an operation.

In a brief statement issued through Clarence House, Prince William paid tribute to the officer, who he said had been an inspirational figure at the Royal Military Academy.

Maj Roberts joined 2 RGR seven years ago, initially serving in Brunei before embarking on a tour of Bosnia as an intelligence officer with the regiment's 1st Battalion.

The 32-year-old, who was married with two daughters, then served two years as a platoon commander at Sandhurst before taking command of B Company, 2 RGR.

The accomplished officer took part in overseas exercises in Canada and

Australia before he was again attached to 1 RGR for Op Herrick in Afghanistan.

Lt Col Jonny Bourne, CO of 1 RGR, described Maj Roberts as one of the Army's "finest prospects" and said soldiers had been left devastated by his death. He added: "Lex stood above the rivalry so often a feature of regimental service and his support to his peers and riflemen was selfless and unconditional.

"As his commanding officer, I could not have asked for a finer company commander.

"He led from the front and inspired all those with whom he served."

The sentiments were echoed by Lt Col David Wombell, CO of 2 RGR. He said: "He was all that I admired in a man – mentally robust, physically tough, charismatic, witty, tenacious and moral to name a few of his qualities.

"We will remember with pride and love what an honour it was to know him. My deepest sympathy goes to his wife, daughters, parents and brothers."



● Maj Alexis Roberts

## Mercians march on

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne has paid tribute to British soldiers in southern Afghanistan for remaining resolute despite the deaths of two colleagues in an accident.

In a statement, Mr Browne commended the comrades of CSgt Phillip Newman of the 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment and Pte Brian Tunnicliffe of the regiment's 2nd Battalion, for continuing the battle in Helmand province "at a very difficult time".

Mr Browne added: "I am deeply saddened by the deaths of CSgt Newman and Pte Tunnicliffe. Their loss strengthens our resolve to continue with our mission."

Both soldiers, who had been serving with A (Grenadier) Company, were on a resupply mission in a Pinzgauer 4x4 near Gereshk on September 20 when their vehicle overturned.

A Territorial Army volunteer with more than a decade of experience, CSgt Newman originally enlisted in the 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

The 36-year-old, who was married with three children, had previously served in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Pte Tunnicliffe, who was 33 and from Ilkeston, was also an experienced soldier having enlisted in The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment a decade



● CSgt Phillip Newman



● Pte Brian Tunnicliffe

ago. His job had taken him all over the world, from ops in Bosnia and Northern Ireland to exercises in Belize and Kenya. He spent most of his career as a storeman and was well respected for his thorough and diligent approach to work.

Lt Col Ivan Yardley, CO of 4 Mercian, said the death of CSgt Newman had been a huge loss.

He added: "He personified all that was good in a soldier; he led from the front and protected those who could not protect themselves."

Lt Col Simon Banton, CO of 2 Mercian, remembered Pte Tunnicliffe as a well-liked and capable member of his team. He said: "He reflected the archetypal county infantryman, fiercely loyal to his regiment."



Star gazing: Soldiers in Iraq watch on as actor Ewan McGregor presents SSgt Michelle Cunningham, 11 EOD Regiment, with a Special Recognition Award

# A force for good

## British Army praised by judges for its professionalism at home and abroad

**A** PROUD bomb disposal expert felt the force of celebrity when a top Hollywood actor touched down in Iraq to present her with a prestigious award.

*Star Wars* actor Ewan McGregor handed over a Pride of Britain accolade to SSgt Michelle Cunningham at the Contingency Operating Base in Basra.

The NCO received the Special Recognition Award on behalf of the

British Army, which was praised by the judges for its professionalism both at home and on operations.

The Pride of Britain Awards mark achievements of remarkable people, and is the biggest national ceremony of its kind with an audience of more than seven million TV viewers.

SSgt Cunningham, who is serving with 721 Squadron, 11 EOD Regiment,

Royal Logistic Corps, was awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal for her conduct during a fire at a Middle Wallop explosives factory last year.

As the first senior woman NCO to pass the High Threat Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Course, the 32-year-old was delighted to receive the Pride of Britain award.

In paying tribute to SSgt Cunningham and her colleagues, Ewan McGregor told reporters that he would "never have had the guts" to be in harm's way.

The actor, whose brother Colin served with the Royal Air Force in Iraq last year, said: "I am just so amazed by Michelle and her unit's courage – she's fantastic.

"Most people, and I'm one of them, would run a million miles from a bomb but she walks towards them. It is important that we pay tribute to Michelle, and people like her, who are prepared to put their lives in danger."

Ewan later said in a message to troops on BFBS Radio: "We are all thinking about you in Britain and are really proud of what you're doing here."

# Engineering excellence

**HARD**-grafting sappers who took on one of the Army's largest building projects since the Korean War in the 1950s have been rewarded with a top accolade.

Troops from 48 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers were singled out at the British Construction Industry Awards for their work on Camp Bastion, Afghanistan.

Judges selected the sappers for their special award after the troops rallied to put up the base, ahead of schedule and under budget, in inhospitable conditions.

**The engineers, who beat off 180 competitors to take the prize, were praised for their inspirational teamwork and flexibility in working with 200 Afghans.**

Industry awards judge Alan Crane said: "The project made me proud. It is logistics management at its best, which industry could learn a lot from."

Camp Bastion in Helmand province is home to more than 2,200 troops, has a 50-bed field hospital and a mile-long runway complete with aviation support kit.



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**SINGER** Tori White will add a touch of glamour to the Festival of Remembrance this month when she performs the Poppy Appeal's official single in the presence of the Queen.

The husky voiced Worcester vocalist will also perform *Please Remember* live to the nation from the Royal Albert Hall on November 10. Money raised from CD sales will go to the Royal British Legion. Tori told *Soldier* her thoughts were with

those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially as a close friend of hers is currently deployed on Op Telic. She said: "I think they're doing an amazing job, putting their lives on the line to stand up for our country."

*Please Remember* can be downloaded at [www.mbpmegastore.com](http://www.mbpmegastore.com), with all royalties from Tori, her producers and the record company going to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

## New face of fundraising

### Charity uses popular website to net supporters

**A** LEADING Forces mental health charity has attracted hundreds more supporters to the fold after setting up a group on a global social networking website.

Organisers at Combat Stress revealed that hundreds of people have signed up since the charity made its debut on Facebook, one of the web's most visited sites. The bid to recruit supporters digitally came as Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg announced that the MoD and Scottish Executive would be providing 50 per cent more funding to the charity. The move means that the organisation will now get up to £260 a day for the treatment of every eligible war pensioner.

Around 1,300 Facebook members have signed up to the Support for Combat Stress group and those behind the move are confident that popularity will continue to rocket.

The charity's director of fundraising, Robert Marsh, told *Soldier* that the Facebook presence would make younger people aware of the organisation's work and the need to support troops. He added: "Facebook is very much a young person's pursuit and it is amazing that more members are signing up to the Combat Stress group all the time."

"One of the things the Service charities should be doing is showing the general public that the veterans of today are very much young men and women."

## IN BRIEF

● THE first successful DNA matching of dead soldiers found on the Western Front has allowed historians to identify the descendants of two Australian comrades – 90 years after they were killed during the Third Battle of Ypres.

Pte John Hunter and Sgt George Calder of the Australian Infantry Battalion were killed in September 1917 when they fought at Polygon Wood.

Pte Jim Hunter had buried his older brother and returned home to Queensland with the news that John had been shot on his first errand as a messenger. His son, also named Jim, said he was shocked when his DNA matched a sample taken from his uncle's remains almost a decade later. Jim added: "My grandfather wanted to look for him but my father said the place was so torn up they would never find him. My uncle would have had the world at his feet if he'd come back from the war."

● AN editor is needed to lead a small team in producing the monthly *Army Families Federation Journal*. The part-time post will involve writing, editing copy and pictures, as well as designing pages and contacting external contributors to the magazine. A strong nose for stories relevant to Army families is essential. For more information contact the AFF Director Communications on 01980 615517 or email [dircomms@aff.org.uk](mailto:dircomms@aff.org.uk)

● SOLDIERS and instructors have given the thumbs-up to the latest dormitory accommodation at the Army Training Regiment in Pirbright.

Provided under the Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (SLAM) initiative, the barracks houses more than 1,000 troops and includes a comfortable recreation area, state-of-the-art washrooms and bunk spaces complete with lockers.

Capt Andrew Montgomery, RA, troop commander of La Cateau Troop said: "Everything here has been very well planned and we have a lot of space."

Rct Neil Jones agreed: "I've heard some horror stories in the past but this accommodation is really good."

● AN Army model aircraft flying enthusiast has issued a mayday to like-minded soldiers. SSgt Dave Gwyther of the Royal Engineers is looking to set up an association with the Royal Air Force, but wants to know how many others would be interested in the move.

He said: "Model aircraft flying is now officially recognised as a sport by the Sports Council and we have come a long way in a few short years."

SSgt Gwyther can be contacted on 01252 333274.

# OUT OF ACTION man



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# Hot on the trail

Experts argue the case for making tracking a regular and respected fixture on operations »

Secrets in the sand: Soldiers on the Military Tracking Instructor's course pick up a trail in Brunei

Report: Stephen Tyler  
Pictures: Mike Weston



**S**TARING at a patch of grass wilting in the unforgiving Bruneian sunshine, it is tempting to tell the tracking course students searching for the trail of an escaped killer that they are wasting their time.

The soldiers are studying the ground intently for clues, but to the untrained eye the unremarkable green expanse is devoid of any footprints and looks indistinguishable from its surroundings.

But just as *Soldier* is about to write tracking off as a discipline that went out with the Lone Ranger, one of the soldiers on the Training Team Brunei (TTB) Military Tracking Instructor's Course (MTIC) exercise begins to point purposefully to a specific section of ground more than a metre away.

"There's a definite flattening of the grass and change of colour," he says, moving forward carefully so as not to disturb his discovery.

Looking at his find from a distance we remain unconvinced, but a closer inspection reveals several blades bent out of shape to form the clear indentation of a boot.

To the layman the footprint may as well have not been there, but the find starts the group in the right direction and before long they have successfully found and followed a trail and discovered the fugitive's escape route.

The fact that the students are picking up such discrete signs just two weeks into the five-and-a-half week course lends credibility to the claim of TTB OC Maj Bryson Gifford, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, that tracking is an invaluable skill that could and should be used operationally.

"Some people have the impression that tracking is real 'Walter Mitty' stuff," he told *Soldier* from TTB's base in Seria. "That is because they don't have an understanding of just what it involves and what it can achieve. Tracking is being employed by other countries all over the world with great effect and I know that if we used it on operations its value would be proved."

"It's not as well established as it should be, but it's an intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) asset that allows commanders to get the honest opinion of a soldier on the ground rather than having to rely on an image on a screen."

The art of tracking is based on the soldier's ability to spot sign – something in the environment that is out of place, whether it is an obvious footprint in the sand, a discrete broken twig or a patch of disturbed dust.

As well as learning how to spot these signs, MTIC students are also taught how to recognise if the person they are tracking is trying to deceive them, for example by walking backwards

or brushing over footprints. Training officer Capt Dean Williams, of the Royal Marines, explained that a trained tracker's ability to use logic to identify whether their quarry is trying to throw them off the scent is a capability over and above those offered by other ISTAR assets such as unmanned aerial vehicles.

"We are trying to get commanders to understand where this fits into their ISTAR cell," he continued. "Once that happens they will realise that it's just another layer to what they already have.

"The major difference is that through making intelligent assumptions and deductions, these guys can really make an impact on the ground."

Despite being used historically with great success on jungle operations such as Burma, tracking can yield results in a variety of other environments.

Although it does make use of Brunei's abundant primary jungle, the TTB course contains a module on urban tracking to show that it is both possible and effective to continue a hunt on terrain ranging from concrete and grass to sand and rock.

Tracking is already widely used elsewhere in the world, where its versatility has most notably delivered results in the policing of the multi-terrain border between the United States of America and Mexico and by the Israeli Defence Force, which has dedicated tracking platoons.

It is the diversity of the skill that makes Capt Williams firmly believe that tracking could play a key role in the battle against insurgents on current operations in Afghanistan.

"Commanders perhaps think of tracking as a black art and equally you have people who are convinced it is only used in the jungle," he explained.

"It is not something new, it's not a form of magic and it's not going to take a lot of money or manpower. In this world of technology, here we have a system where you only need to put people on the ground to get information which can give you numbers, age, sex, equipment being carried, tactics and so on.

"You don't have to be this super soldier to be a tracker because it's something that's innate in all of us. Life has become too easy so we just need to reawaken those skills and take them to another level.

"Even if you just make troops ground-sign aware then I have no doubt that it will save lives."

MTIC is open to all ranks between corporal and captain and every one of the 98 per cent of students who successfully pass through TTB's doors receives a qualification that enables them to return to their units and teach the skill to their colleagues.

With tracking high on the agenda of a number of foreign armies, Capt Williams hopes that more commanding officers will allow newly-qualified TTB trainers to develop the skill within the British military.

"I don't honestly believe these guys are getting the time to pass on what they have learnt at the moment purely because the Army is so busy," he said. "I understand the reasons, but I can't sell the benefits of tracking enough because they far outweigh the demands

on time and manpower.

"To be able to react to intelligence and send a team out on the ground on the offensive is invaluable. It can be utilised quickly and easily and if we can get it used once people will realise what an effective asset it is."

Despite the misconceptions about its usefulness, for those in the know tracking is a low-maintenance, high-impact asset that is ready and waiting to be unleashed on modern-day frontline operations. ■

MAN'S best friend also plays an important part in successful tracking missions. Dogs from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps have been specially trained to provide both infantry patrol and sentry duties alongside their military trackers.

Team Training Brunei canine expert Sgt Matthew Ball, RAVC, told *Soldier* that a trained dog and tracker make a formidable team. "Infantry patrol dogs are sent away ahead of the troops and when they find an air scent they will indicate.

"It sounds like a joke but their ears will prick up and you can use the direction between their ears as a crude guiding tool. If the wind is in your favour they can smell scent 300 to 400 metres away.

"A combat tracking team with a dog and tracker is absolutely superb. They can bounce off each other and if the dog loses track for whatever reason the tracker team can cast back on sign.

"If you're in hot pursuit the dog will catch the enemy very quickly indeed."

**Pictures clockwise from top left:**

**Urban tracking:**

**Sgt Matt Ball, RAVC,**

**and Cpl Rob Green,**

**RA, cast for sign on a**

**bridge during their**

**Military Tracking**

**Instructor's course**

**Looking for trouble:**

**CSgt Gyan Dhenga,**

**1 RGR, looks for**

**clues during a field**

**tracking exercise**

**On the rocks: Tracker dog**

**Megan follows her ultra-sensitive**

**nose as she works alongside a**

**visual tracking team**

**Hot on the trail: Trained trackers**

**follow signs in the sand**



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# Blast from the past

Estonians return to battlefields of  
Afghanistan with British allies »



**Clockwise from main picture, Stop and search: Estonian troops question locals after setting up a vehicle checkpoint; Radio drills: A call goes out for an interpreter to help with an interview; Covering fire: Soldiers are tested in a patrol serial in which a suspected IED is found**

**Report: Cliff Caswell  
Pictures: Graeme Main**

**C**APTAIN Eero Kinnunen is acutely aware of how dangerous and demanding southern Afghanistan can be – the veteran military man has seen it all before.

The Estonian Army officer, who has been preparing with his soldiers for deployment to Helmand province under British command, knows about the unforgiving conditions and what to

expect from a ruthless enemy. But he also knows that this time he will be in very different company.

When Capt Kinnunen last deployed to Afghanistan he was serving in the Soviet military, which had occupied the country in late 1979. When Estonia was part of the former Soviet Union, its nationals were eligible for conscription, with many forced to take part in the disastrous campaign to prop up communism.

Undaunted about his next tour, the officer is confident that the strategy

employed by Nato is vastly different to the heavy-handed tactics of his former Soviet commanders. He is also in no doubt about the legitimacy of the current mission and the expertise of his British commanders.

“The international community is putting its efforts into helping the people and backing the Afghan government to make sure things get better,” he said. “This is different to what happened before; I am confident of success.”

Capt Kinnunen, who was this month due to deploy to Afghanistan as part of the Estonian’s company strength commitment to Op Herrick, served as an infantryman in Kandahar at the height of the Soviet occupation in 1986. With a reputation for no compromise, Soviet commanders pursued a line of total war against the Mujahideen guerrillas – Muslim fighters who had declared a holy war on the invaders – in an effort to shore up Kabul’s beleaguered communist government.

During a ten-year occupation, brutal attempts to crush the opposition would galvanise popular support against the Soviet forces. Despite the military might of one of the world’s superpowers, the country became a grave for many young conscripts.

More than two decades on and, having gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Bloc, the Estonians have





been working alongside the British from early on in the Herrick mission and are currently serving with 40 Commando Regiment, Royal Marines.

As well as bolstering US forces in Iraq, they have won huge respect from UK military chiefs for their contribution to Afghanistan. Their experience of serving under the Soviets has provided a particularly valuable lesson from the past.

Speaking during Exercise Bam, a series of manoeuvres on the Sirgala

training area near the Russian border, Estonian Army spokesman Lt Andres Sang said troops were in no doubt about the legitimacy of their role.

"There are men in their 30s here who served in Afghanistan under the Soviets," he said. "You have to remember, however, that the campaign was purely a military effort for the Soviets – they didn't do anything for Afghan civilians."

"The reconstruction element wasn't an issue at that time, so there is a significant difference between the Nato and Soviet missions. This time it is not just one power in Afghanistan – it is a major multinational effort."

Lt Sang also stressed that Estonia's experience of reconstruction after the fall of communism could be put to use in Afghanistan. "Estonia has become one of the most successful countries in Eastern Europe," he said. "In particular we have first-hand experience of building an economy."

Estonian troops destined for Afghanistan are drawn from the army's all-professional Scouts Battalion. While military service remains compulsory in the tiny Baltic state, all those deployed on operations are career soldiers.

During the Herrick pre-deployment training, Estonian personnel were put through serials including setting up vehicle checkpoints and patrolling with close air support. Authentic villages were also built to give the soldiers an opportunity to put their cultural awareness studies to work.

Scouts Battalion CO Maj Aivar Kokka was confident that his soldiers would be well equipped to deal with their forthcoming Herrick tour. But he admitted he felt a huge responsibility for readying his personnel for battle.

Two Estonian soldiers have been killed in fighting with the Taliban, and several others have suffered

serious injuries during the campaign. "I am preparing the troops for another commander," Maj Kokka said. "Our battalion has to be prepared to operate with Nato units."

British troops observing the exercise were left in no doubt about their counterparts. Capt Will Norcott, a liaison officer with the Royal Marines, was impressed with the commitment shown by the Baltic state's soldiers.

"Estonia only has a small defence force, but it is committing a company of soldiers to Afghanistan, which is actually a huge percentage of its armed forces," he said. "We're going to be fighting alongside these guys when we go to Afghanistan, and I'm happy with what I've seen from them." ■



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# Digging deep

## Versatile Terrier gives sappers the pedigree to back up the toughest ops

Report: Cliff Caswell

Picture: BAE Systems

**A** HI-TECH vehicle that will make Royal Engineers one of the best equipped forces on the battlefield is straining at the leash to join sappers on operations.

Following hot on the heels of the heavily armoured Titan obstacle clearer and Trojan bridge layer, Terrier will give troops more power at the back end of operations, carrying out duties such as disposing of mines and digging trenches.

Designed by BAE Systems in Leicester and earmarked for production at the company's Newcastle factory, the advanced drive-by-wire vehicle will replace the ageing combat engineering tractor when it enters service in just over two years.

While Terrier is smaller than its Challenger 2-based Titan and Trojan stablemates, the Army's latest canine-dubbed vehicle has teeth and it can perform more than a few new tricks.

Top of the list is the facility for the commander and driver to dismount from the vehicle and take it for a walk by remote control at distances of just under a mile, thus dealing with obstacles without putting their lives on the line.

As well as being well protected, the 31-tonne vehicle is also compact enough to be loaded onto

an A400 and transported by air to operations around the world.

Sporting a C18 Caterpillar 700bhp engine mated to a ten-speed automatic transmission, Terrier has a top road speed of 70km/h and can muster 40 km/h cross country, making it capable of keeping up with armoured infantry.

The vehicle can tow up to two trailers and can be loaded with bread-and-butter engineering kit such as fascines.

It also has an automatic route marking system, allowing troops following on to stick to mine-cleared areas.

Crews can expect to find the Bowman communications suite fitted as standard plus night vision kit and 360 degree surveillance cameras to see all around the vehicle.

Crucially the Terrier has also been designed with future threats in mind, and can be beefed up for overseas operations with kit such as an overhead weapons system, enhanced modular armour and sophisticated electronic counter-measures.

The driver and commander, who sit side-by-side in the cabin, have three

levels of seating, operating the vehicle with their heads outside the hatch when the threat is low and dropping them down into the depths of the armour under contact. "We designed the vehicle for the crew to sit adjacent to each other so they could maintain team spirit in times of stress," Derrick Hewkin, the vehicle's system engineering manager, told *Soldier*. "But Terrier can also be operated under remote control if, for example, the crew encounter a blockage that may be booby-trapped.

"The vehicle can be controlled up to 1,000m away and most functions are still available."

Hewkin also pointed out that Terrier could be operated for a full two days with hatches down and was fitted with a nuclear, biological and chemical filtration system. "The vehicle is also well protected – Terrier has been through blast trials using a mine of substantial size and passed with flying colours," he revealed.

BAE Systems is currently showing four demonstrator models and is expecting to deliver between 60 and 110 vehicles in the first quarter of 2010. ■

**'Terrier has been through blast trials using a mine of substantial size and passed with flying colours'**



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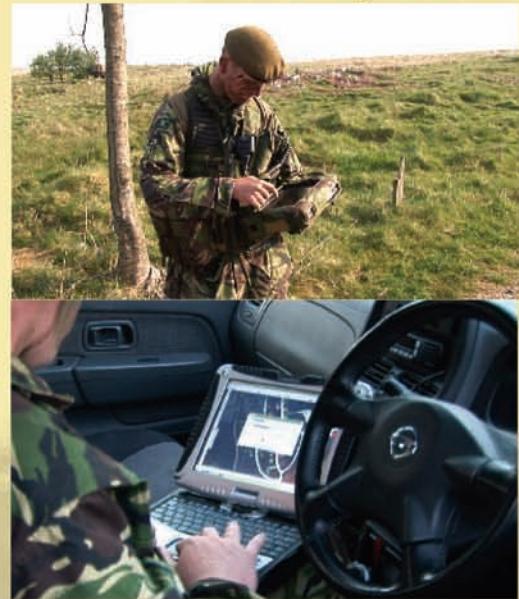


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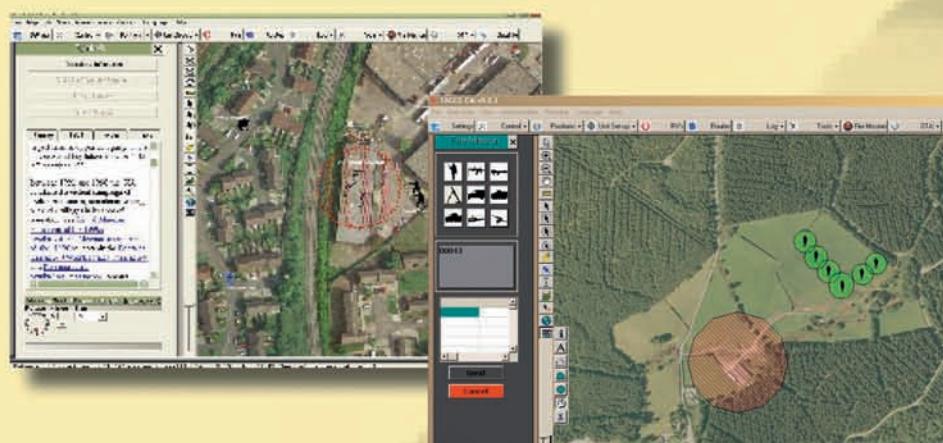
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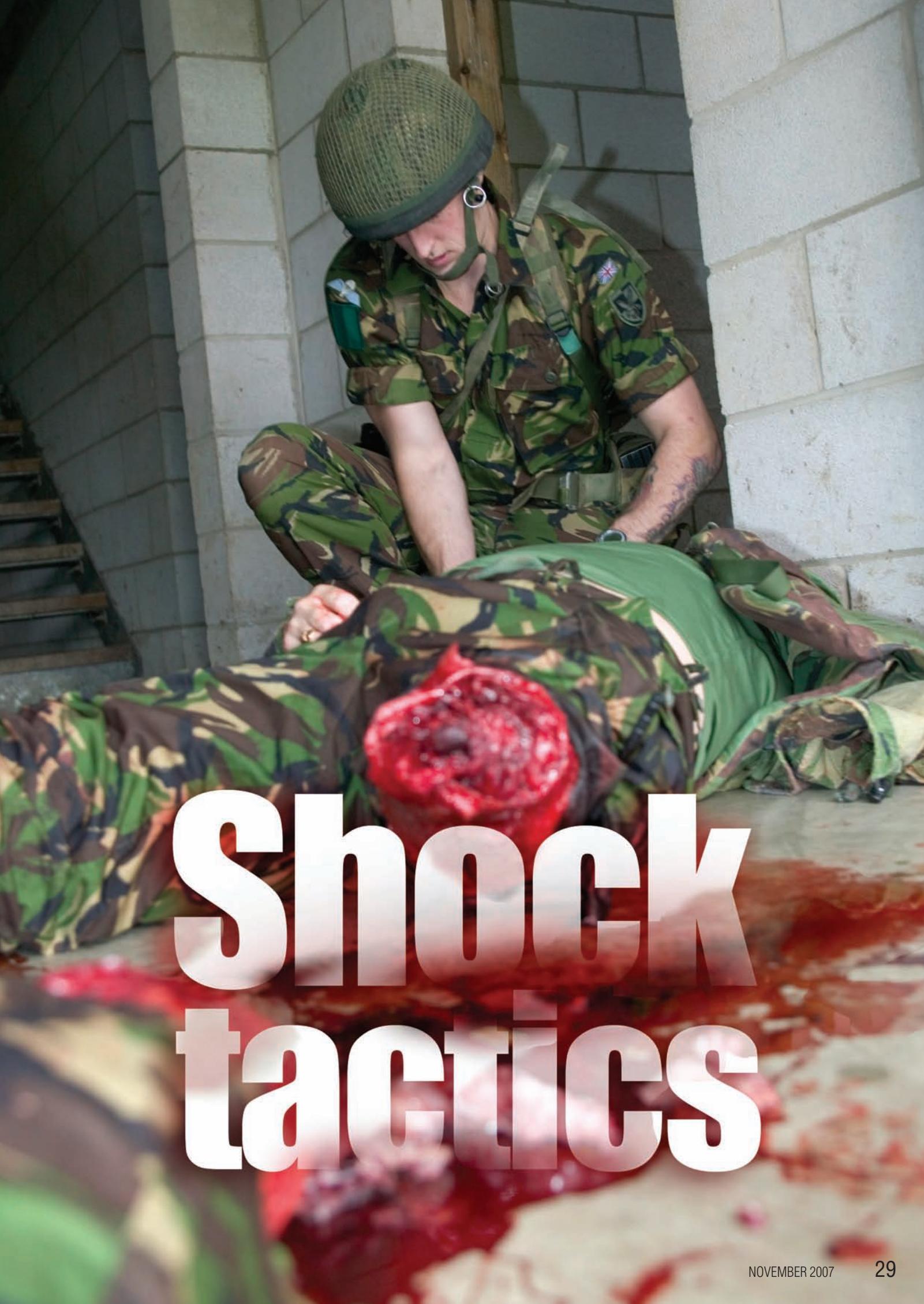
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# Shock tactics



**Report: Cliff Caswell**  
**Pictures: Graeme Main**

**L**YING on his back in a pool of blood, with an ugly gash in his face and the severed remains of his legs grotesquely positioned a few yards away, Darren Swift is ready for action.

In a few minutes he will give unsuspecting soldiers a profound shock when they find him semi-conscious and apparently bleeding to death on the steps of a house.

Aware that his current appearance would test even the strongest of stomachs, the casualty takes solace in the fact that the next time those treating him see a sight like this, the familiarity of the unpleasant experience might well save a soldier's life.

"We've had people who have seen us and run away, and even some who are sick – we call them pukers," he says as a make-up artist liberally adds more blood to the sickeningly crimson

scene. "The problem you have when you see an injury like this is the brain shuts down. But having seen it on an exercise, you should be able to react more quickly when you are faced with a real situation."

"Swiftie" is a professional casualty. On the books of Amputees in Action – a specialist agency that provides limbless actors to play injured personnel in films and on training exercises – he is assuming the role of the wounded on a team medic cadre for the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

There is nobody better qualified to take on the part. In May 1991, the former dog handler was on the streets of Belfast when he lost his legs to a coffee jar bomb thrown from a nearby building. The explosion killed his friend and left him in agony.

"Three of us on this exercise today have been blown up for real and, although we are not experienced from a medical point of view, we do know exactly

how someone would react," he adds.

Tragically, exposing soldiers to the gruesome reality of injuries they may encounter in theatres such as Afghanistan has increasingly become a necessity. While, on the home front, rehabilitation experts at centres such as Headley Court are gearing up to a rise in amputee casualties, troops at the sharp end are being relentlessly drilled in providing the best possible care at the point of injury.

Maj Stu Russell, OC of HQ Company, 3 Para, knows the value of basic medical knowledge. In 1979, he was caught up in an ambush at Warren Point in Northern Ireland and suddenly found himself dealing with friends with missing limbs. He believes encountering an actor with realistic injuries who knows how to play the part can help soldiers when they are faced with life-or-death situations in the field.

"You always have a degree of shock but the training, and the urgency of the



situation really takes over," he adds. "You start putting into play the drills and the procedures you have been taught. You find that you do it without thinking about it."

On the exercise area at Colchester, Essex, the troops are harassed and some clearly horrified by the scenes confronting them. They are further tested when explosions force them to carry the wounded from the house and onto the grass outside.

A debrief follows as the casualties give some feedback on their treatment while doctors provide expert advice on how the soldiers can improve their performance.

"The guys really didn't know what to expect today, and I thought we were going to see some white faces," confides regimental medical officer Capt Nicola Macleod. "There are huge advantages to using casualties that look realistic.

"We are now placing a big emphasis on our forward medical care, and

obviously the soldiers on the ground will be the first to treat their mates."

Senior officers are delighted with the way the troops have taken to their medical training and full of praise for the amputees bringing a new realism to the cadre.

"It is not just the injury that they have, it is the experience," says Lt Col Stuart Tootal, CO of 3 Para. "As a soldier, you have to be able to overcome the shock. You need to be able to see through the red mist and react."

Performing professionally while under pressure is key for the soldiers involved in the cadre. "Obviously this is only training, but it has been very good," says Pte Dennis O'Kane after finishing his turn treating the simulated casualties. "All of us here feel we've learned a lot. You can go over all sorts of things in a classroom but when you get on the

exercise area, it is about as realistic as you can get."

Pte Matt Tonroe agrees. "The make-up they are using here is extremely realistic," he says. "It is without doubt the best medical training I've had.

"You have the shock factor because of what you're seeing, you're slipping all over the place on the blood and there is lot to think about."

The exercise conditions might be tough, but the graphic nature of the cadre, and the realism brought by the amputees has certainly stepped this training up a gear. Soon-to-be-deployed soldiers need the best instruction on offer and dealing with the injuries brought on by the terrorists' weapons of choice is a dark reality of current operations and one with which front-line soldiers must quickly get to grips. ■

**The problem  
you have when  
you see an  
injury like this  
is the brain  
shuts down**

# Hot potato

## Soldiers digest controversial change to Army's mealtime package

Report: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Mike Weston

**N**APOLEON Bonaparte famously remarked that an army marches on its stomach – a principle that was at the very heart of his military effectiveness.

Some 200 years ago, when malnutrition and poverty were rife, the French emperor had reasoned that soldiers who were fed properly were more likely to be victorious in the field.

Bonaparte's philosophy has stood the test of time and remains as pertinent for armies of the 21st century. Troops on operations are still offered the best free catering available, but British soldiers back home

traditionally had money deducted from their wages to make sure they took their three meals a day and remained fighting fit.

So when the way of doing business was changed and soldiers found themselves having to part with cash each time they sat down to eat, there was bound to be controversy.

Under the Pay As You Dine (PAYD) scheme, money previously deducted for food was put back in soldiers' bank accounts, private contractors were brought in to bolster Army catering and troops were given the choice of where and when to go for their scoff.

As the roll-out of PAYD continues, and with the new system bedding in, many have given the thumbs up to the mealtime shake-up.

With civilian companies investing thousands in sprucing up dining and recreational areas, food available around the clock and a potential cost saving with soldiers only paying for the grub they eat, the new scheme has strong support.

On the flip side of the coin, opponents argue that troops could land themselves with a problem if they spend all their money before the end of the month. And some Army chefs are



worried they are now constrained in the types of meals they cook, which is leading to a "skills fade".

"To me the soldiers now have total fairness in that they only pay for the meals that they have," explained Pat White, of private contractor ESS Compass Group. "They have the choice and they eat when and where they want."

"It's fair to say that troops were a bit wary at first – obviously it was a change. However, in my view they have taken to the new system really well and they have come up with good ideas on how the system should work themselves."

ESS Compass is responsible for running the multi-activity contract at Army sites in Oxfordshire, with Abingdon – where 3 and 4 Logistic Support Regiments are based – hailed as a key example of the benefits of a private cash injection.

Under a £450,000 programme of refurbishment, the cookhouse has been overhauled and an upstairs area transformed into a recreation room with a TV and internet access. Snack food is available until late in the evening, while breakfast, lunch and dinner "core" meals are on the menu for less than £2 at set times.

Aramark, the civilian company responsible for running the multi-activity contract in Mid Hampshire, has also been investing heavily in facilities alongside PAYD.

Around £500,000 has been made available to beef up the cookhouse, shop and

recreational areas at the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering in Bordon.

"Pay As You Dine has brought absolute flexibility. We have a whole range of prices, including three hot core meal choices as well as a premium range of products," said Stewart McCulloch, Aramark's outgoing contract director for Mid Hampshire.

"The soldiers understand that they are not paying for food whether they eat it or not and there's now a realisation that they are being treated very much as adults."

PAYD has found support among several Army chefs, who praised new opportunities to gain formal qualifications in the commercial side of catering.

The amount of food waste has also been slashed. Under the old system around 30 per cent went in the bin. Under the new, that figure has been cut to around four per cent.

Other chefs, however, are concerned that the pressures of cooking to order has led to a less complex menu, meaning that their full range of skills were not being tested.

Cpl Lewis White, RLC, a chef at Quebec Barracks in Bordon, said: "There's not so much choice on the core menu now."

"Under the old system you could make a lot of different things. But having said this, the value for money for soldiers is fantastic."

SSgt "Tommo" Thomson, RLC, master chef at Abingdon, was impressed at being given the chance to get to grips with the commercial side of catering and the opportunities provided by the contractors to take recognised civilian qualifications.

"It takes time to get used to different ways of doing things," he said.

"But everything is subject to change now and the guys here are really enjoying things. The soldiers can come in anytime to have a meal and bring their families if they wish."

With a fundamental change in the way of doing business in catering, PAYD was always set to be a talking point among soldiers, but with the scheme on track to be fully rolled out to the Army in 2009, many welcome it.

While there are issues with the system – and catering bosses admit that some problems need ironing out – there is a general acceptance that the new scheme is fair and practical. Napoleon, would approve. ■

● Chefs' bleak future – Page 50

● Sound bites – Page 90

**'There's not much choice on the core menu now – under the old system you could make a lot of different things'**



THE origin of the Pay As You Dine initiative goes back more than three decades.

According to Col Charlie White, Colonel for Catering, Retail and Leisure, the scheme was first suggested as far back as 1971.

"PAYD goes back to the introduction of the Military Salary. Part of that recommendation was that we should stop paying soldiers a fixed sum for three meals a day," he said.

"The introduction was put off and put off and had always remained only as an aspiration. But the general feedback we are getting now PAYD has been introduced has largely been good."

Col White added that the roll-out of PAYD would be completed in Germany next year while Northern Ireland would be the last area of the UK to join the PAYD revolution.



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# Recalling the shots

Army photographer Cpl Jon Bevan shares his experiences of living life through a lens on Afghanistan's front line ➤



**Soldier smoking**

As an Army photographer, it is the highlight of your career to record events during combat. This picture for me sums up the combat imposed upon young soldiers on a daily basis. This soldier is a sniper who has been running between trenches high on a ridge overlooking compounds near Kajaki. While moving he draws enemy fire and dives into trenches. He takes a few puffs of his cigarette and places it down on the ground and then picks up his sniper rifle and re-engages the enemy. Times like these feel like you're in a film and it's not real. This is my favourite picture of combat even though it appears not to look like an action shot.  



Report: Nigel Green  
Pictures: Cpl Jon Bevan RLC

**A**FTER 15 years in the Army, Cpl Jon Bevan was looking forward to a quieter life and the prospect of settling down with his family as he approached middle age.

The Royal Military Police NCO had recently returned from a dangerous tour of duty in Iraq, where fellow soldiers were being killed on a weekly basis, when the opportunity arose for him to join the professional ranks of Army photographers.

With his wife having just given birth to their son, it was a job he believed

would keep him out of harm's way.

But, two years later, the 36-year-old found himself dodging bullets and rockets on the front line in Afghanistan. While his comrades were firing rifles and machine guns, Bevan was shooting pictures.

And those pictures give an incredible insight into a war that has already claimed the lives of more than 80 British troops and left hundreds more badly-injured.

Bevan, who has been caught up in a dozen firefights, admits his job often leaves him terrified. But he also gets incredible satisfaction from highlighting the bravery of soldiers, some of whom are half his age.

"I speak the truth through the lens of my camera and I let people know exactly what youngsters are going through out in southern Afghanistan," he said. "I think these young soldiers are phenomenal."

Bevan, who lives in Shropshire with his wife Charlie and their three-year-old son Joe, joined the Army at 19 and went straight into the Royal Military Police. He spent much of his early career in the UK and Germany, often having to arrest soldiers for offences such as drunkenness and brawling.

"I had tended to see the bad rather

**'They were firing at me. I could hear the bullets going over my head'**

than the good side of the Army – reacting to Friday and Saturday nights," he said. However, Bevan's career took a change of direction in 2004 when he was posted to Northern Ireland, where he trained as a photographer to help police gather evidence from riots and scenes of crime.

Soon after, the red cap was offered the chance to become a full-time Army photographer. He said: "My wife and I had just had a baby and I thought this job would be safer. I said to myself 'what's dangerous about photography'.

"I thought I'd be doing fluffy PR jobs and not be with soldiers who have had to fix bayonets because they are in such close proximity to the enemy."

In March, the sharpshooter deployed with 12 Mechanized Brigade to Afghanistan, where he worked out of the Army's headquarters at Camp Bastion in Helmand province. During a demanding six-month tour he spent much of his time on the front line with soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment (previously The Worcester and Sherwood Foresters Regiment) and the Grenadier Guards.

Bevan often had to walk nearly ten miles and carry 80lb of kit, as well as

### Leg amputation, left

◆ This picture of a coalition soldier having his leg amputated will always remain in my memory. It was my first experience of photographing an amputation.

The British Army theatre nurse pictured watched on as the surgeon battled to save his right leg and then sadly had to amputate the left. I have always found taking pictures of injured soldiers extremely difficult, knowing it could easily happen to me as I deploy on ground operations. ◆

### Cpl Bevan in action, below left

◆ This picture was taken of me with A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment. Soldiers marched from their base in Sangin under the cover of darkness for approximately 8km to the start point of the mission. They were carrying 80lb worth of equipment, rations and water. As dawn broke we started to push north through Helmand's notorious Green Zone. What then ensued was over ten hours of marching and fighting as the Royal Anglians battled their way 7km northwards. For me personally this was the most physically challenging part of my Army career as both a soldier and photographer.

While soldiers around me looked through the scopes of their rifles, I was looking through the lens of my camera. This was my first experience of a contact and that day we had over a dozen skirmishes with Taliban fighters. When, after ten hours of marching and fighting, the objective was completed, the company took a rest near a river in idyllic surroundings. Such is the determination of the Taliban fighters that we, the hunters, became the hunted and they attacked our position with automatic fire and RPGs. An RPG exploded in the air metres from where I was lying and the attack lasted for about 15 minutes. The realities of dying on this tour hit me for the first time. As I lay horizontally as close to the floor as possible during the fierce gunfight, I thought about my wife and young son. ◆

### Close quarter combat, right

◆ Fixed bayonets can mean only one thing – that the enemy is extremely close. During operations in the Green Zone of the Sangin Valley, soldiers from 1 R Anglian exchanged fire with Taliban gunmen only metres away. ◆



body armour, helmet and cameras to get to battles that lasted up to two days. The photographer, who also had to carry an SA80 rifle, said: "I didn't have to shoot to defend myself. I was there to shoot pictures, not people. I usually felt safe because of the guys around me."

But Bevan, who returned to the UK last month, endured some particularly scary moments.

"There was one time when I was just 50 metres from the Taliban," he recalled. "They were that close."

Following a British attack on a Taliban position in August, he came under fire from machine guns and mortars and had to run more than a mile-and-a-half to safety.

He said: "They were firing at me. I couldn't see how close they were but I could hear the bullets going over my head. I was running for my life across open ground. It's the first time I've had to do that. When I was a policeman, it was me who did the chasing.

"I've been there when other soldiers have been injured. It depends on the situation as to whether you take photos.

"One soldier had a bullet bounce off his breast-plate and hit him in the arm. I didn't photograph him.

"I'm more sensitive than civilian journalists. I know that, one day, it could be me."

Bevan, whose pictures have appeared



### Opium fields in Afghanistan

I took this picture early on in my tour during late March. I was on patrol with the Royal Marines from 42 Commando and wanted a picture of the poppy fields as they are symbolic of Afghanistan. ■

in newspapers and magazines all over the world, added: "I've learned more about the Army in the last six months than I did in the previous 16 years.

"I've fallen in love with the Army again. I particularly enjoy the banter. The only downside is the time away from my family.

"I've enjoyed the last six months. I've come of age as a photographer because I've been living and breathing with the camera all the time."

Bevan hopes that his efforts in theatre will highlight the bravery shown by the young soldiers he worked alongside.

"Many of them were just teenagers but they were fit and battle-hardened. In the morning, they could be fighting and killing and, in the afternoon, they could be playing on their PlayStations.

"I recently spent some time with a doctor who was with the paratroopers at Goose Green in the Falklands and he told me that the experience he went through that day 25 years ago, the young lads in Afghanistan are going through every day.

"We take the mickey out of them being the PlayStation generation but they are doing the business out there." ■



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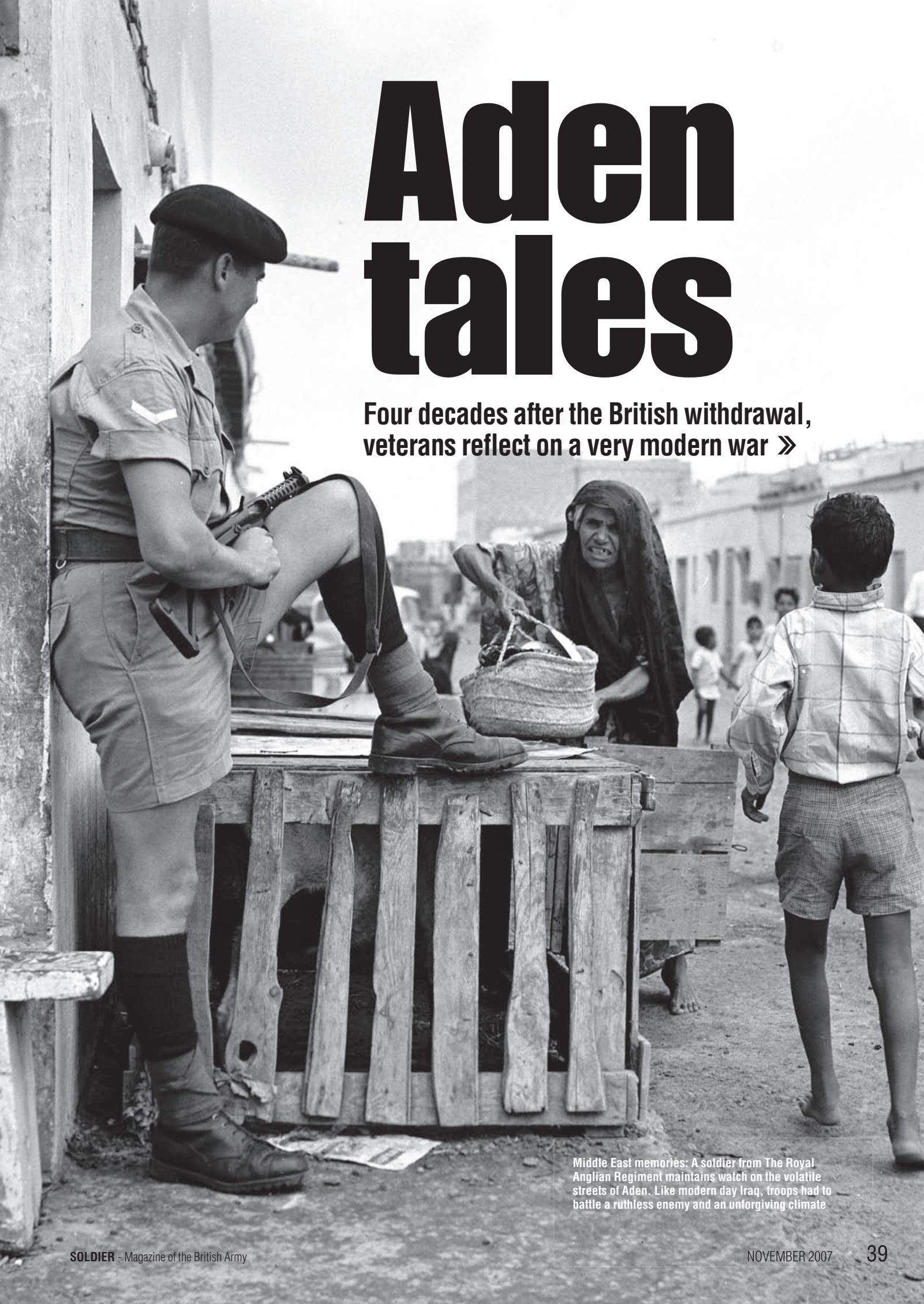
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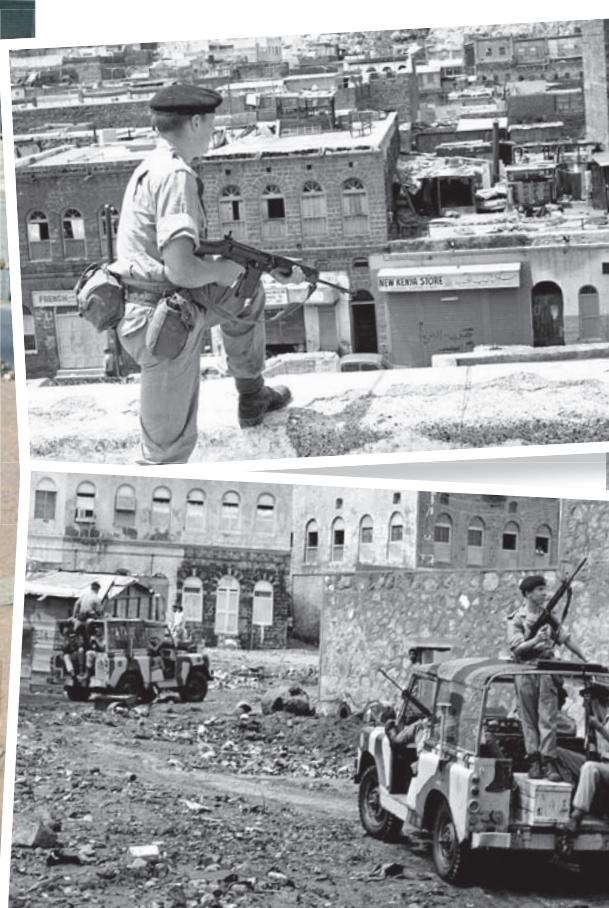
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# Aden tales

Four decades after the British withdrawal, veterans reflect on a very modern war »



Middle East memories: A soldier from The Royal Anglian Regiment maintains watch on the volatile streets of Aden. Like modern day Iraq, troops had to battle a ruthless enemy and an unforgiving climate



**Report: Cliff Caswell**  
**Pictures: Soldier archive**

**T**HEY may have been taken 40 years ago, but Terence Marsden's black-and-white photos of his Middle East tour of duty have a familiarity that is striking.

Sitting in the lobby of a hotel on Blackpool seafront and leafing through the images of arid desert landscapes, soldiers in shirt sleeves and shots being fired over a coffin at a funeral, there is a vivid sense that this campaign is mirrored in the present. Colour in the images and they could have been snapped in Iraq.

Marsden took the pictures in Aden, a tiny British protectorate now assimilated into Yemen at the far end of the Arabian Peninsula. Four decades ago, in November 1967, troops withdrew after waging a bitter campaign against state-sponsored terrorism. Their departure brought to an end a 130-year British presence and was another landmark in the dismantling of the empire.

Like Iraq, the soldiers in Aden faced a complicated task during years of escalating violence. After humiliating the British in the Suez a decade previously, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul Nasser had schemed to increase his influence in the Middle East, backing fighters from the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) in Aden. The terrorist group was given sanctuary in Egypt and was armed with sophisticated kit, including weapons from the Soviet Union.

British troops were also fighting irregulars from a separate group, the National Liberation Front, which had infiltrated the local police, as well as

having to deal with age-old tribal rivalries of the populace. As with their modern-day counterparts in Basra, the soldiers endured mortars, roadside bombs and the threat of ambush in searing temperatures.

For the former soldiers of the Aden Veterans Association meeting in Blackpool to remember old friends, it did not take long for the sights and sounds of the seaside to evaporate. Gone were the trams, the illuminations and rolling waves; to be replaced by images of VC10 aircraft flying troops into theatre, inhospitable terrain, the fetid stench of open sewers and daily contacts with terrorists.

“Aden was supposed to be the worst posting in hell,” Marsden, who served with the Royal Signals, recalled. “I remember getting off the aircraft after we arrived and I couldn’t believe the heat. You could see it rising off the tarmac.”

“Later a corporal in the Royal Signals was shot and killed, which had never happened before – unlike the infantry regiments we were largely left alone. But you didn’t know what was going on out there. This was very much a dirty war.”

“Nasser was certainly the figure behind it all – even the kids would shout his name. One minute you would give them an ice cream, the next they would be stoning you.”

The situation called for a delicate balance of military skills. Faced with an open-ended front line, the soldiers had to combine combat with a hearts-and-minds campaign, exercising restraint while fighting tooth and nail when the need arose. At the extreme end

of the operation, soldiers were warfighting, backed by Hawker Hunter jets of the Royal Air Force. At the other, they were reassuring local people while facing progressively more determined terrorist attacks.

“I arrived in 1966 and left in May the following year,” said Nobby Phoenix, who served with the now disbanded 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, nicknamed the Pompadours, as he recalled the final months of fighting throughout Aden.

“We were based at Radfan Camp to the east but I also served in an area called Sheikh Othman to the north. There was a place called Grenade Corner, where there would be ambushes every day. We must have had around 500 incidents.” Phoenix was also involved in a full scale riot in early 1967, during which

his battalion squared up to scores of angry demonstrators who took cover in a mosque. “The incident predominately involved A Company,” he told *Soldier*. “I heard that they fired around 20,000 rounds in the space of 30 minutes.”

The level of violence, which massively escalated as the Egyptian-backed terrorists took hold, shocked Ted Quinn, who served with the Royal Engineers. After a relatively peaceful tour in the late 1950s, he was taken aback with how the situation had deteriorated when he was sent out again at the height of the insurgency.

As in Iraq, better armour was needed as the tactics of terror stepped up a gear. “There was an incident in which a Ferret armoured car hit a landmine



and blew up, and from that day on we travelled around in Saracen vehicles," he said. "During the first tour I was really spoilt; I was in Little Aden, to the west, and was building accommodation for the troops. But the second time was dodgy. I only just missed being hit by a bullet by a whisker while lying on my bed."

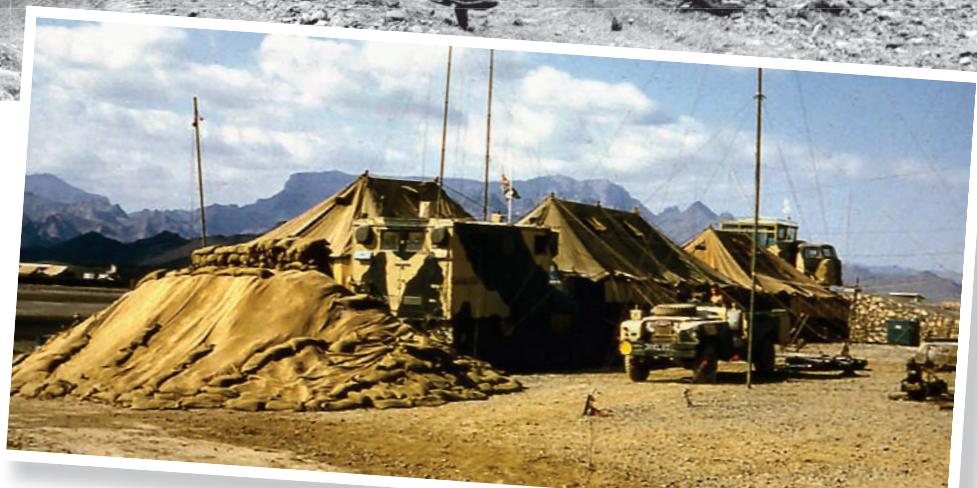
Others, however, were not so lucky. The final years of British tenure in Aden claimed the lives of some 200 personnel, many of whom remain where they fell and whose graves are in the cemetery at Silent Valley. Those who returned are well aware of the sacrifices demanded of the soldiers facing the terror campaign in Iraq four decades on.

Peter Strachan, who was stationed in the volatile area of Dhala to the north of Aden – bandit country that was regularly the scene of ambushes and attacks – admitted his thoughts were with British troops involved in current operations. "I do feel a great affinity with them," the former soldier, who served with the 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said. "I was in Aden from 1959 until 1960 and I remember the conditions; I remember how the tribesmen would fire into the camp and how it was when we went out to provide escorts for convoys."

Four decades have passed, but the challenges facing the Army today are remarkably similar to those faced by Aden veterans who fought a very modern war.

Between the barren rocks of Aden and the volatile streets of Basra, valuable lessons have been learned.

The experience of the British soldier in the Middle East remains one of the Army's greatest assets. ■



**Pictures clockwise from top left:** Out from Aden: The final parade at Little Aden marked the first phase of the British withdrawal

Urban Ops: A British soldier keeps a watchful eye over the streets while troops on the ground patrol in Land Rovers

Action: As a convoy to Dhala halts, soldiers of The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire leap from their truck to take up defensive positions

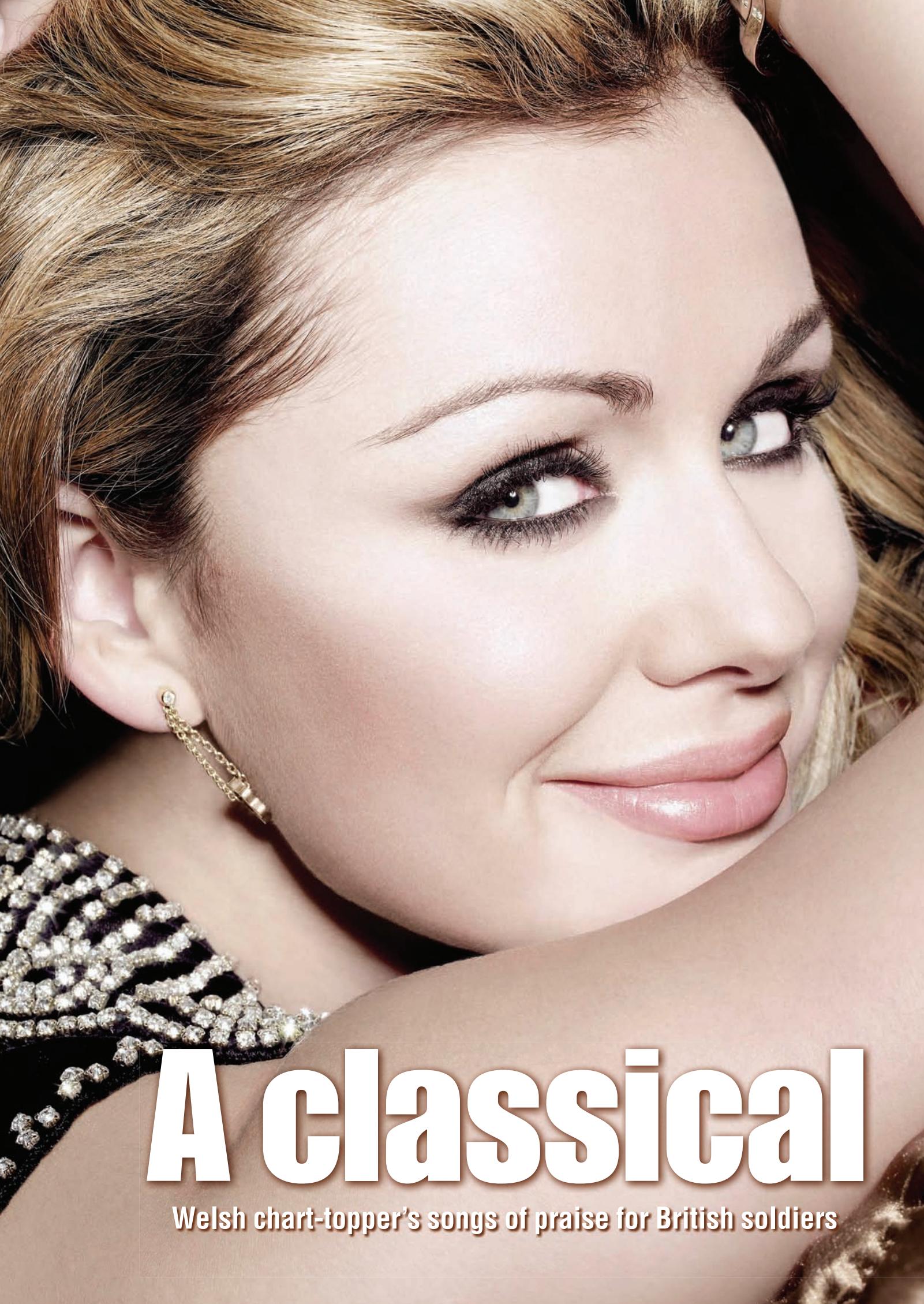
Snapshots from soldiers: A selection of photographs taken during the years of the insurgency show a Royal Air Force Blackburn Beverley offloading a Saladin and Westland Scout lifting a 120mm anti-tank gun



Visit our website to view a selection of features, taken from our digital archive, on the British Army's presence in Aden

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# A classical

Welsh chart-topper's songs of praise for British soldiers

# Katherine Jenkins – MY ARMY

Interview: Cliff Caswell

**W**HEN opera singer Katherine Jenkins started dozing off during a helicopter flight between bases in Iraq, she had no inkling her aircraft was in the sights of a terrorist rocket launcher.

Abruptly brought back to reality by a huge commotion in her headphones and a crippling G-force as the crew reacted to counter the approaching missile, she admitted her heart was in her mouth.

"All I could hear in my ears was a warning that was saying 'missile alert rear,'" the 26-year-old recalled. "The pilots were having to manoeuvre the helicopter around all over the place. Anti-missile flares started going off, but we landed safely and I was rushed off the helicopter and on to the next show."

Despite the heart-stopping moments Katherine, who had been accompanying comedian Jim Davidson on a visit to Basra with his British Forces Foundation charity, was adamant that she had not been put off entertaining the troops.

"I'm remarkably calm about everything really – the more difficult the place is, the more I want to go," she said with a smile. "I love the fact that I have to rough it; after all it's what British soldiers are doing for six months at a time."

By all accounts, performing for the Armed Forces has become a huge part of Katherine's life. The Welsh-born songstress, who last year became a trustee of the British Forces Foundation, proved herself more than capable of adapting to the difficult and demanding conditions that are home to troops on current operations.

Despite, by her own admission, being "a really girly girl", she has travelled the world's trouble spots without the familiar entourage of make-up artists and hairdressers that accompany celebrities, and has earned the respect of military chiefs for her dedication.

Since her early days of fame performing with Dame Vera Lynn at the VE Day commemorations in 2005, the modern-day Forces Sweetheart has put on her flak jacket to visit troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland and the Balkans and has forged a huge fan base among soldiers.

The Classical Brit Award-winning artist, whose work has been a permanent fixture in the charts, recently headed out to Cyprus to meet troops and their families. She is also due to visit the Middle East this month before departing for Helmand in February.

And armed with a new – and deeply personal – repertoire of songs from her latest album *Rejoice*, she is looking forward to bringing her music to soldiers once again.

"It has been a strange year for me," Katherine, who grew up in Neath and studied at London's Royal Academy of Music, admitted. "I split up with my long-term boyfriend but I'm now back on track and wanted to record inspirational songs.

"*Rejoice* is how I feel, as I feel strongly about my involvement with the Army," she added. "The soldiers are doing an amazing job and it is great to get so many letters from them."

Despite her success with troops, Katherine admitted that she had initially been apprehensive over whether classical music would be well received in the ranks.

"When I first went out to perform in Iraq I was really panicking," she confided. "But I tried to choose songs that the soldiers would know, such as *Nessun Dorma*. It was fine and I think it helps that I am willing to have a bit of banter with them when I'm on stage – I don't have to be so restrained."

"The most important thing for me is to put on a good show and spend the maximum time talking to people. I love the family aspect of life in the military – everybody is so incredibly well mannered and it is a joy to see them."

**"I love the fact that I have to rough it; after all it's what British soldiers are doing for six months at a time"**

Katherine, who is the Welsh Rugby Union team mascot, recently took time out to meet wounded troops at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham and believes injured soldiers deserve respect and recognition.

"The injured tend to get forgotten but it is important to remember them," she said. "At Selly Oak I met guys who had been through so much but still had a great sense of morale."

Katherine is now trying to encourage other performers to take the plunge and travel out on operations. "My personal project is to get other artists to come out to theatre, although I have to make sure that they are doing it for the right reasons," she said. "Heather Small from *M People* did a concert with the British Forces Foundation and I'm talking to one other artist. I can't yet say who it is, but it will be a major coup if it comes off."

Attracting others to the fold may be part of her mission, but Katherine remains in demand as an Army icon. "I've been called the Forces Sweetheart by the press, which is a lovely title to have, but it is something that I wanted to earn first. Soldiers are a huge inspiration to me and I am so incredibly proud of all that they do. I am looking forward to seeing them out on operations again soon." ■

Katherine's new album *Rejoice* (UCJ) is out on November 19. *Viva La Diva* – a new musical uniting the talents of Katherine and Darcey Bussell – starts November 25

act

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In-theatre production: Scots DG musicians on parade in southern Iraq

# Amazing return

## Music mogul signs up tankie Pipes and Drums for chart offensive

Report: Karen Thomas

**A** MILLION pound deal with Universal Records is set to propel The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards' band to the top of the charts and repeat the pipers' history of seizing the number one spot.

The international record company snapped up their latest album, *Spirit Of The Glen*, with a contract that will put the 24 pipers and drummers in the same music stable as acclaimed vocalists Katherine Jenkins and Hayley Westenra.

Drum Major Cpl Danny Brown told *Soldier* the band was "blown away" by the possibilities offered by the deal with one of the music industry's top players.

"As soon as we were briefed that Universal were on board we were over the moon and thought of ourselves as pop stars. It's very exciting."

The band produces an album about once every five years but this is the first time it has grabbed the attention of a renowned recording label. Recorded over the summer, the Pipes and Drums had to squeeze in daily studio time with nightly live performances at the Edinburgh

Tattoo to get the CD finished.

Tracks include traditional Scottish ballads, movie themes and a new arrangement of the enduring hymn *Amazing Grace*. Scots DG pipers fought off fierce competition in 1972 to keep their version of the hymn at number one for five weeks. The band hopes that it can emulate that success with their new album.

Universal spokesman Dickon Stainer was confident *Spirit Of The Glen* would be a best seller.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime album. It's an honour to work with our nation's soldiers – they're a credit to their country and to the musical world too. I have never seen a reaction to an album like this. Its raw, emotive power is overwhelming."

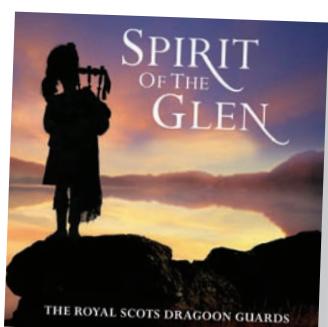
Scotland's only tank regiment has a revered history of courage when serving their country to accompany their Pipes and Drums' profuse musical accolades. Their most recent deployment was to Iraq with 7 Armoured Brigade on Operation Telic 7.

Cpl Brown emphasised that "every single person is first and foremost a

tankie", and membership of the band was entirely voluntary. Practice and rehearsals have to be worked around routine soldiering duties.

Yet pipers have been an integral part of the regiment for centuries, stirring troops for battle and calling to new recruits. Now the Pipes and Drums perform to worldwide audiences and the band will tour the USA next year.

The record deal with Universal can only confirm the national and international appeal of Scotland's finest soldiers and musicians. Time for the piper to call the tune to the top of the charts. ■



THE ROYAL SCOTS DRAGOON GUARDS

● *Spirit Of The Glen* will be available from high street and online record stores from November 19. A donation from each CD sale will be made to Service charities.

# Remember

## War Graves Commission's 90 years celebrated in travelling exhibition

Pictures: Brian Harris

**B**RITAIN has long sent its soldiers abroad to fight wars in pursuit of justice, peace and influence. The only signs of those conflicts today are often the headstones of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country, writes **John Elliott**.

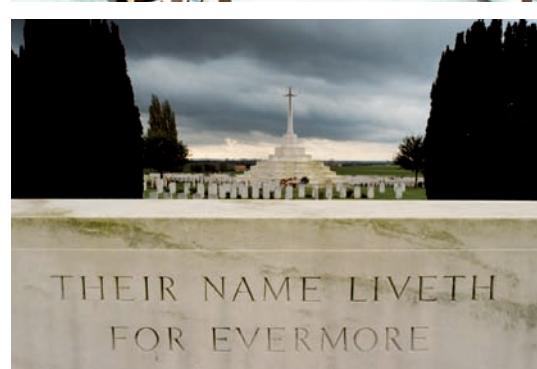
So great was the loss of life in the First World War that an extraordinary organisation was created to preserve the memory of the fallen. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the resting places of 1,700,000 men and women who died in two world wars.

To mark its 90th anniversary the striking Brian Harris images on these pages are touring the world. See them at the Imperial War Museum North, Manchester (Nov-Feb 08). Other venues will be the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance; the Australian War Memorial in Canberra (until May 08); In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper; Calgary Museum, Calgary, Canada (Nov 1-Dec). Visit [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) and click on "Remembered".

With text by Julie Summers, they also adorn **Remembered: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission** (Merrill, £29.95), reviewed in June's *Soldier*. ■

**Their name liveth for evermore – CWGC military cemeteries around the world, clockwise from top right:** Rancourt between Bapaume and Peronne on the Somme, surrounded by a field of wheat and poppies; the snow-covered 6th South African Armoured Division cemetery at Castiglione Dei Pepoli, high in the Italian Appenines; Tyne Cot, near Passchendaele in the Ypres Salient, the largest CWGC cemetery in the world; visitors in Chungkai War Cemetery, Thailand, on the site of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp close to the Kwai Noi River (those buried there worked on the infamous Burma Railway); cactus growing in the El Alamein War Cemetery 130km west of Alexandria on the road to Mersa Matruh, Egypt; another view of Tyne Cot, where many of those lost in the Ypres Salient during the First World War are buried or recorded (the Cross of Sacrifice is built on a German blockhouse captured by the 3rd Australian Division); three Crosses of Sacrifice mark the site of the final action of the Battle of the Somme on Redan Ridge near Beaumont Hamel in France. From left to right, the crosses stand over the war cemeteries of Frankfurt Trench, Munich Trench and New Munich Trench





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A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a vehicle and a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a vehicle and a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a vehicle in a desert setting with a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a flag.
A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a vehicle and a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a flag.	A VISA payment card logo.	A cartoon illustration of a truck with the text 'COMMS SECTION ASHCURCH' and 'Pimp My Bedford'.	A cartoon illustration of a vehicle with the text '2 ROYAL ANGLIAN' and 'OP TELIC 8 2006-2007'.	
A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a vehicle and a flag.	A cartoon illustration of a soldier in a desert setting with a vehicle and a flag.	A logo for 'UK Forces COMBINED FORCES COMMAND AFGHANISTAN 2006' featuring an eagle and a map.	A logo for '2nd LINE PRT KABUL Apr-Sept '06' featuring a flag and the text 'The Lounge Lizards'.	A logo for 'AES BOAT TP OP TELIC 08 APR - NOV '06' featuring a boat and a flag.	A logo for 'Death Or Glory Boys D SQUADRON OP BRAVE LANCER WATHGILL '06' featuring a skull and flags.

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# TALKBACK

# Let public show support

THIS summer I spent a short time as a mobilised Territorial Army soldier at the British base in Basra. We received welfare letters and parcels from the American public that had been passed on to us, with great generosity, by US Forces in Iraq.

It reminded me of my last time in Iraq, during the 1991 Gulf War, when we

## PRIZE LETTER

were overwhelmed by such kindness from home. The effect was, then as it would be now, a great comfort to us as well as a huge boost to our morale.

Whatever the public

thinks of current operations, there is in Britain a deep affection and respect for the young soldiers putting themselves in harm's way on behalf of the nation. They are brave, resilient and highly professional in conditions of extreme adversity in Afghanistan and Iraq, and would very much appreciate receiving letters of support from the British public.

We won't forget those who gave their lives, nor those who returned home wounded.

Let's encourage people who want to show their support to consider a donation to a Service charity, including those which deal with the consequences of physical and mental injury on the

battlefield.

The Chief of the General Staff has made a case for a clasp to recognise combat operations in Helmand province: a similar case could be made for Iraq, where, between April and August, there was a significant increase in rocket and

mortar attacks, roadside bombings and shootings directed against our troops, which caused a rising number of casualties and made operations – and even just being on our bases – very much more dangerous.

Throughout it, our Servicemen and women served with an equanimity, valour and distinction that had to be seen to be believed. – **Lt Col Tim Purbrick, QRL, Media Ops Group (V).**



**"Don't think for a second that Col Purbrick was including you, Eccles, you miserable little toe rag."**

PS...

AS a former member of 1 RTR, I read with interest Maj Botsford's suggestion (Sept) to reinstate the award of wound stripes.

As a civilian looking in from the outside I have to applaud this idea and add my support. Although, as Maj Botsford rightly points out, we do not want to end up with an American system of awarding medals simply for getting out of bed, I think official recognition of those wounded in action is long overdue.

In addition having read the comments of Gen Sir Richard Dannatt regarding measures to make soldiers feel valued, surely this would fall into that remit.

I would like to say though, that in my experience the general public are highly appreciative of our Armed Forces, who are doing an exceptionally tough and dangerous job under very difficult circumstances. – Nick Griffiths, Registered Nurse.

## Int Corps' superb work

I RECENTLY returned from six months service in Iraq, where I was working with the Intelligence Corps.

I am an RAF reservist, with 25 years' military experience, yet confess to being shamefully ignorant until recently of the fine work undertaken by the Int Corps.

Please allow me through the medium of your excellent magazine to publicly express my gratitude to my Intelligence

Corps colleagues for an excellent tour of duty, where I witnessed first-hand the superb work done, most of which contributes directly to saving innocent lives. It is a pity that the nature of intelligence work precludes media coverage. I hope that this letter will go some way towards recognising the corps' fine achievements. – **Flt Lt Alan Corbett, Chicksands.**

**Five pages of your letters and emails on issues of the day**

## Brief is best

YOUR letters provide a real insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas . . . but please keep them brief. Emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) MUST include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). Anonymous letters go in the bin. The Editor reserves 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. Our postal address is on Page 5.

# Chefs' bleak future

**W**HAT lies ahead for the Army chef? With the introduction of Pay As You Dine (PAYD) and working with contractors, many constraints have been placed on military caterers.

Budgetary restrictions and the drive for profit have severely curtailed creativity, personal flair and scope for imagination.

PAYD offers little challenge to a skilled caterer. I know this because I have experience of working in this environment. I will not argue that it is a fairer system of payment for the soldiers, but the variety of foods offered has changed considerably.

When we ask what's in store for us the answer is always the same: "There will be no impact on military caterers because they are still required for operations and exercises."

I am on Op Telic and can safely say there are many chefs here in Iraq who are being misemployed. There are at least ten kitchen facilities, only one of which is operated by military chefs. The rest are run by contractors.

Even Op Herrick has contracted sites. The chefs in theatre plying their trade are working hard and enjoying doing what they are trained for. Project Vanguard at UK Army ATE sites also provides contract catering, so again there is no requirement for us.

I find it difficult to look my soldiers in the eye and talk to them about retention. – **Name and address supplied.**



*"I think he's saying they can feed us for half the cost and think of the profit we can pocket."*

**Maj James Brassington, DRLC, replies:** In a time of change there are bound to be concerns over the deployment and role of military staff, in this case chefs, where capability can and is being contractorised. The role of the soldier logistician, including chefs, is key to future operability and accounts from Iraq and Afghanistan prove how vital military chefs are in helping sustain moral.

The task of the RLC chef has never been more important, as is being demonstrated by those deployed on ops. Although contractorisation at home effects on the daily work and working relationships of RLC chefs it should be to their advantage because it provides an insight into commercial catering practices while taking greater account of our chefs' need for military training, leave and courses.

All military caterers will eventually be employed within the Catering Retail and Leisure (CRL) Pay As You Dine (PAYD) environment. This has inevitably had an

effect on the working practices of military caterers and means they have to work within far tighter budgetary constraints. If the variety of food has reduced this should be investigated by local Food Services staff as the regulations detail the policy to ensure soldiers are offered a nutritionally balanced selection, including catering for diversity.

The core skills of RLC chefs are retained as they rotate through the variety of messes and utilise the full range of skills in the preparation and production of choices.

RLC chefs should ideally deploy on operations with their parent units. Once in theatre they will normally be centrally managed to ensure the optimal feeding solution is provided to all organisations. In Iraq the contractor footprint was initially large but this is now reducing and of the 105 RLC chefs currently deployed, three are employed in tasks outside their specialisation, thus reinforcing DRLC's Soldier Logistician concept.

In Afghanistan there are two catering contracts which affect the deployment of UK Service chefs: Kabul, which is a HQ location with no formed units, and Kandahar, which is a Nato-controlled base supporting UK troops, predominantly HQ staff. All remaining UK bases and forward operating bases are supported by Service chefs.

I would not wish the writer to think his or her concerns are not taken seriously and would reassure them that these issues are subject to review. Such is the awareness of the need to examine the role of Army chefs that it will be debated at the 2007 Army Food Services Study Day attended by staff from stakeholder organisations, including HQ DRLC, Land and DFS IPT.

## Misled over pension commutation

THE NEW defence instruction DIN 01-018 shows just how much the Government respects our 22-year service. Under the old system you could commute 50 per cent of your pension. This has been reduced to 25 per cent, which will ensure soldiers lose money while the tax office gains.

MoD has stated it will introduce a new pension calculator but has not yet designed it. Yet it managed to instigate this policy in 2004. As a sergeant at the top of lower pay band seven, could you tell me how much I would lose if I am allowed to commute only 25 per cent?

I recognise I can have a one-time free calculation from my admin office, but I am trying to make others aware of how this has sneaked under the radar. – **Sgt G Allison, DSOP-DCAE, Cosford.**

PLEASE explain why we were not

informed of potential changes to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS 75) resettlement commutation until after the DIN was published (Aug 2007), then back-dated (April 6, 2006) to before we were notified of our decision to remain on AFPS 75 (May 26, 2006).

What happened to duty of care? – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies to both letters:**

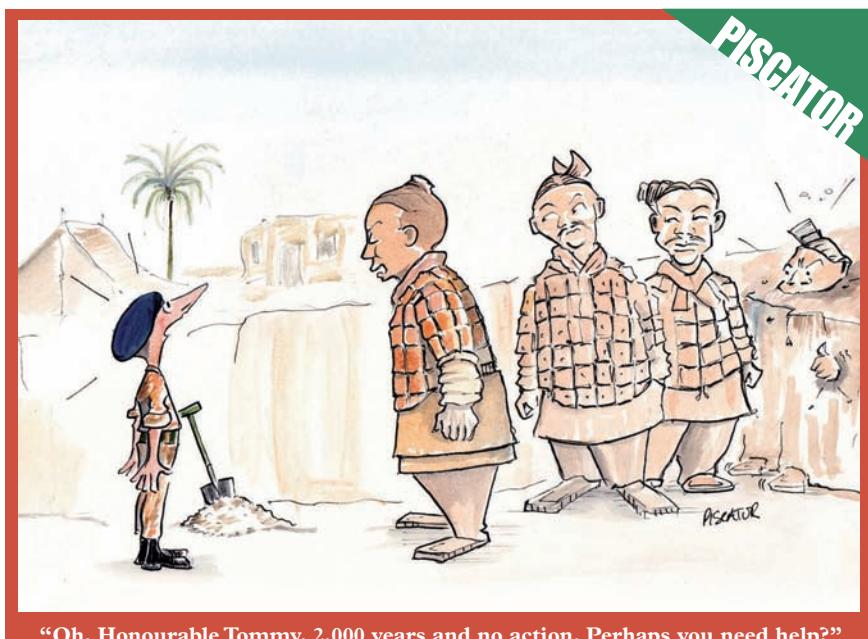
The changes in commutation were brought about by the Finance Act 04 (FA 04) which, as you point out, was on the statute in 2004 but not effective until April 6, 2006. However, the initial technical detail issued by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) indicated that the existing Armed Forces' pensions would not be affected. Subsequent advice changed this, and in July 2007 it became clear that it would affect all pensionable service after April 6, 2006 for

those on AFPS 75 only. It has now become clear that the interpretation of the rules outlined in the DIN (2007/01/018) was not entirely accurate; consequently, it has been withdrawn. The MoD is consulting urgently with both HM Treasury and HMRC on the effects of the FA04 on resettlement commutation to obtain definitive clarification of the changes.

What I can say is that anyone retiring with an immediate pension before the outcome of the consultation is known, and who wishes to take resettlement commutation, will have their calculation made under the old rules.

Their calculation may be revisited and adjusted once the HMRC has issued its guidance but it is stressed that this will only affect the part of the pension accrued after April 6, 2006. Once fuller advice is to hand a new DIN will be issued and the pension calculator will be updated.

## Second class SUPA sub



"Oh, Honourable Tommy, 2,000 years and no action. Perhaps you need help?"



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Call 0845 241 4820 or visit [www.armybenfund.org](http://www.armybenfund.org)

# Motor insurance rule unnecessary

WHEN I arrived at my new posting late last year I submitted a claim for, among other things, my mileage from Tidworth to Colchester. It was denied because my car wasn't insured for business use.

I was aware the requirement was raised last year but surely the idea was that if a private vehicle was used for official duties or transporting personnel to official duties it had to be so insured because the MoD would otherwise be liable for any incidents arising.

My journey fell into the category of a domestic journey as I was moving home and I would have been covered. I am aware the vehicle must be insured for "business use" and that Disturbance Allowance provides the funds to insure the vehicle for business use, but it was unnecessary in this case. Why can't I claim motor mileage allowance (MMA)?

– Name and address supplied.

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** You may have seen earlier letters on this subject and the irritation that it causes to all. Your analysis in the first half of your letter is correct and, as a result, you are in a *Catch 22* situation.

The position of the MoD is that a journey on posting is a duty and if you want to be able to claim MMA for that duty you must have sufficient insurance. If you don't want to pay for business use insurance you cannot claim MMA.

*I do not like hiding behind legal advice, but the requirement for business insurance must stand.*

*However, some insurers allow for the odd business trip, say two to three a year, particularly if you are already covered for commuting. I suggest you examine your policy; if it provides such cover then resubmit your claim. And when it comes to renewal, shop around.*

I WAS posted into a squadron direct from phase two training as a class three military clerk. There was a chief clerk but no junior clerks.

From the outset I was expected to deal with all aspects of the work, even though I had no training in finance.

After a lot of hard effort and long hours I got to grips with it and I am still in the office on my own. The extra load is frustrating but I appreciate that manning is a problem.

What annoys me is that I'm not entitled to substitution pay, despite a corporal LSN (line serial number) vacancy, because I fill the private/lance corporal LSN. Despite coping with two people's workload and the work of a JNCO, I get only the pay of a private. – Name and address supplied.

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** You state there are two JNCO LSN posts in your squadron – a Pte/LCpl post and Cpl post – and that you are doing the work of both.

The unit is correct in saying that you cannot normally be given substitution pay when you are in a rank-ranged post. However, if you are carrying out the duties of a full corporal as well as your own duties, you qualify for substitution pay for the Cpl LSN.

*3SP 754, Sect 3, Chap 8 states: "an individual who substitutes in a post which is two or more ranks higher than their own will only be entitled to receive SUPA appropriate to the first higher rank" so you should receive substitution pay at lance corporal rates. Get your unit to re-check.*

## No bonuses on this 'minimal risk' tour

I'M on Telic 10 and relish the extra money. However, next May I am due to deploy to the Falklands for six months.

But, as stated in *Soldier* (Feb) by the MoD Medal Office: "It is most unlikely there would be much support for a clasp to be instituted to the GSM 1962 to recognise a detachment to the Falklands, where there is minimal risk and very little rigour".

I'll be away from my wife and daughter, but I won't get an operational bonus, a council tax rebate or even a medal. – Name and address supplied.

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A):** Although you are on an operation, the fact is that the risk and rigour of service in the Falklands do not warrant a medal or the operational allowance. Having commanded the Falklands, I believe that this is fair. I agree the council tax rebate issue is unfair, which is why we are working to make sure everyone on operations benefits as soon as possible.

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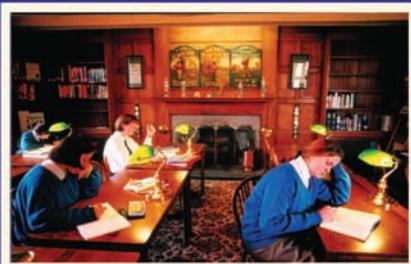


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I AM a married Foreign and Commonwealth citizen enlisted in the British Army and I am trying to find out about Domiciled Collective Overseas Leave. Can you help?

NON-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS) soldiers are being treated as second-class citizens because our relocation payment has been withdrawn.

More letters at **TALKBACK** online  
[www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)

THESE and others letters, and the official responses, appear in full in the **TALKBACK** section of our website

I WAS diagnosed as asthmatic after experiencing breathing difficulties during respirator drills during basic

training and medically discharged despite five previous years in the Territorial Army. Is there anything I can do as I am still very keen to enlist?

MOTOR mileage rate has gone down, despite the cost of petrol going up. Why?

UNASKED for extension of service has denied me access to Over 37 package.

# Unfair cap on flight costs

**W**HY under JPA do I have to produce receipts for virtually everything, so guaranteeing that the MoD will save money due to the average soldier's ability to lose almost everything, as well as ensuring that they also only reimburse actuals.

Yet when it comes to my Get You Home (Overseas) (GYH(O)) allowance I am capped to £120 for a return flight from Germany to the UK?

I am aware that it is based on research by the MoD into average flight prices from all German airports to London but it does not take into account those that live in other parts of the UK, in my case Newcastle upon Tyne.

I can only imagine that £120 for a return flight to the UK would also have to be booked well in advance, not always a luxury that your average soldier over here has.

After slashing single soldiers' local overseas allowance (LOA) without justification, is it now time the MoD reviewed this ludicrous GYH(O) system and reimbursed the actual cost of a



"A bit 'hairy', I'm told, but well within the £120 Get You Home allowance limit."

flight home? – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** The aim of GYH(O) is to reduce the separation of

soldiers from close family, friends and the UK lifestyle that results from an overseas assignment for periods of 12 months or more. It is intended to assist towards the costs of one return journey to the UK, not to pay for it.

The rates are reviewed every year and new rates are published as at August 1. The review uses a sample of flight costs for each airline company flying into London, concentrated around the main leave periods (Christmas, Easter and August).

London is used as a benchmark because most flights from the 84 different countries in which GYH(O) is applicable, will land there and taxes at the London airports tend to be higher than elsewhere.

Each flight cost is taken for a booking roughly one month ahead. Lower cost airlines are avoided on the grounds that their prices can be variable and provincial airports are not included because this could further reduce the rate limit.

In addition to your flight costs, GYH(O) will also assist you with the additional cost of travel to and from the airport at either end of your journey.

# No quarter?

MY girlfriend and I are both in the military and believe we should be allowed to live together by the Army. But Defence Housing has said that until we get married, we will not be entitled to a married quarter.

I could understand this if there weren't enough houses for married couples but I know there are a large number of empty quarters in our area. I looked into renting but we would have to pay between £650 and £800 a month, which is not feasible. We feel we are being pressured into marriage if we want to stay in the Army. – Name and address supplied.

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** In order to facilitate accompanied service, quarters are provided to married couples or those in civil partnership. You are single and therefore not eligible for a quarter to cohabit in. The Army is not pressuring you into marriage, so don't rush it.

# Privates' minimum wage

RATES of pay for Service personnel in comparison with civilian pay came into a conversation the other day.

With the national minimum wage (NMW) now dictated by the Government, why does a private soldier require a pay rise of 3.5 per cent just to break even? This percentage is based on an eight hour day yet as we all know a soldier is supposedly paid for every hour of every day?

This means those deploying on active service earn less than a shelf stacker in a supermarket. Is this fair? Enlistment, we are told, is at an all-time low. I wonder why? For a territorial soldier there would need to be a 11 per cent rise to meet the criteria. – **Ex-WO2 David Commerford, Gosport.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:**

Comparison of our pay to the minimum

wage is a red herring. It is obvious that on an op tour with 18-hour days junior personnel will earn less than the NMW while deployed.

However, Defence Analytical Services Agency stats show average hours worked per week across the Armed Forces in 2006/07 was 48 hours.

Instead we are demonstrating to the Armed Forces Pay Review Board that the training we are required to do to be able to do our job, and the responsibilities loaded on to even the most junior of our soldiers deserve the sort of pay rise you would like to see. For info, NMW is £4.45 an hour age 18-21 (inclusive) and £5.35 an hour age 22+. The national working hours directive allows for a 48-hour week.

This equates to £213.60 and £256.80, respectively a week. The weekly wage of private soldiers equates to between £301.48 and £467.85 (£15,677 and 24,328 ÷ 52).

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# I've had no pay for five months

SINCE the implementation of JPA something has happened to my pay. I have made many phone calls at my own expense to the JPA information numbers and with the same response each time: that someone from the Sabre team will get back to me (no one has).

I have spoken to my own unit and know that all the information is correct from my side. My admin officer has sent plenty of emails and spoken to his superiors about my pay and nothing has been done. – **Cpl D McLintock, 125 Ration Squadron RAMC.**

**Cmdr Angus Ross, SPVA, Director Military**

**Services, replies:** *It has been widely reported that there were a number of teething problems with Territorial Army pay on the switch to JPA. In part this was true as initially some TA unit admin staff experienced difficulty in getting to grips with the new system.*

*This led to a number of delays in payment of both Man Training Days (MTD) and annual bounty payments.*

*Cpl McLintock's initial problem was further compounded by a glitch in the JPA system which took time to identify and put right. Throughout this period he received Early Payment in Cash (EPIC) from his unit and I have been informed that full*

*payments were made via JPA to his bank account in August. This is a regrettable situation for which I hope Cpl McLintock will accept my sincere apologies.*

*I must stress that this particular problem was very much in isolation and as we all become more familiar with JPA, I would see these issues becoming extremely rare.*

*Cpl McLintock says he made several calls to the JPA Centre at his own expense. Any soldier with a pay or allowance problem should initially seek assistance from their unit admin office or human resources staff. And if a soldier does need to call the JPAC, they should use the widely publicised freephone number, which is 0800 085 3600.*

# Promoted, but not paid

DEPLOYED to southern Afghanistan with the Light Dragoons from January to April as part of a squadron uplift. When I saw my pay statement I realised I was not being paid Longer Serving Separation Allowance (LSSA) and informed the clerks who actioned the problem.

Last December I was promoted but as yet I have not been paid for the rank. Neither have I received my operational tour allowance.

Since returning to the UK I have been posted and am owed Disturbance Allowance on top of the LSSA, promotion and operational tour allowance.

I have been through my chain of command. Can you help? – **LCpl D Bell, 1 CS Company, REME.**

**Cmdr Angus Ross, SPVA, Director Military**

**Services, replies:** *I will try to respond by taking each of LCpl Bell's issues in turn.*

*On November 30, 2006 a signal was sent to CO Light Dragoons (his unit at the time) to inform Bell he would be promoted to acting lance corporal on assuming his new post in 1 CS Coy REME on June 4.*

*Printed on the bottom of the signal is the statement: "It is stressed that this signal is not a promotion authority. Authority will be promulgated in a REME Corps Order".*

*His promotion was therefore effective only from June 4 when the necessary authority was granted. The paperwork has now been raised by Army Personnel Centre, Manning and Career management (APC, MCM) and forwarded through the appropriate channels to activate the promotion and the uplift in pay.*

*LSSA was paid under the Army Legacy system prior to JPA but under the JPA umbrella it is known as Longer Separated Allowance (LSA). To resolve this matter*

*his present unit human resources (HR) has been trying to confirm his qualifying dates from his previous unit.*

*Unfortunately these details have, as yet, not been forthcoming. The same applies to the operational tour allowance – unit HR requires confirmation of dates before any payment is made.*

*His unit is aware of the situation and is chasing the information required to make the necessary payments.*

*LCpl Bell acknowledges that he has approached his chain of command and has been advised to claim for Disturbance*

*Allowance online. At the time of writing this, he had not done so.*

*Having checked the Army Legacy Template database and JPA system there is no record of these matters being passed to the Services Personnel and Veterans Agency, Glasgow for advice or resolution, either by LCpl Bell or his unit.*

*If unit HR personnel are unable or are having difficulties in processing a claim, they should contact the JPAC enquiry centre. If they had done so, the necessary advice or action would have resulted in these matters being addressed long ago.*

# JPA 'lost' my bounty

I AM in the Territorial Army and eagerly checked my bank balance because I had been promised my annual bounty payment had been paid.

But I was disappointed, for the fourth month in a row.

My unit seems to have had issue after issue trying to understand and use JPA, to the point where I and others didn't receive any pay for some months.

Five lucky members of my unit received their bounty payment last month after being used as guinea pigs, so working on the basis that the rest of our data were input into JPA in exactly the same way, my hopes for receiving my £1,560 were built up, only to be dashed again.

The argument for not giving TA soldiers a pension is that we receive a bounty each year. Does that mean the MoD is going to pay me interest on the money I haven't had in my account for four months? – **Name and address supplied.**

**Cmdr Angus Ross, SPVA, Director Military**

**Services, replies:** *With the transition to JPA there were a number of teething problems with TA pay. A number of TA units admin staff had difficulty in understanding the requirements of the JPA system and this led to a series of delayed payments.*

*In this case, the delays were compounded by an IT problem involving the automated data upload facility within the JPA system.*

*I want to thank SSgt Cooper at 47 Air Defence Regiment who completed nearly 400 manual entries and his proactive efforts while dealing with the JPAC enquiry centre on behalf of his unit are to be applauded.*

*Following the August pay run, all missing bounty payments have been made and I apologise for the obvious inconvenience the delay has caused to the soldier and their colleagues.*

*As unit admin staff become more familiar with JPA and niggles with the system are corrected, I hope similar issues will become a thing of the past.*



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**Private Y** – recovered £130,000 after being injured when jumping over a wall whilst on exercises.

**Chef A Class** – on board ship suffered severe injuries to a hand trapped by a watertight door in the galley and received £131,000.

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**CLAIMS**

# Positive approach

## Finally, our returning heroes are given the welcome home they deserve

RECENT media coverage of troops returning from operations has been fantastic, particularly the poignant and emotional images of families welcoming their soldiers home.

The media has finally worked out that even if they don't support the conflicts our soldiers are fighting in, they should be supporting the troops themselves and their families. Let's hope this is an upward trend as there are still more than 14,000 deployed – every one of whom deserves a bit of pomp and circumstance to mark their return home.

But we mustn't forget that not everyone's loved one makes it back, and that others suffer life-changing injuries; between January 1 and September 15 this year 76 soldiers lost their lives and 877 were medically evacuated from Afghanistan and Iraq. Military charities are an essential source of support for them and their families so it was good to hear of the launch of a new charity, Help for Heroes.

Its aim is to raise money for injured soldiers but it also links offers of help from the public with the most deserving recipients ([www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)).

SINCE 2002, the MoD has been selling off surplus assets. One of the largest, Chelsea Barracks in London, is due to be completed early next year for as much as £900 million. Of this, £550 million will fund the much publicised Government commitment to improve Service accommodation, but I want to know where the balance will go – I'm guessing



A personal view from Catharine Moss, Editor of the AFF Families Journal

the Treasury, but even if the MoD gets the lot, I'd like to see a guarantee that it will all go on Service housing.

This financial year, Defence Estates (Ops) Housing is spending £50 million on Service Families Accommodation (SFA). Around £31 million will be spent on projects such as upgrading playgrounds, boilers, kitchens, bathrooms and roofs. The rest is being spent on upgrading properties to Standard 1 for Condition.

Particularly good news is that Invicta Park and Blandford (where some of the poorest SFA is located) are being given priority. I've been told the plan is that by the end of next year no one will be living in a Standard 4 for Condition house, other than by choice.

That seems a strange proviso, but some soldiers in Grade 1 for Charge housing struggle to pay the rent so ask to be allocated a lower grade quarter.

DEBT is a growing problem for Army families, which is not surprising given the worryingly high average personal debt in the UK (see Keith's column below). To ensure that soldiers and their families are informed about managing their finances the MoD has teamed up with the Financial Services Authority, which will soon be launching an awareness campaign in garrisons to tackle this rising problem. The AFF is also in the process of producing a debt DVD.

Want to know more about the Army Families Federation. Log on to [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

**I'd like to see a guarantee that it's all going to be spent on Service housing !**

AN added boost to the finances of serving parents of young children is the long-awaited introduction of the salary sacrifice scheme for childcare vouchers, due to be implemented next month (see also IN BRIEF, Page 8).

Soldiers could save more than £1,000 a year by not having to pay National Insurance contributions or income tax on the proportion of their salary that they choose to receive as childcare vouchers.

FOR deployed personnel there was more good news at the Labour Party Conference. Although the Prime Minister's keynote speech hardly mentioned Defence, the Secretary of State for Scotland did rather better, which is no bad thing as he's also Secretary of State for Defence. "Every day we ask our Armed Forces to do extraordinary things and every day they deliver," he said. But the headline-grabbing announcement of a 25 per cent discount on council tax for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan needs explaining.

It's actually going to be a bonus attached to the Operational Allowance, which will be calculated at a daily rate and which will amount to around £140 for a six-month tour. This won't necessarily equate to 25 per cent of a soldier's council tax or Contributions in Lieu of Council Tax (CILOCT).

Let's hope the improvements that the Government is starting to make gain momentum, and don't start flagging once the headlines dry up. ■

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## Debt nation

BY the end of last month the average household debt in the UK was £8,873 excluding mortgages, £56,309 including mortgages. The average sum owed by

every man, woman and child in the UK was £28,707 (including mortgages).

Average consumer borrowing via credit cards, motor and retail finance deals, overdrafts and unsecured personal loans had risen to £4,524 per average UK adult.

A survey carried out by Payplan found that almost 80 per cent of us worry about the financial side of Christmas.

Between September and November lenders send out at least 140 million unsolicited, but pre-approved, credit card application forms. One million new cards were taken out, which achieved "top of the wallet" status: they are the most used cards and the most lucrative for lenders.

The British Retail Consortium says the

average family accumulates 18 per cent of its annual borrowing in December by spending twice as much as in any other month (stats from Credit Action monthly debt facts and figures available at [www.creditaction.org.uk/debtstats](http://www.creditaction.org.uk/debtstats)).

Try writing down all the extra spending you will do over Christmas and the New Year. Remember to include food, gifts, going out, at-home entertainment and drink, cards, stamps, decorations, tree and transport costs. Add it all up and be surprised.

**Next month:** Tips for surviving Christmas.

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# HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



TEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 792, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by November 30.

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

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

**September competition (No 790):** First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Capt T Miller, Land Warfare School, Warminster.** Runners-up **SSgt G M Tomlinson, 28 Engr Regt Wksp, BFPL 31** and **Bdr Kay, 3 Platoon, Army Foundation College, Harrogate,** each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: Lance corporal's chevron; bayonet; flintlock; wrist band; lieutenant's pips; bell rope; hole in barrel; epaulette; cap cypher; and chest band.



## Winner of our September competition (inset)

WE are sending the prize for the September caption competition to veteran Charles Golder of Bolton for his perfectly reasonable question: "Sarge, why do we have to take our kit off to practise the hokey cokey?" although senior storeman Bernie Thompson at 221 Fd Sqn (EOD) RE(V) at Rochester sent in a caption on very similar lines. Great minds think alike.

We also liked "Blimey, Sarge, when you cross your arms, you get man boobs" from LCpl Jones, MPGS Security Flight, RAF Linton on Ouse, York. From the same MPGS unit, LCpl O'Brien offered: "The audition for the new male version of *Tenko* was going well".

SSgt J Long at HQ RSME, Chatham, came up with the tongue-in-cheek "Remember, lads, the last man standing gets a set of desert CBTs that fit correctly" and P Clarke of Wokingham sent in



**The junior ranks' disco really went with a swing after DJ Adolf got them rocking with "You put your right arm out and shake it all about"**

**WIN A BOOK:** Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our June 1948 issue and send it to us by November 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Foxbat*, the new James Barrington thriller which puts Paul Richter back in the pilot's seat. (Macmillan, £12.99.)

**Chippendale training continued with the 'posing with a small table' lesson.** Sandra Shephard, from the Facilities Management

Office at Rheindahlen, suggested "The Army Physical Training Corps practising their synchronised swimming techniques".

# Web watch

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Supporting thousands of young single soldiers in the British Army. Offering a listening ear and practical help 24 hours a day.

### [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

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

### [www.ngvfa.com](http://www.ngvfa.com)

The National Gulf Veterans and Families Association website.

### [www.erskine.org.uk](http://www.erskine.org.uk)

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

### [www.info@tnauk.org.uk](mailto:info@tnauk.org.uk)

National talking newspapers and magazines. Difficulty reading the printed word? *Soldier* can still be enjoyed in audio format. To receive a free audio sample of *Soldier* contact the National Talking Newspaper Service on 01435 866102 or [info@tnauk.org.uk](mailto:info@tnauk.org.uk)

## SERVICES

### [www.armywivesunited.co.uk](http://www.armywivesunited.co.uk)

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

### [www.enterpriseation.com](http://www.enterpriseation.com)

Website launched by Redbrick, the UK's leading consultancy for Regional Entrepreneurial Development, to provide information and inspiration to home workers across the UK.

### [www.forceshomes.co.uk](http://www.forceshomes.co.uk)

Finding homes for military personnel. We organise your mortgage, search for your ideal property, manage the complete purchase, arrange the letting if required, and we pay all your professional and legal fees.

### [www.stft.mod.uk](http://www.stft.mod.uk)

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

### [www.mungogram.com](http://www.mungogram.com)

Imagine you're in theatre, imagine opening a greeting card to hear your family/friends "Happy Birthday Jon". Log on and claim 10% discount (use code ARMY when prompted).

### [www.remerus.co.uk](http://www.remerus.co.uk)

REME R US – Unite REME wherever you are. REME R US members include serving, ex and future members of the REME, their families and friends, who want to have an exclusive online community website.

### [www.postedoverseas.com](http://www.postedoverseas.com)

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

### [www.baff.org.uk](http://www.baff.org.uk)

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

### [www.BFPOShop.com](http://www.BFPOShop.com)

Gift boxes, sports nutrition, toiletries, books, newspapers, 24-hr BBC news, chat forum and much more.

### [www.YellowRibbon.org.uk](http://www.YellowRibbon.org.uk)

Informal and impartial support and information community serving the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Endorsed by the MoD.

## OPPORTUNITIES & BUSINESS

### [www.demobjob.co.uk](http://www.demobjob.co.uk)

Demob Job – jobs and resettlement courses for those leaving the Armed Forces – IT'S FREE.

### [www.4exmilitary.com](http://www.4exmilitary.com)

The No. 1 recruitment service run by ex-military for ex-military.

### [www.jobs.forcesreunited.org.uk](http://www.jobs.forcesreunited.org.uk)

Forces jobs. Full and part-time jobs for serving and ex-Forces personnel from Forces Reunited Jobs.

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### [www.messkitonline.co.uk](http://www.messkitonline.co.uk)

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### [www.dragonsupplies.co.uk](http://www.dragonsupplies.co.uk)

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### [www.shopagc.co.uk](http://www.shopagc.co.uk)

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### [www.cadetdirect.com](http://www.cadetdirect.com)

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### [www.armyandoutdoor.co.uk](http://www.armyandoutdoor.co.uk)

Premier kit shop in the North West for Services/TA/Cadets extras.

### [www.Military247.co.uk](http://www.Military247.co.uk)

We give 10% of our profit to the Royal British Legion, so get the **BEST** Military Kit sent to your door by us. Quote SM5 for a **5% DISCOUNT** on your order.

### [www.ukkitmonster.com](http://www.ukkitmonster.com)

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### [www.feltons-uk.com](http://www.feltons-uk.com)

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### [www.army-surplus.co.uk](http://www.army-surplus.co.uk)

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### [www.combatservicesupport.co.uk](http://www.combatservicesupport.co.uk)

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Tel: 01673 857803.

### [www.rv-1.co.uk](http://www.rv-1.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-2.co.uk](http://www.rv-2.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-3.co.uk](http://www.rv-3.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-4.co.uk](http://www.rv-4.co.uk)

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## MOD LINKS

### [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk)

Official website of the British Army.

### [www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk](http://www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk)

The latest information on match reports, fixtures, ticket and equipment sales, and contact details for all Army Rugby Union teams. See how the most popular and successful sports team in the Army is doing.

### [www.armyaviation.co.uk](http://www.armyaviation.co.uk)

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

### [www.armysafety.mod.uk](http://www.armysafety.mod.uk)

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

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## MUSEUMS

### [www.rememuseum.org.uk](http://www.rememuseum.org.uk)

REME Museum of Technology.

### [www.armymuseums.org.uk](http://www.armymuseums.org.uk)

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

### [www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com](http://www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com)

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster

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# Bulletin board

## Defence directory

**Army Benevolent Fund:** 0845 241 4820  
**Army Welfare Information Service:** 01722 436569/436461; [www.army.mod.uk/aws](http://www.army.mod.uk/aws)  
**Army Families Federation:** 01980 615525  
**British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association:** 020 8590 1124. [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)  
**Career Transition Partnership:** 0207 766 8020  
**Children's Education Advisory Service:** 01980 618244; [enquiries.ceas@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries.ceas@gtnet.gov.uk)  
**Confidential support lines:** UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services \*201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.  
**Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society:** 01372 841600; [www.combatstress.com](http://www.combatstress.com)  
**Family Escort Service:** 020 74639249  
**Forces Pension Society:** 020 78209988  
**Gulf Veterans Association:** 0191 2301065  
**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:** 01722 436575  
**MoD Medal Office:** Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600  
**Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group):** 07962 023654, [www.mutualsupport.org.uk](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk) email [welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk](mailto:welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk)  
**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:** (0900-1700) 01482 808730; 24-hour helpline 01482 833812; [www.ngvfa.com](http://www.ngvfa.com)  
**Regular Forces' Employment Association:** 0207 321 2011; [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)  
**Royal British Legion:** 0845 7725 725  
**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:** 01622 717202/718484; [www.rbli.co.uk](http://www.rbli.co.uk)  
**Ex-Service Homes Referral Agency (ESHRA):** 0207 8394466; [www.eshra.com](http://www.eshra.com)  
**St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women:** 0207 7235021; [www.st-dunstans.org.uk](http://www.st-dunstans.org.uk)  
**SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association)**  
**Falklands conflict veterans:** 01495 227577  
**Services Cotswold Centre:** 01225 810358  
**SSAFA Forces Help:** 020 7403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392  
**Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA):** 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)  
**Victim Support:** Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900, [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)  
**WRVS (24-hr answer service):** 02920 739016; general enquiries 02920 739016

## Reunions

**2007 Devon County Festival of Remembrance:** Great Hall, Exeter University, Nov 8 at 1930. Tickets: Royal British Legion members £6, non-members £8. Details from HQ Devon County RBL, 3 Barnfield Crescent, Exeter EX1 1QT, 01392 27311 or 272211.  
**South Notts Hussars reunion:** Remembrance weekend, Nov 10-11. Email [wstlkraig@aol.com](mailto:wstlkraig@aol.com)  
**5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards:** First southern area reunion. Informal meeting and curry night on Nov 16 at UOTC, Falklands House, Oxford. Ring Steve Hunt on 07880 908050 or John Walker on 01865 863235.  
**Army Arts Society Exhibition:** This exhibition will be held in the Medieval Hall, Salisbury on November 17-18. Opening times 1000-1600. All visitors welcome. For further details contact Iain Park-Wier, Tibbetts, Cholderton, Salisbury, Wilts SP4 0DW.

**8, 9 Int Cosys and C1 Plans (Malaya and Singapore):** Ex-members are invited to a Singapore Dawnwatchers 40th anniversary reunion at the Hilton Hotel, Cologne, April 4-5, 2008. Further details from Dave Wakelam [davenpam47@t-online.de](mailto:davenpam47@t-online.de), Nik Collett [jackc@arcor.de](mailto:jackc@arcor.de) or Mick Conway [conwaym39@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:conwaym39@tiscali.co.uk)

## Defence diary

**November 1-until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story** – A free exhibition built, written and contributed to by soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade to tell the story of their experiences fighting in Afghanistan. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 7300717.

**1-30: 90th anniversary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission** – British leg of a special photographic exhibition (opening simultaneously in Canada and Australia) to mark the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CWGC in 1917. Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. Tel: 0161 8364000.

**4: 55th Midlands Festival of Remembrance**, starting at 1830 in Birmingham Town Hall. Contact Frank Manning, 22 Lambeth Road, Birmingham B44 9NS.

**24-25: Birmingham Tattoo**, The NIA. Tickets and details from [www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk](http://www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk) or 0870 9094144.

**December 15:** Charity Christmas concert for the **RBL Poppy Appeal and Banbury Young Homeless Project**, Parish Church, Kings Sutton at 1930. Tickets from Mike Carter on 07786 640245/01865 780124.

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to [diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

## Searchline

**Group 66c intake, Army Apprentice College, Chepstow:** Colin Bridgeman is trying to locate former apprentices who served with him (Sept 1966 for three years). Contact Colin by email at [colinbridgeman@aol.com](mailto:colinbridgeman@aol.com)

News of **Eric Alberto Collymore**, who served during the 1950s in Cyprus, Gibraltar and Aden is sought by his brother. Last known address was Ireland in the 70s and Southampton in the 80s. He has four children in the UK and two in Canada. Contact Bentley Beckles by email at [bbeckles@advantagetsl.com](mailto:bbeckles@advantagetsl.com)

Where are you **RAMC theatre technicians** (OTT/ODA/ODP)? Join OTT reunited database for newsletter and reunion updates – currently 135 members. For further details contact Ken Hannah by email at [ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk) or on 01733 453462.

Prof Gabrielle Robinson is writing a book about the end of the Second World War based on the diaries of her grandfather, Dr Herbert Frese, an eye surgeon in Berlin. In 1945 Dr Frese had to flee to Lower Saxony where a member of the British occupation force befriended him. Prof Robinson is trying to trace that soldier – Dave, who served in Suderburg 53, District Uelzen, Lower Saxony, or his family. Contact [grobino@iusb.edu](mailto:grobino@iusb.edu)

WO2 Dave J Williams wishes to have a 22-year reunion in April 2008 and is seeking personnel from **Caen Troop, Junior Leaders Regiment, RAC**, Bovington (Jan-Dec 1986). Especially Tp Ldr Lt C M S More, 16/5th Lancers; Tp Sgt, Sgt P C Worthing, 17/21st Lancers; and Tp Cpl, Cpl H L Barnes, QDG; and anyone who is still serving or was part of that intake. Email [dave.williams@seae.mod.uk](mailto:dave.williams@seae.mod.uk) or call 01189 763610.

Where are you **G Tomkinson** of The South Staffordshire Regiment and a member of the airborne force which took part in the battle for Arnhem in 1944? Tanno Pieterse of the Netherlands is trying to locate you. He was 17, living in Arnhem and was a voluntary messenger boy with the Red Cross. Mr Pieterse has spent many years trying to find the soldier (now thought to be living in the West Midlands area). Contact T J Pieterse MBE, Pegasus, Bosbeekweg 13, 6721 Mh Bennekom, The Netherlands.

## Competitions

**Hour of Victory (Xbox 360 game) winners** – M Hall, Tonbridge; D Montgomery, Ballyclare; K Robinson, Balby, Leicester; WO2 B Law, Gillingham, Kent; Ms E Fail, Consett, Co Durham.

**Westlife: The Love Album DVD winners** – Pte S Morrison, Catterick; Miss J Ramsay, Isle of Wight; C Long, Grimsby; H Gough, BFPO 39. **CD winners** – S Barton, Colchester; J Milne, Camberley; M O'Shea, Wembley, Middlesex.



Picture: Mike Weston

## Enduring emblem

**T**HE red paper poppy is quite possibly the world's most iconic charity emblem. Eye-catching, instantly recognisable and deeply emotive, it remains the universal and enduring symbol of remembrance, **writes Andrea Webb**.

This humble little flower's status was changed forever during the First World War by John McCrae, a doctor serving with the Canadian Armed Forces, who, after noticing that the only thing that grew in the devastating aftermath of battle was the blood-red wild poppy, felt inspired to write the war poem *In Flanders' Fields*.

At the end of the war an American secretary, Moina Belle Michael, moved by McCrae's poem, had the idea of selling poppies to raise funds for ex-Service personnel and their families. The tradition of the remembrance poppy began.

The first official Royal British Legion Poppy Day took place in Britain on November 11, 1921. Since then the Poppy Appeal has continued as an annual event, and the sale of poppies has gone from strength to strength.

But many people remain unaware that the paper poppies they pin on their lapels

or the wreaths they lay in memory of the fallen represent the year-round efforts of a dedicated team of employees at the Royal British Legion's Poppy Factory.

The origins of the factory date back to 1922 when Maj George Howson founded the Disabled Society to help ex-Servicemen injured during the First World War. With a grant of just £2,000 from the Unity Relief Fund, he set up a small factory off the Old Kent Road with five ex-Servicemen. It was there that the first British poppies were made.

Within a few months the number of employees had risen to 50. As demand grew, the premises became too small and the factory moved to an old brewery on the Petersham Road in Richmond, near to the site of the present factory, which was built in 1933. Today, the workforce is made up of predominantly disabled people, who are either ex-Service personnel or dependants. More than 40 are currently employed there, backed up by a further 90 home workers.

Although production methods have changed over the years, all products are still assembled by hand.

This year the factory will have made more than 34 million poppies, 105,000 wreaths, 750,000 remembrance crosses, and the five million petals which will fall from the ceiling of the Royal Albert Hall during the annual Festival of Remembrance.

"The nature of our workforce and the work we do are some of the things that make the Poppy Appeal so special," said Bill Kay, manager of the factory. "The poppy you dip into your pocket for is made by people who are beneficiaries of the charity that you are contributing towards and the manufacturer of the emblem is a satisfying part of the objectives of the charity."

For further information on employment opportunities at the Poppy Factory or guided tours for individuals or groups of up to 53 people, telephone 0208 940 3305 or email [admin@poppyfactory.org](mailto:admin@poppyfactory.org) ■

### Roadshows

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow.

The event starts with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and culminates with a finger buffet. Military personnel will be on hand to answer your questions.

Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to [apt.mod@btinternet.com](mailto:apt.mod@btinternet.com) with the event you are interested in attending.

**Nov** – 6, Wembley; 7, Newham; 8, Bromley; 21, Sheffield; 22, Halifax. **Dec** – No presentations. **Jan** – 14, Yeovil; 15, Exeter; 17, Isles of Scilly; 29, Penrith; 30, Blackburn; 31, Preston.

## British Army Badges

By Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges

### Cap badge

THE Queen's Royal Lancers Death's Head had been the badge of the 17th Lancers from its formation in 1759. Known in the regiment as the Motto and by soldiers who originally served in the 16th/5th Queen's Royal Lancers as the Chad, it was adopted as a cap badge in 1897, retained by the 17th/21st Lancers on amalgamation in 1922 and by The Queen's Royal Lancers in 1993. It is worn on a red backing on the beret.



### Formation sign

2 Medical Brigade commands medical units in the UK and became operational in 2002. The arms of the red cross on the badge represent the four corps in the brigade; RAMC, QARANC, RADC and RAVC. The central logo depicts the international symbol for medicine, the Rod of Aesculapius and the serpent.



### Specialist badge

THE Army Air Corps Colonel-in-Chief's trophy has been awarded annually since 1995 to the aircraft commander who achieves the best results in the aviation standards test. The recipient is presented with an engraved silver box by Prince Charles and a Prince of Wales badge which may be worn in perpetuity on the upper left arm of the flying overall and cold weather jacket.

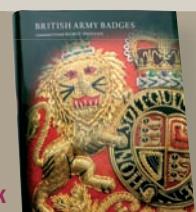


### Tactical recognition flash

INTRODUCED in late 2004 to replace several regimental arm badges, the design of the Royal Logistic Corps TRF represents a mounted corps and is similar to a pattern originally worn by the Royal Army Service Corps, although the blue half of the TRF fades to purple with washing.



THESE excerpts appear in **British Army Badges** by Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges, available from Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, tel 01380 723371. Email [robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk)



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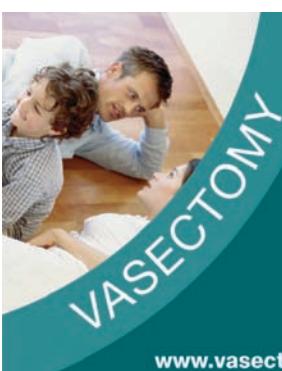
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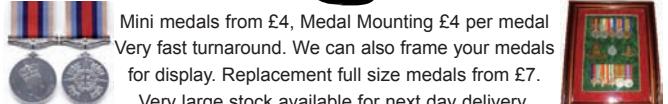
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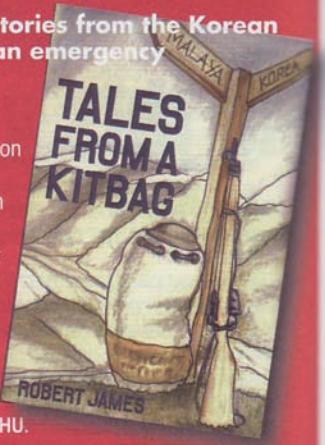
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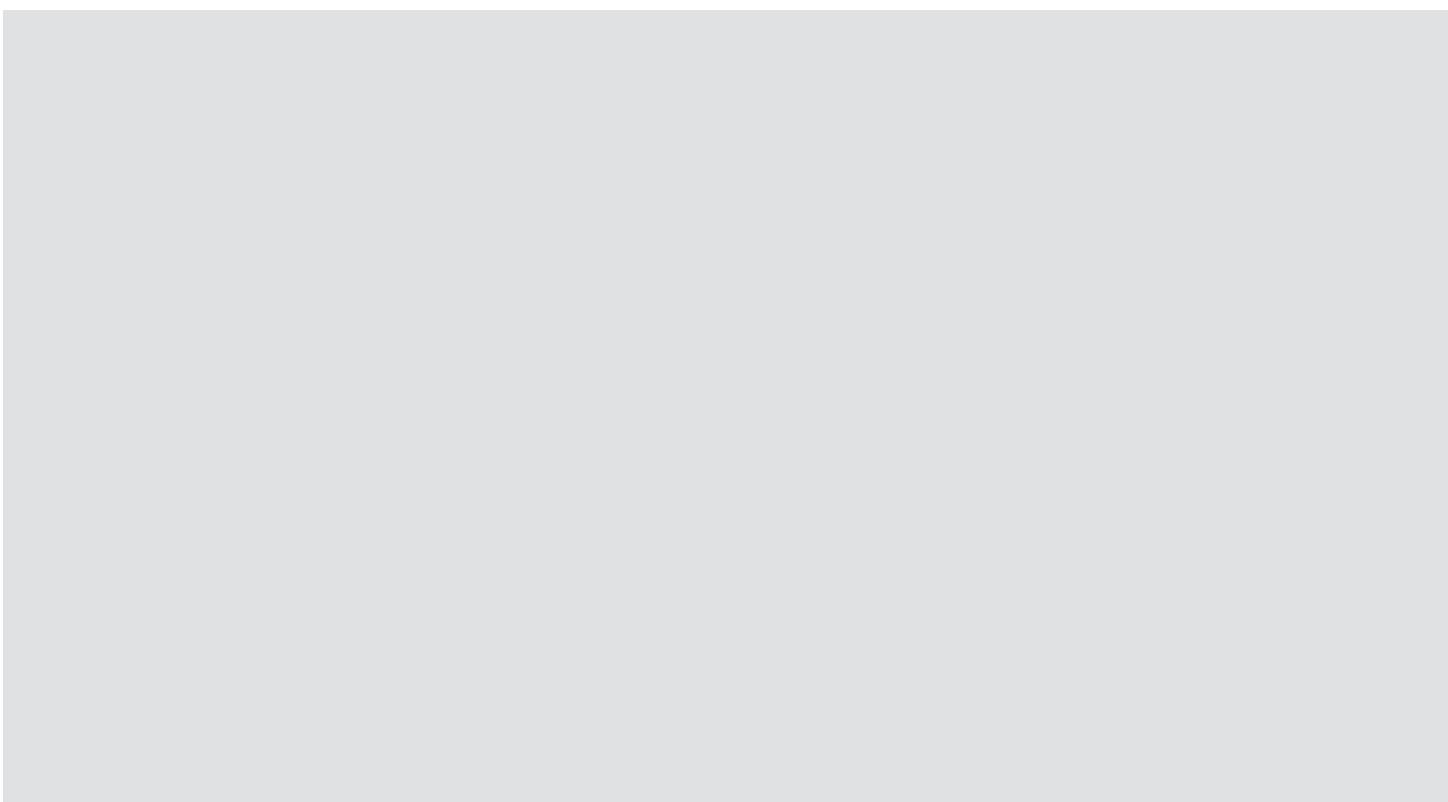
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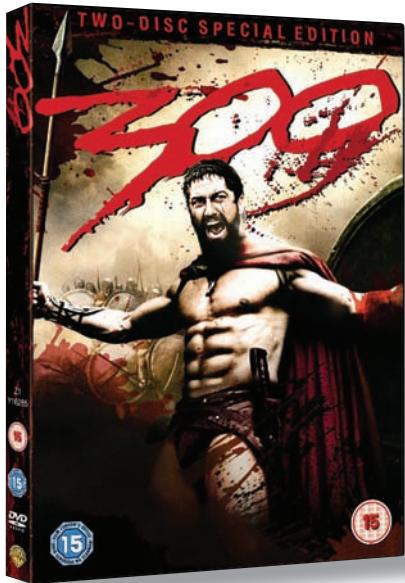
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**Fight club:** Tom Wisdom, right, experienced an insight into the life of a soldier during the filming of this summer's box office smash *300*



# Spartan existence

**Brit star Tom Wisdom recalls the hardships of boot camp on the set of *300***

WITH a reputed body count of 585, the blood-soaked epic *300* slaughtered its box office foes in spectacular fashion when it hit cinemas this summer.

And while the blood spilt in this ferocious retelling of the ancient battle of Thermopylae was theatrical, British actor Tom Wisdom is adamant that the sweat and tears seen on screen were very real.

Wisdom, who has gone from appearing in *Coronation Street* to playing Spartan sword-swinging Astinos in *300*, which is now available as a double disc DVD, told *Soldier* how the entire cast were subjected to boot camp style training during filming in Canada.

“It was hard work,” confided the Wiltshire-born star, reflecting on his role as one of the 300 Spartan soldiers who, led by King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) and facing insurmountable odds, fought to the death against Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro) and his massive Persian army.

“We had to be organised like an army. We went to boot camp where we were trained by the military.

“We had to get up early in the morning and do drill, work like a team and do a lot of exercises.”

Away from the relative comfort of their trailers, the actors received little in the way of star treatment and there was no “pulling of rank” – with one exception.

According to Wisdom, the film’s leading man, *Phantom of the Opera* star Gerard Butler, assumed the rank of general both on and off camera.

“He did, but he had to,” he explained. “You have to remember he had to be like that. He is the guy we all look up to in the film so it made life easier for us because Gerard was like that anyway. He was our general.”

In addition to a punishing fitness regime, the actors’ diets were carefully controlled to ensure the Spartan warriors went into battle in peak physical condition and were

aesthetically pleasing on the eye of female cinema-goers.

“We had a trainer and we were monitored every day,” said the 34-year-old, who is now filming *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants 2* with *Ugly Betty*’s America Ferrera.

“We were told what to eat and drink. It was a very strict regime but it does get you into that army mentality – having all that sort of stuff thought out for you.

“We were trained as soldiers and I have never felt fitter. Although there were times when we did feel pretty stupid going to work half-naked.”

The spartan existence imposed on *300*’s battalion of thespians by director Zack Snyder (*Dawn of the Dead*) only relented on the last of the 60 days of filming, by which time Wisdom admits he was ready to escape barrack life.

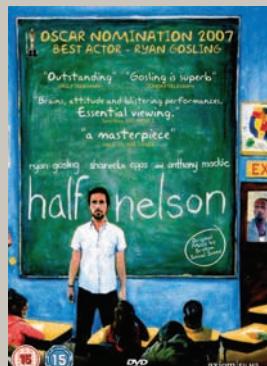
“All the cast and crew had a massive party the day we finished. And yeah, we had a steak and drink,” he said.

“I hadn’t drunk alcohol during the shoot. We were allowed to drink alcohol,



### The Nines, in cinemas November 30

ONE can only assume that screenwriter **John August** (*Go*) was midway through a prescription of Larium when he began filming this surreal directorial debut. Consisting of three short films, each featuring the same actors – **Ryan Reynolds** (*Smokin' Aces*), **Hope Davies** and **Melissa McCarthy** – in different, yet overlapping, roles, *The Nines* blurs the traditional parameters of movie-making. Alternately funny and unsettling, *Nines*, like the hallucinations induced by the Army's anti-malaria drug of choice, is strangely enjoyable.



### Half Nelson, DVD

IF you're on a date with someone searching for the meaning of life in our have-it-all but easily disillusioned society, then this flick will impress. **Ryan Gosling** plays a gifted teacher working in a New York high school. However, he's addicted to crack and gets caught getting high in the girls' loos by one of his students. The acting is faultless but the promising plot line of having a drug habit never gets started in the slow, home video style of filming. Convince your date to have a couple of hours off from life's realities down the pub instead.

but only vodka and tonic, which is apparently the alcoholic drink with the least calories. So it was nice to get drunk with the cast at the end.

"I definitely have not kept it up [the fitness regime]. I still work out, but not to that extreme. Which is a shame, because like I said, we were in the fittest conditions of our lives."

Based on Frank Miller's (*Sin City*) graphic novel and shot mostly on blue screen to duplicate the imagery of the comic book, *300* has been a massive hit, taking more than \$70 million at the box office during its opening weekend despite the claims of some critics that the film is all style and no substance. It is success that *Wisdom* insists was difficult to predict during filming.

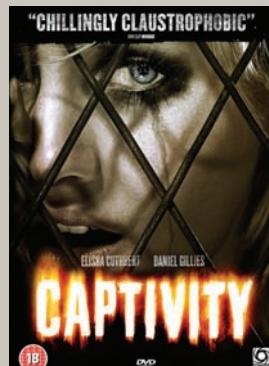
"Working on the film we thought there might be a chance it would be a hit," he said. "But when you are stuck in Canada, and you are half-naked all day wearing a cape and helmet and filming just in front of a blue screen, then you do have your doubts. Yes, it has style but there is more to it than that. It's the sort of film that has never been done before, and critics have a problem with anything new. *300* has proved to be pretty popular so it can't have been too bad."

**300 Special Edition**, featuring more than 90 minutes of extras, is out now.



### The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, in cinemas November 30

AN action-packed gun slinger this is not. More a psychological drama than a Western, **Andrew Dominik**'s take on America's most famous outlaw is a character-driven affair that explores the troubled and deeply complex relationship between James (**Brad Pitt**) and his gang mate-turned-killer, Ford (**Casey Affleck**). Pitt plays the brooding and mentally unhinged gunman with aplomb, but like its title, the film is self-explanatory and a little on the lengthy side.



### Captivity, DVD

THE recent splatter of torture films has split cinema-goers into distinct love them or hate them camps, and this grisly addition to the genre falls firmly in the latter. Starring **Elisha Cuthbert** (24) as a model who is kidnapped, locked in a basement and subjected to some particularly cruel and unusual punishment, *Captivity* lacks the compelling plot that made *Saw* and *Hostel* stand out. The film hinges on a less-than-subtle twist and once that's out of the way, it relies too heavily on blood and guts rather than trying to explain the torturer's motivations.



### Armistice Diary, download ([www.quantamfilms.com](http://www.quantamfilms.com))

ORIGINALLY screened on Channel 4, this series of four three-minute films chronicling the experiences of Erskine Williams – a bandsman and stretcher-bearer who kept a diary of his time on the Western Front during the Great War – is now available as a DVD-quality download. The musician, whose story was brought to the screen by his filmmaker grandson **Nicholas Jones**, was also an artist and sketched many of the men whose lives he recorded in his diary. Well worth 12 minutes of your time this Armistice Week.



### Exiled, DVD

THE music and scenery of **Johnnie To**'s tale of honour among hit men plays like an old-fashioned Western without horses and tumbleweed, writes **Dave Murphy**. Four assassins agree to keep their target alive until they have provided a future for his wife and child. There are no **John Woo**-style doves of peace in *Exiled*, probably because they would get the crap shot out of them. Apart from the opening three-way stand-off, chaos rules in the shoot-outs – no fancy gunplay, just loads of guns and spent bullets. Definitely one for lovers of Hong Kong movies.



**International campaign:** The new *Call of Duty* title puts players on diverse battlefields ranging from the heat of the Middle East to the former Soviet Union



# Global battlefield

**Latest instalment of Activision shooter immerses player in present-day war**

**Report: Stephen Tyler**

ONE of gaming's most popular Second World War franchises will be launched into the 21st century when the eagerly-anticipated fourth instalment is released this month.

*Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* will lead gamers into fictional modern-day battlefields from Russia to the Middle East, a firm departure from the 1940s environments on which the series built its reputation.

Speaking during the unveiling of the Xbox 360, PS3 and PC game in London, Grant Collier, boss of developer Infinity Ward, told *Soldier*: "We had a bunch of ideas that we wanted to use to propel the story forward, but we couldn't do it in the Second World War setting.

"We also wanted to create characters that people could sink their teeth into and I think we have managed that."

The plot of *Call of Duty 4*, which is published by Activision, revolves

around a less-than-savoury Russian arms supremo who is intent on transforming his country back into a Soviet-style global superpower.

Knowing that the USA would easily stamp down on his nefarious plan, the Russian gets an accomplice to stage a coup in the Middle East to distract American troops from his actions.

The coup is part of a rich, well written plot that sets the stage for gamers to join US and British troops on operations ranging from the defence of a village in the Middle East to the storming of a Russian naval base.

"We spent a lot of time trying to weave a very compelling storyline and we got TV show writers in from Hollywood to lift this story up. We wanted it to play out almost like a series of 24 so the player is always guessing what will happen next," explained Grant.

"One moment he will be with ground troops and the next he will be in an attack helicopter or

providing infantry cover for a tank.

"All of the storylines keep coming out so that the player is taken on a really interesting ride."

*Call of Duty 4* takes full advantage of the latest generation of consoles to provide some impressive graphics.

Smoke billows realistically from bombed targets, grass sways naturally in the wind and every character casts a perfect shadow on the immersive backgrounds.

Infinity Ward has also spent considerable time improving translucent lighting effects. Running water now bubbles and reflects as you would expect it to and the night vision mode is particularly atmospheric.

British soldiers will recognise real-life weapons on offer throughout the game, whether they are spraying targets with fire from an assault rifle or waiting for a killing shot through a sniper scope.

The arsenal also contains weapons such as the battle-winning Javelin missile, which players can deploy



to eliminate terrorist vehicles.

The game's physics engine has been overhauled to make the *Call of Duty* experience more realistic. Players are now able to hit targets through walls and other solid objects depending on the calibre of their weapon.

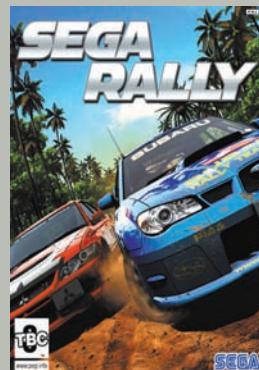
"Modern conflicts don't really use the type of weapons that would give you a stand-up fight. Usually one nation goes in and levels the playing field," said Grant.

"With *Call of Duty 4*, we have created two equal forces that are set against each other in a fictional conflict, leading up to the ending in Russia."

Although the game itself was in development for well over a year, a playable version was completed within three months and the designers put their efforts into making the title accessible to gamers of all abilities.

Multi-player options are also impressive. Up to 32 gamers can battle it out on PC, with 16-man death matches available on the console versions. Unlockable extra content, including clothing, weapons and new levels, is also available online.

*Call of Duty 4* certainly has the potential to fire its way to the top of the charts when it is released on November 9. ■



### Sega Rally, PSP

*SOLDIER* has already reviewed and highly rated the Xbox 360 version of this remixed hit of times past, so there was considerable interest in the PSP incarnation. Thankfully it did not disappoint in the slightest and is easily among the best driving games on the handheld console. Players face an ever challenging race over a variety of landscapes. There are plenty of officially licensed cars from which to choose, controls are mercifully easy to use and the game's simplicity is by far its strength. *Sega Rally* delivers in every respect and is well worth the cash.



### Halo 3, Xbox 360

FANS of the *Halo* series will be pleased to know the game's third instalment is the biggest and best yet. The addition of new weapons, including the gravity hammer, and the chance to pilot some outlandish vehicles makes despatching the waves of Covenant enemies an exciting and attractive proposition. Master Chief battles his way through stunning environments ranging from snow-covered mountains to alien ships in the well-crafted one-player campaign, but *Halo 3* comes into its own in multiplayer mode. A resounding hit and certainly a game of the year contender.



### Football Manager Handheld 2008, PSP

FITTING the immense world of *Football Manager* onto the PSP is no mean feat, but Sega has done it with style. Most of the important features from the PC version are present and correct as players try to guide a club to league and cup glory. The smaller database means the game zips along at a pleasing pace and makes it much more accessible than its PC counterpart. The latest transfers are all included and the game is easy to pick up and play. All in all this is a must-buy title for PSP-owning football fans.



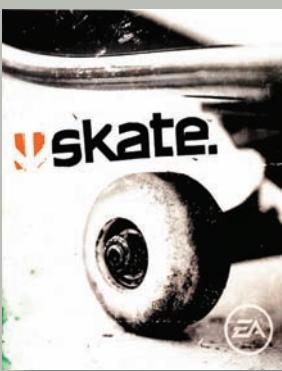
### Assassin's Creed, Xbox 360

A TRUE next generation title, Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed* is undoubtedly one of the finest games *Soldier* has seen this year. It is set in the Middle East during the Crusades and players get to step into the shoes of a hired sword who has made it his mission to stop the war by eliminating those responsible for starting it. Gamers have the opportunity to roam freely and prosecute missions in any way they see fit in glorious three-dimensional environments. *Assassin's Creed* is an outstanding achievement and a winner on every front.



### Fifa 08, Xbox 360

CONSOLE football fans tend to fall into two camps. They either swear by EA's *Fifa* or come down on the side of Konami's *Pro Evolution* series. Judging by the latest game from the EA stable, however, the software giant could yet win a few converts from the opposition. A near immaculate blend of action and management, *Fifa 08* brings the world's élite teams to the virtual arena and adds a raft of new features, including an opportunity to take a single player through his career. This should be in every console footie fan's collection.



### Skate, PS3

SKATEBOARD action has become a regular feature of the video game world, with the legendary Tony Hawk leading the scene. *Skate* brings this underground world to the PS3 and gives players the opportunity to take to the streets and master their craft. With a sprawling urban landscape to explore and plenty of opportunities to get to grips with the tricks-of-the-trade, *Skate* delivers the goods for fans of the scene. Graphics are pretty faultless and overall gameplay is unfailingly slick, although the long loading sequence is a bit frustrating in an otherwise sound offering.



**Pot of gold:** Hayley Westenra's third international album, *Treasure*, explores the folk music of her Irish roots and features the hymn *Abide With Me*

**Remembrance:** The New Zealand soprano finally gets to see the name of her distant relative carved on the Tyne Cot cemetery memorial



# Hayley's hymn

## Young star serenades her fallen forever silenced in Flanders fields

**Interview: Karen Thomas**

THE vibrant voice of Hayley Westenra floated across the Tyne Cot cemetery headstones and briefly haunted the soldiers sleeping an eternal slumber in the mass grave of Passchendaele.

As the celebrated soprano sang *Abide With Me*, sighs from the hundreds of thousands of men swallowed by the bloody campaign waged in a cramped corner of the Western Front were almost audible. Marking the 90th anniversary of the Third battle of Ypres, the New Zealand star sang in tribute to her fellow countrymen who fought valiantly alongside their British comrades.

But 20-year-old Hayley also counted a personal cost of the human sacrifice paid by the soldiers in 1917 as they doggedly advanced through the Flanders' mud to the German lines. Her distant relative, infantryman Pte Frederick Alan Westenra of the Canterbury Regiment,

died in the carnage. Like so many, his body was never recovered and Pte Westenra's name is carved on the Memorial to the Missing at the rear of Tyne Cot.

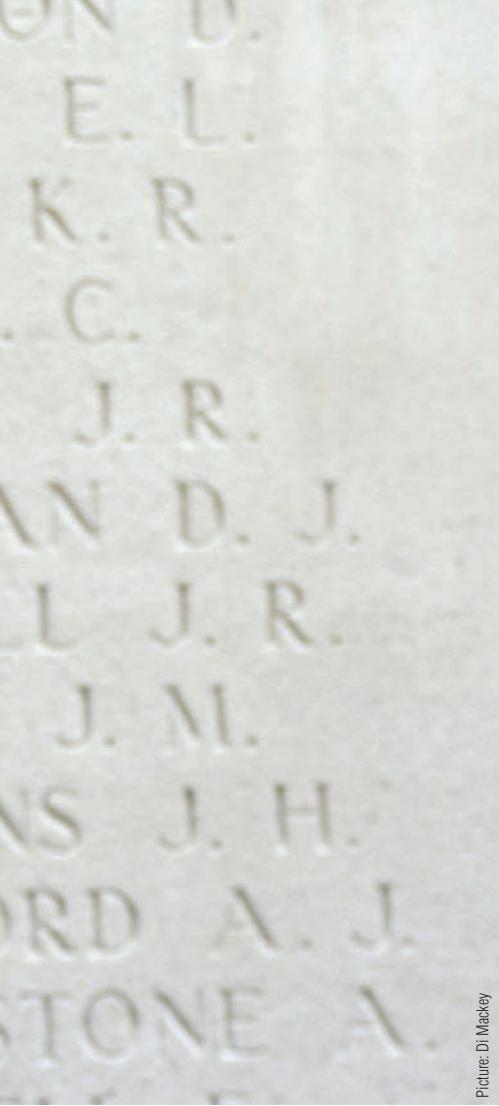
"It was really only by chance we discovered we had a relative who had lost his life here," Hayley told *Soldier*, explaining how a random check by Belgian archivists started the investigation into whether the two Westenras were related. "It's really special because there are not many of us Westenras and none of our relatives knew about him. I doubt anyone's come to visit him, so it's really nice to be able to pay our respects to a family member."

The perfect pitch of the Christchurch-born prodigy was discovered when she was six years old and cast as the singing lead in a Christmas play. Her rare talent brought rapid fame and nine years later Hayley's CD *Pure* debuted in the UK as the fastest selling classical album.

Almost a million copies flew off the shelves, launching her career.

Hayley has sung for the Queen, Tony Blair and George Bush, and for audiences in the Sydney Opera House and Royal Albert Hall. But her soulful renditions of *Amazing Grace* and Handel's *Let Me Weep My Cruel Fate* this time soothed the dead Empire soldiers on a damp, grey day in this now quiet corner of Belgium. The free concert reflected Hayley's desire to remember beyond her classroom history lessons and annual Poppy Day the soldiers who died for her freedom.

"It is quite draining being here, just taking onboard the loss – it's really hard to comprehend the scale of it all. As you think about each life that was lost, you also think they could have had a wife, a loved one, a girlfriend back home and about the pain they went through too. It's good to have this opportunity for me personally to put everything into



Picture: Di Mackey

perspective," added the songstress.

By the time the last shells fell on Ypres in October 1918, the Salient had claimed 185,000 Commonwealth lives. At that time Hayley's homeland had a population of just one million, of which one tenth was lost to the First World War. But that was when the Empire was indomitable and the bonds between the motherland and her colonies were particularly close.

"We still feel we're part of the Commonwealth and we feel a strong connection to the British so I think it's good to appreciate what the Army goes through," stressed Hayley when asked whether commemorating the fading memories of the Great War held any relevance to the 21st century conflicts Britain is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We went to the New Zealand memorial at Gravenstafel and looked out on the fields the soldiers had to cross and although you can't know exactly what they went through, you can at least try and put yourself in their shoes.

"I think it's really important for as many people as possible – especially young people who won't be in an army – to at least appreciate what their fellow human beings went through many years ago and still go through now." ■



### Better Days (The Decadence)

ON just his second day in Helmand, paratrooper LCpl "Gaz" Hart was ambushed and saw his platoon sergeant shot through the neck. It spurred him to scrounge a guitar and write a song about life as a soldier in Sangin. *Better Days* is a moving rock and roll ballad recorded by Hart's band, **The Decadence**. The chorus – *Lost our friends along the way, you and me, we've seen much better days* – will touch battle-hardened troops. Download the track from [www.myspace.com/thedecadenceuk](http://www.myspace.com/thedecadenceuk) but the band asks that a donation is made to charity in remembrance of soldiers on the front line.

**Karen Thomas**



### Drastic Fantastic (KT Tunstall)

FOLLOWING the colossal success of her 2005 debut, *Eye To The Telescope*, the talented **KT Tunstall** returns with her second studio album. But does it live up to expectations? Well, in a nutshell, no. The raw edge that exploded from her debut is nowhere to be seen and the same can be said for the variety of songs that made *Eye To The Telescope* so special. *Hold On* and *Saving My Face* are notable exceptions but on the whole, *Drastic Fantastic* sounds over-produced and fails to showcase **KT Tunstall's** obvious talent.

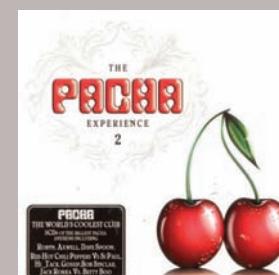
**Cpl Tom Robinson,  
151 Tpt Regt, RLC**



### Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace (Foo Fighters)

I WAS always a fan of *Learn To Fly* but this album is completely filled with brilliant tracks that show the spectrum of songs I would expect from such an acclaimed group. If you have never listened to the **Foo Fighters**, you could do worse than use this album as a wonderful introduction to an already great band. Every track will stay with you long beyond the end of the CD, and you will find the lyrics beautifully crafted along with delicious guitar riffs. My personal favourite is chart buster *The Pretender*.

**Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish**



### The Pacha Experience 2 (Various)

THE follow-up album to a successful first collection of Ibiza anthems played at the world-renowned club is everything that would be expected from this type of production. Remixes of well-known dance records and pop songs are liberally scattered throughout this triple CD – enough to keep a party going for quite some time. There is more of a summer feel to the tracks but that won't go amiss in the dark winter months. Fans of the previous album and other dance music series such as **Gatecrasher** will really enjoy this.

**Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt,  
5 Regt, RA**



### The State Of Things (Reverend And The Makers)

FRONTED by Jon "The Reverend" McClure, this band has shot to stardom from the Sheffield scene, gaining exposure touring with the **Arctic Monkeys**. They share the same humour as the Monkeys and some of the lyrics are very funny, especially on the brilliant *He Said He Loved Me*. Lyrically this is a "feel good" album but the music is serious rock and roll, combining powerful and polished instrumentation with a rough indie edge. This is a mightily impressive debut, establishing the band as one of the biggest players on the indie scene.

**Pte Patrick Jordan, RAMC**



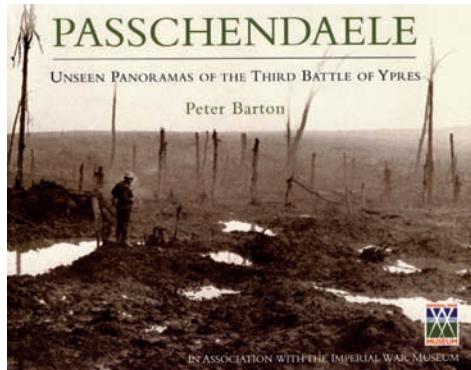
### Shutter's Nation (Babyshambles)

WHAT do you do after hooking up with supermodel Kate Moss and being repeatedly arrested for drug offences? In the case of **Pete Doherty** you go back to what you do best, making music. *Shutter's Nation* reflects on an array of experiences and displays the **Babyshambles'** true potential. This is not another **Libertines** cast-off. It's spontaneous and in a league of its own. This will undoubtedly sway the opinion of more reserved critics who might possibly admit that *Shutter's Nation* deserves to be recognised as an excellent album.

**Cpl Ray Kalaker,  
RETDU (B)**

# Books

NOVEMBER REVIEW



Muddy hell: How the battle landscape looked in November 1917. Canadian pioneers take advantage of early morning mist to carry out essential maintenance work. One of the dramatic photographs from *Passchendaele*. This month marks the end, 90 years ago, of the terrible Third Battle of Ypres



# Ypres in focus

Anniversary marked by benchmark guide to Battle of Passchendaele

**Passchendaele: Unseen Panoramas of the Third Battle of Ypres** by Peter Barton (Constable, in association with the Imperial War Museum, 468pp, £30).

**Reviews: Maj Mike Peters AAC**

THE Third Battle of Ypres, widely known as the battle of Passchendaele and which ended 90 years ago this month, remains one of the most controversial events in British military history.

The vast scale of casualties on both sides and the horrendous conditions endured by the combatants are difficult for the modern mind to grasp.

Britain's summer offensive of 1917 began with great optimism and purpose on

July 31, 1917. The resulting titanic struggle to break free of the Ypres salient and the all-consuming mud of Belgian Flanders ended in late November in what many describe as a hollow victory.

During the course of what developed into a series of costly battles, the by now battle-hardened British Army would demonstrate its new-found ability to coordinate artillery, air power, tanks and chemical weapons on a large scale.

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) forged around Ypres during the tempestuous summer and autumn of 1917 the concept of the all-arms battle we employ today.

Its initial attack, for example, was supported by 300 tanks, aircraft, massed artillery and a huge logistic effort. The fact that British gunners fired an average of 3.2 million shells a week onto German positions gives some indication of the scale of effort produced.

Peter Barton has worked for eight years in the

panoramic archives of the Imperial War Museum uncovering large quantities of previously unseen photographs to broaden our knowledge of the Great War.

His previous works, *Battlefields of the First World War* and *The Somme*, are widely regarded as milestones in the gaining of a balanced understanding of the First World War. This third volume has been released to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Passchendaele and it is, I believe, even better than its predecessors.

The new panoramas are the centrepiece to this work; they allow you to view the ground as it was. Each is supported with a recent picture taken from the same viewing point and contemporary accounts from those who fought over the terrain illustrated.

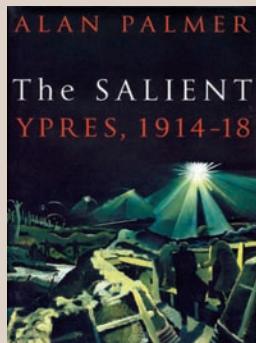
The inclusion of German photographs (also newly published) gives us the opportunity to see the ground from the defenders' trench and so gain a fuller understanding of the problems faced by the attacking British, Empire and Commonwealth troops during the battle.

German photographers produced their

## Soldier ordering service

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## OTHER BOOKS ON PASSCHENDAELE



### The Salient

by Alan Palmer

IF you are searching for a single book that outlines the complete story of the bloody and protracted struggle for possession of what became known to the British Empire as The Immortal Salient, then take a look at this one. The author weaves together the dramatic events of all four Ypres battles, producing a narrative that takes the reader to Hill 60, Gheluvelt, Hellfire Corner and, of course, Passchendaele.

**Constable, 270pp, £20**

work with the bonus of Carl Zeiss zoom lenses and vantage points that were generally further to the rear and on higher ground than those of their British counterparts.

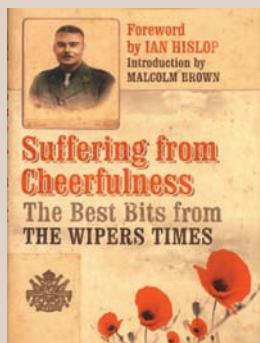
German panoramas were primarily for use as aids to artillery indication while the British employed theirs for reconnaissance and orientation of ground to their front.

The images are supported by excellent colour maps, diagrams and aerial photographs taken from aircraft and observation balloons and illustrate the tactical situation and conditions in very clear terms.

The inclusion of so many first-hand accounts, letters and personal photographs create a benchmark publication that will be difficult to match. Although the quantity and quality of the information contained in this book is initially overwhelming, especially if you are new to this period of history, once you delve into the chapters it all falls easily into place and you will be hooked by Peter Barton's engaging narrative style.

His relaxed tempo, coupled with a natural authority, makes reading this large volume far less intimidating than you would suppose. Slightly more expensive than most books on the subject but money well spent. ■

For more reviews, go to  
[www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)



### Suffering from Cheerfulness

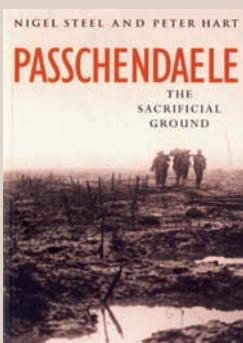
The Best Bits from  
**THE WIPERS TIMES**



### Suffering from Cheerfulness: The Best Bits from The Wipers Times

IN his foreword, Ian Hislop describes the *Wipers Times* as the forerunner of *Private Eye*. I agree; this book is packed with the banter and the humour of the Great War. Like many of the unofficial military magazines and newspapers we are familiar with today, the *Wipers Times* is a barometer that indicates the mind set of the soldier of 90 years ago. Full of laughs and satire, I thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

**Little Books, 192pp, £9.99**

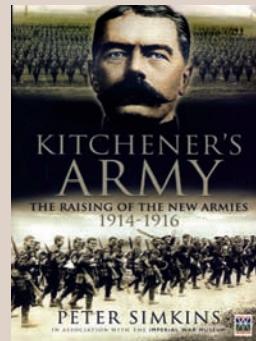


### Passchendaele: The Sacrificial Ground

by Nigel Steel and Peter Hart

THE authors are both respected Great War historians who have enjoyed unrestricted access to the archives of the Imperial War Museum. They have cooperated to produce a comprehensive account of the series of battles in 1917 that we commonly refer to as Passchendaele. They have succeeded in capturing the unsurpassed horrors of life for the British soldier during the Third Battle of Ypres.

**Cassell, 368pp, £8.99**

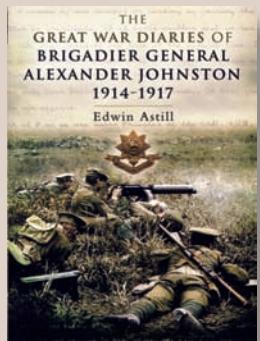


### Kitchener's Army

by Peter Simkins

THE British Army of the Great War numbered more than five million men and Kitchener volunteers made up over half that number. This highly detailed reference work is destined to be regarded as the definitive account of the formation of the largest British Army in history. Kitchener's men received an infamous baptism of fire during the Somme campaign, then formed the core of the armies that battered their way into the ruins of Passchendaele.

**Pen & Sword,  
368pp, £19.99**

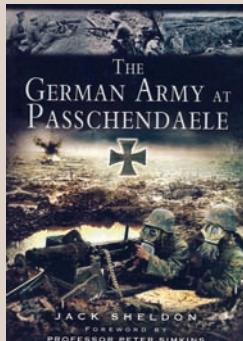


### The Great War Diaries of Brigadier General Alexander Johnston 1914-1917

by Edwin Astill

BRIG Gen Johnston was an exceptional soldier who fought in most of the British Western Front campaigns. Originally a Worcester, he served as signals officer in 7 Brigade and 3rd Division, commanded a battalion of The Cheshire Regiment and ultimately his own brigade. No "chateau" general, during the Passchendaele battle Johnston was wounded by sniper fire while visiting a forward outpost. An intriguing book.

**Pen & Sword,  
244pp, £19.99**



### The German Army at Passchendaele

by Jack Sheldon

IT is impossible to really understand any battle or campaign if you view it from only one of the combatant army's point of view. This book complements the British-orientated histories of Passchendaele and takes the reader across no man's land and onto the German fire step. The British onslaught of 1917 was of unprecedented scale and ferocity; the German soldier endured it under increasingly difficult conditions but fought on. Read this excellent book and understand how and why.

**Pen & Sword, 336pp, £25**

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# SOLDIER SPORT

**HOT TO TROT**  
Commonwealth  
dreams for  
athletics star

Best foot forward: Sgt Sophie Morris (R Signals) is hoping to become a Great Britain regular after making her international track debut on live television at Crystal Palace

Picture: Graeme Main



On the run: Inter-Services athlete Sgt Sophie Morris (R Signals) struggled to keep pace with a top-class field during the televised Norwich Union Grand Prix

# Morris on track

## International call-up is just reward for hard-working Royal Signals runner

**Report: Stephen Tyler**  
**Picture: Graeme Main**

**A**THLETICS star Sgt Sophie Morris has set her sights on future international success after making her Great Britain track debut.

Competing in front of a capacity crowd and on live television during a Norwich Union Grand Prix at Crystal Palace, Morris (R Signals) struggled to cope with the pressure and slipped down the field, eventually coming home 16th out of the 17 finishers.

The pragmatic signaller told *SoldierSport* she was pleased to have earned a place on the starting line but

admits her performance fell way below the high standards she has set herself.

"I was a bit disappointed that I let the occasion overwhelm me as much as it did," she said. "I respected the other athletes too much and that meant I didn't run anywhere near the times I know that I'm capable of."

Despite not being recognised at Olympic level, the 3,000m attracts some of the world's best runners from other middle distance disciplines.

Morris went into the race hoping to beat her personal best of 9:10.44, recorded this year, but the pace set by British Olympian Jo Pavey and eventual winner Lauren Fleshman, of the USA,

proved too hot and the Army athlete finished in 9:11.60.

Getting the call-up to represent her country was a fitting reward for the hard-working Inter-Services 800m and 1,500m champion.

Morris's dominance of Service's middle distance running led to her changing her coach last summer at a time when she was already combining her full-time Army job training signallers with being a mother to twins.

The switch meant the 3,000m and 5,000m specialist adopted a more professional approach and by Christmas 2006 her coach had given her an ultimatum – make a push to become an



## SPORTSHORTS

### FROST'S FALKLANDS FEAT

A FALKLAND Islands-based officer braved South America's elements to complete a modified modern pentathlon to raise funds for Diabetes UK.

Starting in the bitterly cold waters of the San Carlos River, Maj Ed Frost-Kell (Light Dragoons) completed swimming, running, horse riding and shooting events on East Falkland island.

And rather than letting the lack of fencing facilities get in the way of his challenge, Frost-Kell swapped the discipline for a 23-mile cycle ride.

"This was not your average modern pentathlon," he said. "There was no swimming pool, flat ground or Tarmac racetrack, no trained show-jumping horses and no other competitors. It was a battle against the elements and against my body."

After completing the swimming stage, the intrepid officer set off on a 16-mile run across the Sussex Mountains, battling through a strong headwind for much of the route.

A bike ride to Mount Pleasant Camp followed before Frost-Kell completed the challenge with a combat shoot and a final 1.5km run.

The epic 50-mile challenge took Frost-Kell ten hours to complete and raised £1,100 for Diabetes UK.

Frost-Kell chose the charity as his sister suffers from the disease.

### LOTTERY RELAUNCHED

**ARMY** Sports Lottery players stand to win far greater prizes thanks to a change in the way winners are picked.

The previous method of using football and cricket scores to select winners has been replaced by a random number generator similar to that used in the National Lottery.

The new system was used for the first time in September and will be followed in December by a full lottery relaunch including a one-off top prize of £20,000.

Jackpot winners after the relaunch will receive £10,000, with nine other players receiving between £5,000 and £250. None of the prizes will be shared between players as happened occasionally under the old system.

Lottery manager Maj (Retd) Dave Scott said: "This brings the lottery into the 21st century."

To join the lottery, visit [www.army.mod.uk/sportandadventure/army\\_sports\\_lottery](http://www.army.mod.uk/sportandadventure/army_sports_lottery) or telephone 94222 3550.

international athlete or miss out.

"It was a case of deciding whether to really commit myself to running or try another sport," she explained. "I had always wanted to run, but it was difficult because I had children and they became my priority."

"The last year is really the first time in my life that I have got a grip on my training. I used to look up at international athletes and think they were far, far better than me but now I am competing on the same track at a major event."

Despite the constant demands of raising a young family, Morris has still managed to find the time to take her training to new levels by taking to the track twice a day several times a week.

It is part of a long-term goal that Morris hopes will see her improve at a constant rate.

The results have been evident. Morris made her Great Britain bow in May this year when she joined established international Liz Yeling and Mara Yamauchi in a 10km team race in Boulder, Colorado.

"I have always run and when I joined

the Army I competed but never really stuck at it," she said.

"It wasn't until recently that I fully committed myself to see if I could be better at it.

"This year has been a good improvement and it will be interesting to see how I perform next year and the year after."

When asked whether she believed she could improve enough to make it to the next Commonwealth Games, modest Morris said qualification for the event was not top of her list of motivations.

But with an international appearance under her belt and a constantly evolving training programme helping her to improve further, Morris admits that anything is possible.

"My coach and I have talked about the Commonwealth Games," she concluded. "It's not something I'm going to get hung up about because I need to take each season as it comes."

"After what I have achieved in a short space of time I think it's definitely something I could do if I keep the commitment going and put the work in over the next few months." ■



Goal-den touch: Army striker LCpl Amanda Hood (RLC) showed great composure to score a well-taken brace during her side's win over the Royal Air Force

# Queens of the green

**A**BLISTERING finish secured the Army's women golfers an unprecedented third consecutive Inter-Services title.

After battling to a tie with an improving Royal Navy team at Woodhall Spa Golf Club, the Army went into the final match against the Royal Air Force knowing that a win would be enough for them to take home the title.

And despite finishing a nerve-wracking opening morning tied at 2-2, the reigning champions stepped up a gear in the afternoon and romped to a 8-4 win.

"We have beaten them quite well and that's what we set out to do," explained team member WO2 Chrissie James (AGC (SPS)).

"They have dominated the competition for a long time, so we were keen not to miss out on the record."

The late flourish required to dispatch the RAF was in keeping with the Army's slow-starting form in their opening game against the Navy.

Non-playing captain Maj Jayne Errington's (AGC (SPS)) side initially struggled to come to terms with the Navy squad and it took a change in the playing order before the Army golfers asserted their dominance.

Trailing 1.5-2.5 after the morning foursomes, the Army won four and halved one game in the afternoon to create the first tied match in Inter-Services history.

"The Navy always up their game

against us," continued James. "We just have to up our game and make sure we do our best to beat them."

This year's tournament represented the final Inter-Services stand for former team captains Lt Col Mary Woolard (AGC (SPS)), who has been in the team for 15 years, and WO2 Denise Richards (APTC) who first competed 12 years ago.

James told *SoldierSport* that although the current squad is still as strong as ever, it is looking for more up-and-coming golfers to help maintain the Army's winning run in the future.

"We have got a strong enough squad for next year, but hopefully we will get some young blood in so the current players try to lower their handicaps." ■

# Hood at the double

## Super striker too hot for RAF as Army women open season with a win

Report: Stephen Tyler  
Picture: Graeme Main

**A** COOLY-TAKEN brace from LCpl Amanda Hood got the Army's women footballers off to a perfect start in this season's South West Counties league.

Hood (RLC) demonstrated her clinical finishing once in each half as the reds cantered to a 2-0 win at Aldershot's Military Stadium.

In truth, the score should have been much higher and it was only the home team's profligacy in front of goal towards the end of the match that saved the Royal Air Force from a much heavier defeat.

Speaking after the game, head coach WO1 Sandra Hodgson said she was glad to have got three points on the board at the start of what promises to be a hard-fought competition.

"We know that we've got some tough games coming up and with no disrespect to the RAF, this was a match we knew we should be winning.

"We have a few new players in the team this year and I'm pleased with how they performed tonight."

The Army's belief that an opening-day win was well within their capability shone through during a fast-paced opening ten minutes in which the RAF struggled to keep up.

The home team huffed and puffed, but their commendable insistence on

playing a technical game too often resulted in them losing possession in the final third.

Their pressure eventually paid off in the 11th minute when a through ball sent Hood clear on the right. The forward showed good pace to bring the ball into the RAF area and produced a deft finish into the far corner to give her side a deserved lead.

With the momentum clearly in their favour the Army continued to dominate possession, but a hooked effort from Cpl Helen Lee (AGC) that eluded the keeper and nearly swung into the net was the closest they came to extending their lead in the first half.

Midfielder Sgt Kate Holmes (Int Corps) played a starring role in the second half, denying the RAF time and space and acting as the catalyst for most of her team's attacks.

A neat one-two involving Holmes and Lee saw the Int Corps star burst through the heart of the RAF defence only for a last ditch tackle to send the ball out for a corner.

Holmes had another chance to get on the scoresheet moments later as a typically surging run earned her space in the box, but the diminutive midfielder's placed shot lacked power and drifted wide of the post.

Despite the warning shots being fired by the Army's attackers, the RAF defence continued to play a high line and were ruthlessly exploited time and

again by the pace of Hood.

The scorer of the first goal was afforded too much space on the right flank and cut inside only to hit a tame shot straight at the keeper.

Hood made amends moments later when a defensive mix-up gifted her another clear run at goal. With the angle narrowing, Hood calmly rounded the onrushing keeper and put just enough power on her shot to see the ball over the line.

With the result beyond doubt, the Army stepped off the gas and Hood was unlucky not to complete a memorable hat-trick before she was taken off to a deserved standing ovation minutes before the final whistle.

Hodgson will be delighted with the result and with her team's overall performance – particularly the dominant midfield display from Holmes – but the coach told *SoldierSport* that her players need to convert more chances if they are to succeed in the South West Counties competition.

"Our finishing in the attacking third wasn't brilliant tonight and we know that putting the ball in the back of the net is something we have to work on," she said. "Overall I think a lot of people still expect schoolgirl football when they see women's matches, but the standard is constantly improving.

"A lot of our team are now playing at quite a high level in civilian teams as well so hopefully that will continue." ■

# Goggles up for grabs

## Four Seal XP masks on offer thanks to swimming specialists Aqua Sphere

LEADING swimming brand Aqua Sphere is celebrating its sponsorship of the Army Triathlon Association (ATA) by offering four *SoldierSport* readers the chance to win a pair of hi-tech Seal XP swim goggles.

The company supported the ATA's sprint distance championships in May and was so impressed with the quality of competition it has now signed up to supply Army triathletes with its award-winning goggles and masks.

Aqua Sphere's Seal masks and Kaiman goggles have revolutionised the market thanks to their patented curved lens technology which provides the wearer with

a distortion-free 180 degree field of vision.

Delivering a comfortable watertight fit, the easy-adjust buckles let you alter the fit while wearing the ergonomic eyewear – so it's easy to see why Aqua Sphere's eyewear is worn by swimmers in competitions all over the world.

For more information about Aqua Sphere's goggles, masks, tri wet suits and other swimming products, visit [www.aquaspHEREswim.com](http://www.aquaspHEREswim.com) or telephone 01254 278873.



● Aqua Sphere's Seal XP goggles

To be in with a chance of winning a pair of Seal XP goggles, worth £17.99, which combine the curved lens, all-round

visibility and exceptional comfort of the Seal mask with the low profile and hydrodynamics of the Kaiman goggles, answer the following question: Which three events make up a triathlon?

Write your answer on a postcard and send it to the address at the front of the magazine. Closing date November 30. ■

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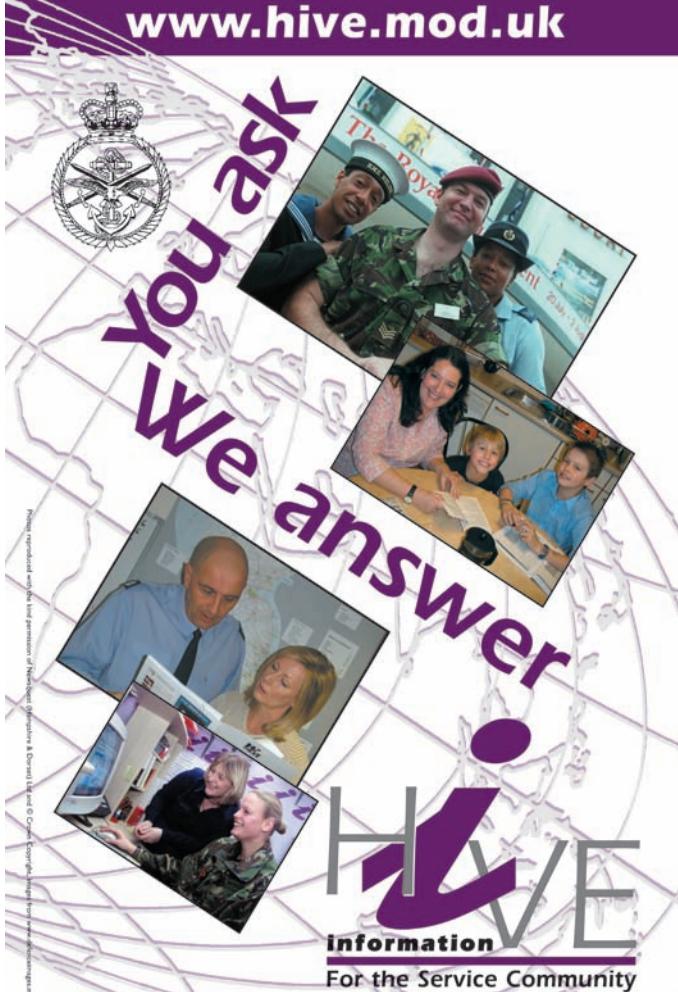
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Air assault: Inter-Services paragliding champion Capt Andrew Rudd (RE) follows Sgt Wayne Gregory (RA) at 4,500 feet near the Welsh town of Pontypool

# Winged warriors

Paragliders soar to new heights by beating airmen to Inter-Services title

Report: Stephen Tyler

**A**RMY paragliders are flying high after coasting to a memorable victory in the Inter-Services championships in Wales.

Led by Capt Andrew Rudd (RE), the 15-strong Army contingent overcame pre-competition favourites the Royal Air Force to come out on top at the week-long event.

Rudd, who took up the extreme sport 20 years ago, capped a memorable tournament by adding the Army individual title to the team trophy, beating SSgt Simon Green (R Signals) and Maj Jerry Thwaites (AAC) into second and third.

"On paper the RAF were the ones to beat because they had a very strong team," said Rudd.

"They have traditionally been the most successful over many years, but

quite a few of their pilots have now left and that helped us out.

"The Royal Navy were a little bit weaker but I'm really pleased that we managed to win."

Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) device to follow a set course, competitive paragliders have to complete a set of specific tasks during their flights and finish by landing within a designated target area.

The Inter-Services competition consisted of three flights ranging in length from 30km to 50km with each one taking as much as an hour-and-a-half to complete.

"The competition is a bit like orienteering – you upload waypoints into a GPS unit and off you go," continued Rudd.

"The unit programmes the route, telling the pilot how high they are and how fast they are going up and the

information is recorded and scored by software at the end of the course."

In addition to mastering the paragliding equipment, pilots have to prove they have a good knowledge of air traffic laws before they can take to the skies and compete.

The sport is also reliant on good weather and paragliders need to learn about air dynamics to ensure their flight does not end with a bump.

Rudd told *SoldierSport* that paragliding just below the cloud base several thousand feet in the air is an enthralling experience.

"When you're up in the clouds you're free," he said. "You don't really know what speed you're travelling at because you are so high up, but it's peaceful and quiet with a great view."

"When you go up in the air it's just you testing yourself against the weather and the environment." ■

## SPORTDIARY

### BASKETBALL

November 2-4 – Combined Services v Solent (Aldershot); 12-16 – Inter-corps championships (Grantham); 21-25 – Combined Services v Nottingham/Milton Keynes (Grantham).

### BOXING

November 1 – Army v North West Counties (Wigan); 8 – Army v Wales Select (Swansea); 12 – Army v Southern Counties (Piccadilly); 16 – Combined Services v Birmingham Select (Birmingham); 16 – Army v London Select (Hereford); 22 – Army v London Select (Holborn); 25 – Combined Services pre-ABA novice quarter finals (TBC).

### CANOEING

November 17-18 – Inter-Services polo championships (Portsmouth); 24-25 – Army wild water racing championships (Llangollen).

### CYCLING

November 4 – Inter-area team championships (Lutterworth).

December 5-6 – National championships (Birmingham).

### FENCING

November 1-6 – Combined Services match (Canada).

### FOOTBALL

November 6 – Army Under 23 v Cambridge University (Fenners); 14 – Army women v Gloucestershire (Aldershot); 18 – Crusaders v London University (Aldershot); 21 – Army v Middlesex (TBC); 25 – Army v TA (Aldershot); 25 – Army Youth v Middlesex (Uxbridge); 26 – Army Under 23 v Crusaders (Aldershot).

### HOCKEY

November 4 – Army women v Stafford Women (Aldershot); 7-8 – Inter-Services outdoor tournament (Aldershot); 13 – Army veterans v Devizes (Devizes).

### ROWING

November 3 – Fours Head of the River race (London); 4 – Veteran and Forces fours head of the river race (London).

### RUGBY UNION

November 17 – Army Under 23 v Esher (Aldershot); 21 – Army veterans v Colchester (Colchester); 28 – Army women v Regional Elite (Aldershot).

### SAILING

November 11 – Hamble five (Solent); 18 – Hamble six (Solent); 25 – Hamble seven (Solent).

### SQUASH

November 1 – Combined Services women v Hampshire women (Portsmouth); 2-4 – Combined Services individual championships (Portsmouth); 12-14 – Inter-corps championships (Aldershot); 28 – Army veterans v Camberley veterans (Aldershot).

### TRIATHLON

November 24-25 – Army trials (Aldershot).

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to [fixtures@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:fixtures@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

# Rio's not so grand

## Olympic hopeful loses at world championships

Report: Stephen Tyler

Picture: Steve Dock

**D**EASTATED judo star Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) has blamed a “stupid” refereeing decision for his early exit from the world championships in Brazil.

Competing at the Rio de Janeiro tournament, Nartey was seven points up after only one minute of his opening tie against bruising Armenian opponent Khachatur Arakelyan.

The Ghanaian international tried to defend his lead rather than wrapping up the match by pushing for further points, but the referee awarded four penalties against him and Nartey was subsequently disqualified.

Speaking after the controversial bout, Nartey told *SoldierSport*: “Because my opponent was physically stronger than me I was trying to defend the score.

“The referee gave four penalties against me for not attacking and I ended up going out because of that. I think he was a bit stupid to do that because when you have a high score and a big lead it’s natural to want to defend it. My opponent could have picked me up at any time if I had been constantly

attacking and that’s why I stayed back.”

The early world tournament exit was especially hard to swallow for Nartey as he was confident he could eclipse the quarter final place he managed in 2005 after becoming the first ever Ghanaian to take part in the championships.

Under the top-class tutelage of coaches at the University of Bath’s centre of excellence, Nartey has continued to gain international recognition and secured a fifth place finish at the All-African Games in July.

And despite losing out on important additional world ranking points by failing to progress past the first bout, Nartey believes he will still qualify to represent Ghana at next summer’s Olympic Games in Beijing.

“This tournament was disappointing for me because two years ago I went to the last eight and I thought I could do better this time,” he said. “I’m still in the qualifying places at the moment and the biggest challenge for me is to stay there by doing well at the tournaments between now and next summer.

“Everything is going really well and my mind is focused on qualifying for the Olympics. I am working hard to get back on track and achieve that.” ■

# Tri-stars' test

ARMY triathletes rubbed shoulders with the sport’s leading lights during the world championships in Hamburg.

Thirteen Service athletes reached the required qualifying standard and travelled to Germany to join almost 8,000 competitors on the start line for the event.

The event was split into Olympic and sprint distance age group races and several members of the Army squad forced their way into the top ten.

Capt Sarah Thomas (RAMC), who finished 11th in the sprint distance race for 30 to 34-year-olds, told *SoldierSport*: “We have never had that many athletes qualify. The Army Triathlon Association’s

(ATA) aim is to get as many people as possible competing on a world level and this competition shows that we are achieving that.”

Thomas was one of three Army women competing in the sprint race for 30 to 34-year-olds.

Royal Signals athlete Cpl Gayle Worthington finished ninth with fellow signaller Capt Cat French coming home in 21st place.

The highest ATA placing of the day came courtesy of WO1 Rick Hunt (1 Rifles) who narrowly missed out on a place on the podium in the Olympic distance race for 35 to 39-year-olds after finishing fourth. ■



Brazil blow: Tpr Emmanuel Nartey plans to bounce back after a disappointing defeat in the first round of the World Judo Championships in Rio de Janeiro

# Prentice's master class

**Report: Stephen Tyler**

ARMY diving champion Amanda Prentice added two international titles to her medal collection with a dominant performance at a European age group masters tournament.

SSgt Prentice returned from the European Masters Diving Championships in Jesenice, Slovenia, with two golds and one bronze from the 35 to 39 years age category.

The Royal Logistic Corps athlete stormed to top spot in the 3m springboard and platform disciplines and rounded off a successful

tournament with a third-place finish in the 1m springboard event.

"It was the hardest competition I have done in years," the veteran diver told *SoldierSport*.

"There were some very good female internationals diving so I was pleased with my performance."

To secure her medals, Prentice completed six dives from each board in front of a watching panel of five judges.

Personal best performances in the 3m springboard and platform dives were good enough for the Army Swimming Union member to beat rival Tatjana Peskiseva into second place.

The Latvian gained her revenge by claiming the 1m springboard title despite another personal best performance from Prentice, who has now taken charge of the Army's diving team and is hoping to continue her dominance of the sport in the Services.

"I have a very good coach and he came out to Slovakia with me. The Army has a two-week summer camp at Aldershot and he has been there to help out as well."

"The Inter-Services competition didn't happen this year," she concluded. "I'm organising it next year so I can make sure it goes ahead." ■

# Sound bites

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

## We asked British Forces Germany-based troops for their impressions of the recently introduced Pay As You Dine scheme

### Sgt John Penhale, REME

Under PAYD you have to pay for any extra stuff outside the core menu. This applies to things such as extra fruit juice or even extra slices of bread.



I'm married and the only time I use the system is when I am on duty. The food is always spot on. Standards haven't slipped but it is the little things that make the difference.

### SSgt Trevor Elliott, 9/12 L

PAYD has been up and running in Hohne for a while now and you find that a lot of married people use it as well as the single soldiers. Sometimes my wife comes over to see me at work and we go for a quick bite to eat for lunch, which is great. There's plenty of choice, although I would say that the portions are smaller than before.



### 2nd Lt Katie Miller, AGC (SPS)

I think PAYD is very good. You get free meals when you are on duty and, as a junior officer, I have been on duty for the past two weeks. The scheme means you are not wasting food or money. The only drawback for me is that, in the evening, I would sometimes just rather sit down and have a salad. But that isn't possible because you can only choose a three-course set menu.



### Tpr Richard Bell, 9/12 L

PAYD has been around at Hohne for some time now and on the whole it is good – you do save money. It's the same Army food as before, cooked by the same Army chefs,



although some of the portions have halved in size. You also get more choice under the scheme, although I tend to stick to the core menu.

### Cpl John Harrison, 9/12 L

I have used PAYD a couple of times and it is good value for money. The lads have to control their money a lot more than they used to, although I'm not aware of any problems in that respect. For those who cook for themselves, however, it could be cheaper to buy food from the shops in town rather than the shop on camp.



### Cpl Andy Smith, 9/12 L

To be fair, PAYD gives the soldiers the opportunity to fund their own meals although it does tend to work out a bit more expensive. But overall I don't think they are worse off, and they don't have to pay for food they don't eat. Everything really comes down to personal admin.



### Cfn Ian Barton, REME

I don't use the PAYD system but I now have the choice to eat when and where I want. I don't want to be bound by structured mealtimes.



Personally, if I eat at 1700 I start to feel hungry again three hours later. I have undoubtedly saved money with the introduction of the new scheme.

### LCpl Brad Herbert, 9/12 L

I'm happy to have my own money for food as I cook for myself most of the time. I do think PAYD is a problem for some of the young soldiers who can end up skint at the end of the month. I wouldn't go back to the old way, but if you could have a choice – and if the younger lads could perhaps be issued with a swipe card so meal costs could come directly out of their wages – that would be a good thing.



### Cpl Craig Schembri, REME

The only time that I use PAYD is when I am on duty. The standard of the food is OK, but I think the core meal is too small, especially for breakfast. However, now you can just pay for what you eat. As for soldiers not having enough cash, they should be able to manage their money. They are certainly old enough to do so.



Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Steve Dock

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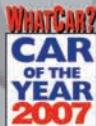

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