

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

SOLDIER

NOVEMBER 2009 £3.50



BIGGER BIRDS
Ambitious upgrades
for Chinook aircraft



TOUR TRIBUTE
Gen Wall's praise for
homecoming heroes

CULTURE CLASH
Afghan assets shake
up Canadian prairie



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Cover picture (left): Boasting a mock Afghan village, Batus offers Helmand-bound troops such as Pte Christopher Weaver (2 R Welsh) a taste of the "province" Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: The Household Cavalry Regiment prowl the Devon dunes in Jackals before heading on Herrick Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth, RLC



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ARMY



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WINNER

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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"You are all doing a great job, but... we're getting complaints about you cornering the market on maple syrup as well as knocking off the occasional moose, which is a protected species."

● A New Dawn – Pages 25-27

Nous on the prairie

TAKE a straw poll of the things that spring to mind when the average Brit thinks of Canada and a few usual suspects are sure to appear.

Maple syrup, grizzly bears, wide open spaces and a penchant for ice hockey – the stereotypical image of America's near neighbours is idyllic if not entirely accurate.

Ask a member of the British Army the same question, however, and the answers are likely to be a whole lot different.

For soldiers who have deployed to the British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus), Canada represents the ultimate testing ground for their skills and equipment away from the operational front lines of Afghanistan.

The country-sized swathe of prairie that the Service uses for its well-established Medicine Man exercise has always allowed soldiers to wheel out their vehicles and perfect armoured assaults.

But with Op Herrick posing a challenge like no other, the powers that be over the pond have kicked things up a notch to make training in Canada as relevant as possible to the current mission in Helmand province.

Hence why a *Soldier* team found themselves walking through a decidedly Afghan-like village complete with a mosque and market during a visit to Batus last month (Pages 25-27).

The settlement – known as Hettar – was placed under the grip of insurgents for the exercise and it was down to the deployed personnel to regain control and provide enough security for an election to take place.

Afghan civilians were even drafted in to add a further touch of contemporary realism to the training and the inclusion of IED threats makes Ex Medicine Man as relevant as it is testing.

For the troops of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh pitting their wits against the revamped facility, the exercise meant focusing as much on the hearts and minds side of operations as it did on the more kinetic parts (Pages 30-31).

Thousands of miles away in Afghanistan itself, last month saw Brig Tim Radford begin to lead 11 Light Brigade home after a testing tour in which 70 British personnel paid the ultimate price.

As devastating as the losses are, the dedication of the fallen and those they left behind created tangible results, whether it was the safely-held national elections or the fact that the Taliban has now been denied influence in many important areas of Helmand.

'The dedication of the fallen and those they left behind created tangible results'

And their efforts over a long, hot summer have allowed 11 Light Brigade, who move into theatre under the command of Brig James Cowan, to concentrate on working alongside Britain's allies to help develop southern Afghanistan's infrastructure and government.

At a time when belts have been tightened in all walks of life, it is not surprising to learn that the MoD is having to cut its cloth accordingly.

But while changes affecting assets including the Territorial Army and Officer Training Corps have to be made, Commander-in-Chief Land Forces Gen Sir Peter Wall is adamant that operational capability will not be hit (Page 20).

Finally, we decided it was time to take a closer look at just what it entails to become a member of the Army's boxing team.

Soldier's Joe Clapson spent some time training alongside the super-fit squad and capped the experience by getting in the ring for a few rounds (Pages 51-53). Needless to say it hurt, but Joe took it firmly on the chin. ■

REMEMBER

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THE **informer...**

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

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Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer, RLC

Real results: Troops from 19 Light Brigade, pictured during Operation Panther's Claw, helped to dent the insurgency in Helmand province

Change of the Light Brigades

THE commander of 11 Light Brigade has pledged to "bring prosperity" to Helmand after his troops arrived in southern Afghanistan for Op Herrick 11.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the transfer of authority from 19 Light Brigade to 11 Light Brigade, Brig James Cowan stressed the importance of reconstruction to the mission over the next six months.

Brig Cowan's soldiers arrive in theatre after a testing deployment for 19 Light Brigade which saw British forces suffer 70 fatalities as they drove the Taliban away from the centre of Helmand province.

"It is in all our interests that we succeed," he said. "Only the people

of Afghanistan can provide the lasting solution. We will do everything we can to help achieve this goal.

"To this end, we will consolidate our close relationship with our friends in the US Marine Corps and our civilian counterparts in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in order to bring prosperity to the people of Helmand."

Formed in 2007 specifically to tackle the insurgency in Afghanistan, 11 Light Brigade contains a counter-IED task force and is made up of major units including the Household Cavalry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards and The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment.

It will disband on its return to the UK next April.

Brig Tim Radford, commander of the outgoing 19 Light Brigade, said that his troops' major successes – including Op Panther's Claw, which drove the Taliban out of Helmand's most populated areas – had helped to deliver "security and governance" to southern Afghanistan.

"I want them to be remembered for the courage, fortitude and resolve they have shown in the harshest operational environment," he said.

"They have been tested to the extreme and they have delivered."

"I expect that 19 Light Brigade's tour will be remembered for the hardest fight the British Army has encountered in Helmand province."

"But to selectively remember the sacrifice without the progress would be to forget the reason that so many laid down their lives."

"The resolve, determination and bravery of the whole task force are something that I am extremely proud of and I believe the British public should be too."

107

THE NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS THAT
WERE ABLE TO OPEN DURING THIS SUMMER'S
AFGHAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS THANKS TO THE
SUCCESSES OF 19 LIGHT BRIGADE

A BREWERY has created a new beer in recognition of soldiers returning from southern Afghanistan.

The 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment were the first troops to taste Peace Keeper, a real ale which has been made to raise money for Help for Heroes.

Maj (Retd) Andrew McCallum, of The Willoughby Brewing Company, presented a bottle of the beer to each of the soldiers on their return to the UK last month.

"Our Armed Forces work hard in our name and this is a way in which we can all show our support.

"Ten pence from the sale of each bottle and pint of Peace Keeper will be donated to Help for Heroes to support the vital work they do in support of our injured troops," he said.

For more information about Peace Keeper contact McCallum on 01885 482359 or 07974 371294.

AN EVENING of laughter was had by all at the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association's (BLESMA) first comedy night.

The event, at the Comedy Cafe in Shoreditch, served to entertain and raise awareness of the charity and the support BLESMA provides to injured Servicemen and women.

BLESMA general secretary Jerome Church said: "We provided a night of entertainment for our members and the general public."

A PAINTING commemorating the last moments of Victoria Cross winner Cpl Bryan Budd has been unveiled.

The picture, by Stuart Brown, shows the 3 Para NCO in combat during an act of valour that cost him his life in Afghanistan on August 20, 2006.

The painting, which is now proudly displayed at the 3 Para officers' mess in Colchester, follows a long tradition of immortalising the battalion's VC winners.

THE UK's oldest Territorial Army unit has been handed the Freedom of the London Borough of Islington.

The Honourable Artillery Company was given the award at a reception for its members, representatives of the council and veterans from the borough.

A SUPPORT network for Muslim Service personnel has been launched.

The Armed Forces Muslim Association uses meetings and internet forums to provide access to information including the locations of mosques and religious groups close to Service bases.

Chairman Gp Capt Zahur Ul-Haq said: "In the Armed Forces, Muslims have been extremely successful and hold a number of senior positions. The fact we are willing to die for our country is a testament of our loyalty and our desire to protect the values we all share."

'Mindset' key to Afghan success

THE situation in Afghanistan is "serious" and a growing insurgency needs to be repelled if the campaign is to be won, the most senior Nato officer in theatre has stressed.

In a speech to the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, Gen Stanley McChrystal, who commands the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf), admitted that the coalition needed a "change of mindset" to reverse current trends.

And he warned that the price of failure was unthinkable as terrorists would again be able to use Afghanistan to mount attacks on a global scale.

Gen McChrystal said: "Violence is on the increase, not only because there are more coalition forces but also because the insurgency has grown.

"We need to reverse the trends and time does matter – this effort will not remain winnable indefinitely and nor will public support.

"However, the cruel irony is that in order to succeed, we need patience, discipline, resolve and time."

The senior officer admitted that the situation on the ground had deteriorated in some areas and stressed that "decisive action" needed to be

taken by Nato partners.

He maintained that the alliance had remained on a conventional warfare footing and needed to better understand the challenges posed by a terrorist enemy.

Gen McChrystal said: "Our societies want to see lines on a map moving forward towards objectives, but you will not see that in a counter-insurgency because you do not see clearly what is happening in peoples' minds.

"We will have to do things dramatically differently in order to change how we think and operate.

"In short, we cannot succeed by simply trying harder.

"We cannot drop three more bombs and have a greater effect, it is much more subtle than that."

Gen McChrystal stressed that reversing the "perceived momentum" gained by the enemy, training Afghan security forces and better focusing resources are key priorities.

He concluded: "We can succeed; we must redefine the fight and the objective is the will of the Afghan people.

"We must protect the Afghan people from all threats and must think and operate in a fundamentally new way."

100

THE NUMBER OF YEARS THAT TIDWORTH GARRISON THEATRE HAS BEEN HOSTING EVENTS FOR TROOPS. THE CENTENARY WAS MARKED WITH A CELEBRATORY CONCERT

Herrick allies salute fallen officer

A SENIOR officer who was killed in Afghanistan has been saluted by Nato allies with the presentation of a posthumous award to his widow.

Sally Thorneloe – who was married to Welsh Guards commanding officer Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe – was handed the Estonian Defence Forces' Distinguished Service Decoration at a ceremony in London's Wellington Barracks.



● Images of Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe in theatre

The award was made in recognition of her husband's bravery and support to the Baltic state's troops during his time on Op Herrick. The officer was killed at the beginning of July after his vehicle was caught in an explosion.

The Chief of the Estonian Defence Forces, Lt Gen Ants Laaneots, also presented Mrs Thorneloe with a selection of pictures of her husband during his tour of Afghanistan.

He said: "We very quickly recognise and appreciate others who demonstrate the attributes of honour, integrity, comradeship and respect for others.

"It became very clear to me, and other Estonians who met Lt Col Thorneloe, that he possessed and valued those attributes – his tragic loss came as a shock."

Mrs Thorneloe added: "He often remarked how proud he was of his Estonians and what terrific friends and brothers-in-arms they had become – he grew to love them dearly."



Picture: Captain Forsyth, RLC

SOLDIERS from the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards have returned to their base in Aldershot after completing a six-month deployment to southern Afghanistan. The 500-strong battalion, which lost seven soldiers including commanding officer Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe during the testing Op Herrick tour, arrived at Lille Barracks after undergoing a decompression period in Cyprus. Maj Dai Bevan said: "The tour has been incredibly successful for the Welsh Guards, but equally it has been extremely challenging and demanding."

Contract enhances mental care

AN INNOVATIVE approach to providing mental healthcare has been commended by two senior MoD medics.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) has been handed a contract by the MoD to provide treatment for mental problems to serving personnel across the country.

During a tour of the purpose-built Cavell Centre in Peterborough, Surgeon Commander Dr Neil Greenberg and Lt Col Mark Earnshaw were shown the state-of-the-art in-patient facilities on offer.

Dr Greenberg, from the Academic

Centre for Defence Mental Health, explained: "Just as our personnel give us their best while they carry out their duty, we aim to do the same for them in the provision of healthcare.

"Although the numbers of personnel who are diagnosed with a mental condition are low, we want all Armed Forces personnel and their families to know that professional help is available."

CPFT is part of a group of seven NHS Trusts which will provide care across the UK, ensuring that treatment is offered close to the patient's home or unit.

Afghan mission inspires reshuffle

THE top level of the Army is to be reorganised to enhance its effectiveness and to increase focus on current operations.

Under the direction of Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir David Richards, Headquarters Land Forces (HQLF) is being restructured to improve delivery of operational capability to the front line.

Three three-star commands will be created under Commander-in-Chief Land Forces, including Support Command, Force Development and Training Command.

The move is being made to further improve the coordination of activity between the general staff and HQLF.

The role of the independent Army Inspector is also set to be reviewed.

An MoD spokesman said: "The correct management of civilian and military staff is critical to the success of restructuring."

Changes will be integrated into existing or projected change programmes and will incorporate the review of the Regional Forces command structure.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WOLVERHAMPTON'S Sikh community hosted a special meal to welcome home more than 100 Territorial Army soldiers returning from Afghanistan.

Troops were treated to a traditional dinner before being presented with a ceremonial sword and plaque at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sikh Temple.

Lt Col Martyn Forgrave, CO of 4 Mercian, presented the hosts with a copy of an 1880 painting of Sikh officers from the 2nd Regiment of Cavalry Punjab Frontier Force.

A ROYAL Artillery battery that first saw action in Afghanistan in 1839 has been resurrected for modern operations.

The newly-reformed Z Battery has been created in 5th Regiment Royal Artillery to provide a weapon locating capability to troops on the front line.

The move means there are now four batteries providing this specialist discipline, which is designed to detect and respond to the launch of enemy rocket and mortar attacks.

As a result, gunners can now look forward to extended tour intervals of 18, rather than 12, months with the new battery's first deployment on operations likely to be late next year.

GOOD DRILLS

JACK JONES

SUPER-fit Jack Jones has been saluted by his colleagues and commanders after becoming the first Army Cadet to be promoted to Under Officer in the Warwickshire and West Midlands ACF. The 18-year-old, from Sutton Coldfield, put himself through command tasks and military tests to achieve his promotion, which senior officers said was "thoroughly deserved".

CAMBRIAN PATROL

TROOPS have been taking on the physical and mental test posed by Exercise



Cambrian Patrol, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Two thirds of the soldiers involved in the Welsh manoeuvres, which included river crossings and shooting, are set to deploy to Afghanistan in the coming months.

EMERGING ENEMIES

CYBER-terrorism is among the range of new and deadly threats to security around the world, according to Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In a speech delivered at Lloyds of London, the alliance chief also said that piracy on the seas was a growing issue for the international community.



ROGUE REAPPEARS

SENIOR Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud remains at large despite rumours that he had been killed, it has been confirmed. The BBC reported that the insurgent boss had appeared in public to meet with a select group of journalists. Mehsud took command of the Taliban after his predecessor died in a US missile strike earlier in the year and has been trying to shore up support.

BAD DRILLS

Forces fight the flab

PERSONNEL who pile on the pounds are set to be singled out and put on strict diets in line with a new healthy regime, it has emerged.

The Armed Forces Weight Management Policy came into force on October 1 with the aim of ensuring all personnel are "fit for task".

The measure follows research highlighting that increasing numbers of soldiers have weight problems which could have a negative effect on their ability to serve.

"Rising levels of the UK adult population are either overweight or obese and recent research suggests that the Armed Forces are not immune from this damaging trend, resulting in reduced operational readiness," a spokesman for the MoD explained.



Statistics gathered by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in 2007 suggested 34 per cent of Armed Forces personnel studied were overweight or obese.

Under the new policy all Regular Army personnel will have their body mass index and waist circumference measured annually by unit physical training staff to check for potential obesity problems.

Any individuals deemed to have significant health risks will be flagged up to their chain of command and will be put on suitable fitness programmes.

The spokesman added: "The British Army has a responsibility to address obesity and to put in place processes to manage those who are extremely over or underweight."

O THE PRICE IN POUNDS THAT BRITISH PERSONNEL BASED OVERSEAS PAID TO WATCH THE INTERNET-ONLY BROADCAST OF ENGLAND'S WORLD CUP QUALIFIER AGAINST UKRAINE THANKS TO A DEAL BETWEEN THE RIGHHOLDER AND BFBS

Act heralds new legal system

THE updated law underpinning Army discipline has come into effect.

The Armed Forces Act 2006 will harmonise arrangements across the three Services so that all personnel are subject to the same system.

Representing the first change in regulations for more than 50 years, the legislation has been updated to better support operational effectiveness.

The provisions of the act include:

- The establishment of a single system of Service law, with a common range of offences capable of being dealt with by commanding officers;
- A single court martial system,

including the establishment of a tri-Service prosecuting authority;

- A streamlined grievance procedure for members of the Armed Forces;
- A modernised system of Service internal inquiries.

The Service Discipline Acts, which have provided the legal basis for discipline in the Armed Forces since the 1950s, will be repealed in due course.

Guidance on operating and administering the new system will be provided in the *Manual of Service Law*, which is available on the Defence Intranet at <http://www.afimplementation.dii.r.mil.uk>

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE first of eight reconfigured Chinooks that have been in storage for more than a decade will be ready for front-line operations before the end of the year.

Defence Procurement Minister Quentin Davies told *Soldier* that the Mk 3 aircraft, which already have the more powerful engines now being fitted to the rest of the fleet, would soon be available to troops in Afghanistan.

The eight helicopters will bolster lift capability in theatre along with a fleet of Merlins that have been reconfigured for Op Herrick after returning from Iraq.

Mr Davies explained: "We are hoping to take delivery of the first of these Chinooks before Christmas."

The Mk 3 aircraft were procured in the 1990s but were grounded because of problems with their specification.

Troopers test Jackal's bite

SOLDIERS from the Household Cavalry Regiment put one of the Army's all-terrain stars through its paces over north Devon's sand dunes ahead of their deployment to Afghanistan.

The Windsor-based troops mounted up in seven-tonne Jackal vehicles to carry out intensive training across the rugged landscape of the 900-acre Braunton Burrows site near Barnstaple.

Household Cavalry troopers are now serving in southern Afghanistan as 11 Light Brigade's reconnaissance experts and will spend the six-month tour gathering vital information and battlefield intelligence.

Lt James Hulme, a troop leader serving with the regiment's A Squadron, explained: "We have been preparing for the deployment for many months and the intensive workout with the Jackals on the Devon dunes is a key part of our UK training."

Although the HCR traditionally carries out patrols in the Scimitar tracked vehicle, some of its soldiers have mastered the use of the Jackal to

provide extra flexibility in theatre.

The three-man vehicles, which can reach a top speed of 80mph, offer increased off-road mobility and can operate effectively in desert and mountainous terrain.

As well as being able to avoid well-trodden routes favoured by Taliban IED teams, Jackals also feature a hull with advanced armour protection.

And the versatile vehicles can be fitted with a range of weapons, including grenade launchers and machine guns.

"The Jackal is a fantastic piece of equipment," added Lt Hulme.

"The troops are very impressed with it and its mobility over the roughest terrain is unrivalled.

"It's been tested to its limits here on the dunes and it can get over, or up, pretty much anything."

"As reconnaissance specialists we are the eyes and ears of the force and having this type of vehicle is going to be vital in delivering a successful counter-insurgency campaign."

4
THE NUMBER OF
FEMALE SOLDIERS
IN THE 75-STRONG
GROUP FROM **58**
FIELD SQUADRON

(EOD) WHO RETURNED TO THEIR BASE IN WIMBISH LAST MONTH AFTER COMPLETING A TOUR OF AFGHANISTAN. THE EXPLOSIVES SPECIALISTS HELPED TO DEAL WITH MORE THAN 1,400 REPORTS OF IEDS AS WELL AS CONVENTIONAL MUNITIONS DURING THEIR DEPLOYMENT

NEWS IN BRIEF

A FORMER Army officer has written a book of poetry about the realities of Service life to raise awareness about the "humanity" of the British soldier.

John Jeffcock (ex-Coldm Gds) started writing sonnets at the age of 14, but it was during tours of Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Iraq that he produced his best works, which feature in *Book of War*.

Jeffcock, who received a Mention in Dispatches during the first Gulf War, said: "I produced this book so that troops can hand it across to people and say this is what we are really about, this is what we really do and that being in the Army is very much about humanitarian thinking rather than shooting people."

Book of War is now available online from Amazon, with £1 from each sale being donated to the Army Benevolent Fund and The Royal British Legion.

A RECIPE book featuring 100 celebrities has been launched this month in aid of The Chelsea Pensioners Appeal.

A Salute to Cooking, compiled by the Royal Hospital Chelsea, includes offerings from chefs Gordon Ramsay and Nigella Lawson and celebrities such as Jeremy Clarkson and London Mayor Boris Johnson. Also included are favourites from a few of the Chelsea Pensioners themselves.

In addition to the recipes, the title features a foreword from The Prince of Wales and all profits from each book will go to the charity.

Gordon Ramsay said: "One of the highlights of my career is entertaining the Chelsea Pensioners in my restaurant and having the honour of treating them to Christmas lunch. In buying this book you're supporting a wonderful cause."

Fellow contributor to the charity read, actress Joanna Lumley, added: "Take a large amount of the nation's favourite people, stir in delicious recipes – result: a wonderful cookbook."



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

Enemy ambush tests recce soldiers

ELITE troops fought off an intense insurgent attack after an IED strike on their convoy's lead vehicle left their patrol stranded and exposed.

Troops from 19 Light Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) were ambushed by Taliban fighters after a roadside bomb disabled a Mastiff's front right wheel during Op Shejah Palang in the Nad e-Ali area.

After fending off an initial volley of RPG and small arms fire, the soldiers took up defensive positions while they waited overnight for the damaged vehicle to be recovered.

BRF operations officer Capt Euan Grant said: "The lads are always up for it, always ready to do their job in the most difficult of circumstances.

"We've had a tough tour this year, but

despite that the lads know they've done a sterling job so far, really taking the fight to the insurgents."

Op Shejah Palang – Pashtu for Panther's Valour – saw more than 100 British and Afghan soldiers, including a counter-IED team, set out from Camp Bastion to the Luy Mandah Wadi area of Nad e-Ali in Jackals and Mastiffs.

The mission aimed to allow coalition forces to engage in dialogue with local residents as well as keep up the pressure on insurgents already targeted in Op Panther's Claw, which took place over the summer.

But the BRF came under heavy fire as troops provided protection to the counter-IED team as it attempted to disarm a number of bombs in a bazaar.

The group had to call in fire support from Apache helicopters and US F16 fighter jets to take out insurgent positions as close as 100 metres away.

It was while the patrol was extracting from the scene of the attack that the Mastiff struck a massive IED, showering the convoy with dust and wreckage and attracting enemy fire.

Despite their exposed position, the BRF did not come under any further contact and the soldiers managed to capture an insurgent who was concealing a large cache of weapons.



Picture: Cpl Mike O'Neill, RLC

Waiting out: Recce troops Pte Nick Gilby (2 Mercian, left) and LCpl Ryan King (2 Rifles) on patrol

75 THE AMOUNT IN THOUSANDS OF POUNDS THAT SAPPERS FROM 70 GURKHA FD SP SQN, QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS SAVED WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL BY REBUILDING A 100-YEAR-OLD BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIVER ARUN. THE STRUCTURE, WHICH WAS BUILT NEAR THE VILLAGE OF AMESBURY, HAS BEEN RENAMED THE GURKHA SUSPENSION BRIDGE

NEWS IN BRIEF

MORE than 1,000 performers will entertain the crowds at this month's Birmingham Tattoo.

The spectacular event, which features a showpiece field gun competition between the three Services, also plays host to military bands, gymnastics displays and a colourful parade of more than 100 standards.

The tattoo takes place at Birmingham's National Indoor Arena on November 28 and 29. Tickets can be ordered by contacting the box office on 0844 338 8000. For more information and a full list of artists, visit the event's website at www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk

A NEW booklet will help commanders better manage their soldiers' careers.

Due to be published by the end of the year, the *Unit Career Management Aide Memoire* will set out officers' responsibilities in developing the professional lives of their personnel.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£15,000 (Ongoing)	THE GUMPATHON Four runners, backed up by Army personnel, will be covering 3,630 miles across the USA from New York to Los Angeles in two months from April. More at www.thegumpathon.com	Help for Heroes and the US Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund
2	£14,000	ON THEIR BIKES Six Pirbright soldiers cycled a staggering 1,000 miles through England, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium to Normandy	Macmillan Cancer Support and Help for Heroes
3	£2,000 (Ongoing)	HAVING A BALL Charlotte Steele, wife of Cpl Chris Steele (3 Med Regt), organised a sold-out masquerade ball in King's Lynn, Norfolk	Help for Heroes
4	£1,000 (Ongoing)	2 SIGNAL REGIMENT Nocturnal York-based signallers are taking part in the Sleepwalker Race – a 20-mile overnight slog through the Brecon Beacons. Sponsor the team by visiting www.justgiving.com/michael-perkins	Help for Heroes



Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding, RLC

THE FORMER head of the British Army has been officially installed as Constable of the Tower of London. Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, who was replaced as the Chief of General Staff by Gen Sir David Richards in August, now has overall responsibility to the Queen at Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress. Nijmegen Company, Grenadier Guards, 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, The Honourable Artillery Company, members of the Adjutant General's Corps, the band of the Army Air Corps and trumpeters from The Life Guards were all present for the rain-soaked installation ceremony. During the event, Gen Dannatt was handed the gold master keys to the Tower by Lord Chamberlain, on behalf of the Queen, symbolising the Constable's responsibility for the royal palace. Describing his new role as a "great honour and a privilege", Gen Dannatt told *Soldier*. "Of course I will stay in touch with the troops, I have the greatest admiration for what everyone in the Army is doing. It's a very difficult operation in Afghanistan but we will succeed."

Taliban rocked by Allied ops

BRITISH soldiers from 19 Light Brigade showed no let up against the enemy despite being on the final stages of their Op Herrick tour.

During separate actions, troops from 2nd Battalion, The Rifles launched an assault on a drug network in Sangin while colleagues from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland found a weapons cache in Kandahar.

The ops restricted the Taliban's ability to launch attacks and intimidate the civilian population as well as denying them crucial funding.

The first attack saw Black Watch soldiers, supported by Canadian and Afghan personnel, arrive by Chinook into the Zari district of Kandahar under cover of darkness.

They immediately came under contact as they began an assault on one of the biggest known Taliban strongholds in the area.

But the group managed to overcome enemy booby traps and defences as they advanced on their target.

The troops later unearthed an

Aladdin's cave of weapons, including two motorbikes rigged with IEDs, a grenade launcher and a recoilless rifle.

Cpl Jim Copeland (3 Scots) said the Taliban had cunningly arranged their defences. "There were bunkers and trenches, rat runs and tunnel systems," he added. "IEDs laced the ground to their front. To the rear, buildings had sniper positions and hides where they cached their weapons."

During the second operation, which happened two days later in the Sangin area, around 100 soldiers from 2 Rifles uncovered a number of drug factories following an airborne attack.

After calling in an Apache gunship to repel a Taliban counter attack, the British soldiers liberated a group of Afghan children forced to work for the drug lords and seized 331kg of opium with a UK street value of £3.3 million.

Maj Karl Hickman, who commanded A Company, 2 Rifles during the action, said: "This operation will hit [the Taliban] hard and demonstrate that there is nowhere for them to hide."

NEWS IN BRIEF

POSTAL provision at a dozen Nato headquarters is set to change.

Although a basic service will remain at the 11 locations in Europe and one in the United States, soldiers posted to alliance HQs will have to make greater use of the civilian international mail system.

Each centre affected will retain its BFPO number.

THE Band and Corps of Drums of the Royal Logistic Corps is selling tickets for its annual Christmas concerts.

Musicians from the band will be performing festive songs at Tela Theatre, Princess Royal Barracks in Deepcut at 2000 on December 10 and 1930 on December 11 and 12.

For more information or to order tickets, call 01252 833628.

SPORTS bra retailer LessBounce.com has launched a new product to raise money for Help for Heroes.

The white bra, which comes in sizes 28-44 A-E, costs £28.50 and can be bought online at www.lessbounce.com, with £2.50 from every purchase going to the charity.



Picture: (APPHOT) Barrie Henesy

TWO Apache helicopter crews from Wattisham-based 4 Regiment Army Air Corps teamed up with their Royal Navy colleagues to take part in maritime aviation training aboard HMS *Ocean* in the North Sea. Eight pilots who had recently returned from operations in Afghanistan were put through their paces on the Navy's largest warship as they attempted to master day and night landings. The rigorous training was held to allow the pilots to gain deck qualifications and further enhance the operational capability of the aircraft.

Fist kit packs a punch

SOLDIERS in Afghanistan are to receive new assets that will make them the scourge of the Taliban both day and night.

The surveillance and target acquisition package will give troops a new suite of sights and the ability to engage insurgents in all weather and light conditions.

Supplied by contractor Thales as part of the Future Integrated Soldier Technology (Fist) programme, the incoming kit includes a targeting system for the underslung grenade launcher and improved night vision equipment.

Lt Col Andrew MacDonald, project manager for the MoD, said the Fist developments would make a big difference to Infantry capability when it arrives in theatre next year.

He added: "We have had some issues

with getting the underslung grenade launcher on target – the existing sight is pretty primitive and it is typically difficult to get a first-round hit.

"Now there is a laser range finder on the weapon – you simply place a red dot on the target and that gives you a good chance of a first-time hit."

Lt Col MacDonald also highlighted that night vision, previously considered "an area of weakness", had been addressed through the adoption of cutting-edge thermal sights.

Infantrymen showcasing the equipment at the recent Defence Systems and Equipment International show were impressed with the new gear.

Gdsm George Collins (1 IG) said: "The new sights for the underslung grenade launcher find the range for you – it takes a lot of work out of the job."

NEWS IN BRIEF

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to ensure all Armed Forces personnel are eligible to cast their vote in the next General Election.

Ministry of Defence research has shown that 35 per cent of military staff are not registered to take part in the ballot and the Electoral Commission wants to make sure that members of all three Services get a chance to have their say in the national poll, which will take place next year.

Unit registration days are being planned by the MoD and further information about voting is available at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces

A RETIRED nurse who has dedicated months of her time to making quilts for seriously injured soldiers is appealing to unit welfare officers to get in touch.

Jean Morris has made more than 100 blankets since the beginning of the year but relies on the Army to help them reach wounded troops.

The 62-year-old from Monmouth, south Wales, told *Soldier*: "I am so proud of the soldiers when they talk about their injuries so bravely and I wanted to do something to show my appreciation."

Email jean@qovf.org for information.

8 THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES – AND TIME ZONES – CROSSED BY BRISTOL UNIVERSITY OFFICER CADET LUKE SHAW AND THREE FRIENDS DURING THE 2009 MONGOL RALLY. SPONSOR THE TEAM AT WWW.JUSTGIVING.COM/4KINGSJIMNY

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IN MEMORIAM



PTE JAMES PROSSER (21)
2ND BATTALION,
THE ROYAL WELSH
KIA SEPTEMBER 27 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS battling the Taliban in southern Afghanistan have been mourning the loss of a young colleague who was just months into his Army career.

Pte James Prosser died when the Warrior he was driving was caught in an explosion near Musa Qaleh, Helmand province on September 27. Remembered as a natural infantryman, he had joined 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh in February this year.

The 21-year-old, who was originally from Cwmbran, immediately caught the eye of superiors with his natural flair for soldiering after immersing himself in a demanding pre-deployment training package.

Pte Prosser's friends said in a statement:

"The amount of respect we have for you is indescribable, a true friend and a real hero forever. We shared so many good memories with you and can't believe that you are not going to be with us anymore."

Lt Col Didi Wheeler, CO of 2 R Welsh, said: "Although James only joined us in February, he had come to the fore – he had a boundless sense of humour and was a true character in every respect.

"This brave Welsh warrior will be sorely missed by so many of us. Our thoughts turn to his immediate family and his close friends."

Pte Prosser's company commander Maj Huw Jones added that the death had left a "huge hole" in the ranks.



GDSM JAMIE JANES (20)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADE GUARDS
KIA OCTOBER 5 – AFGHANISTAN

A YOUNG soldier who had just arrived in Afghanistan for a six-month tour was killed by an IED while clearing a route for his comrades.

Gdsm Jamie Janes, 6 Platoon, 2 Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, was the first Infantry fatality from 11 Light Brigade, which is in the process of replacing 19 Light Brigade in Helmand province.

Gdsm Janes, serving on his second Herrick tour, died en route to hospital after the explosion near Nad e-Ali district centre on October 5.

He leaves behind his girlfriend, Kate, three brothers, two sisters and his mother.

Speaking about the loss, Maj Richard Green, Gdsm Janes' company commander, said: "So early in our tour, the tragic death of one of our

brave young men comes as a shock. Jamie was a soldier to his heart and a friend to all.

"He stood tall amongst his fellow men as an experienced hand who willingly stepped forward to take on the difficult task of clearing routes, and he gave the less-experienced soldiers in his section huge confidence."

Maj Green added: "Gdsm Janes was an integral member of 2 Company, both on a professional level and also as a constant source of morale.

"His experience and cool head reassured the younger, less experienced guardsmen and set their minds at ease.

"He died in the way he lived; protecting his friends from danger; a true Grenadier."



LCPL JAMES HILL (23)
1ST BATTALION,
COLDSTREAM GUARDS
KIA OCTOBER 8 – AFGHANISTAN

A JUNIOR NCO remembered as having "the most outstanding qualities" was killed in an explosion in southern Afghanistan.

LCpl James Hill, who was serving with the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, died following the blast near Camp Bastion, the main British base in Helmand province, on October 8.

The 23-year-old enlisted in the Army in 2005 and carried out ceremonial duties after joining up with his battalion in London District the following spring.

Originally from Redhill in Surrey, the junior NCO had been on exercise in South Africa and had served on a previous Op Herrick deployment, where his potential for promotion was recognised.

Lt Col Toby Gray, CO of 1 Coldm Gds, said the young soldier was "quite simply superb". He added: "He was personable, fit, intelligent and ambitious. His humour, coupled with his energy, singled him out as a popular and respected junior non-commissioned officer.

"His drive to be the best was constant and he was a man with commendable ambitions. Our loss is huge but that of his family, fiancee and friends is even greater."

LCpl Hill's parents Brian and Claire said in a statement: "James was the finest son we could possibly have asked for and we are immensely proud of who he is and all he has done.

"He was immensely caring and always there for us and everyone else who needed him."

A VIETNAM veteran who draws portraits of US soldiers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq is now offering his services to the families of fallen British personnel.

Michael Reagan (pictured right) began the Fallen Heroes project in 2004 and refuses to accept any money for his work, instead relying on small donations he receives through his website.

The former US Marine, who has completed more than 1,800 portraits, receives approximately 20 requests per week for his services from families across the world and tries to complete two drawings a day.

Speaking from his home in Washington,

Reagan explained that he feels a sense of pride towards British troops for their bravery in Afghanistan.

He is now inviting the families of British personnel killed on active service to get in touch and request one of his drawings.

He added: "I am doing this for people who didn't get the chance to say goodbye.

"As an artist I believe those portraits are more powerful than photographs.

"They take up at least five hours of my life to complete and I go into painstaking detail on all of them."

To find out more or if you would like a free drawing from Reagan, visit his website at www.fallenheroesproject.org





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Iraq veterans honoured

THE sacrifices of more than 100,000 British personnel who served on Operation Telic were commemorated during a moving service at London's St Paul's Cathedral.

Around 2,000 Servicemen and women were joined by dignitaries including 13 members of the Royal Family, including the Queen (pictured right) for the occasion.

The six-year operation in southern Iraq, which came to a close last April, saw 179 members of the Armed Forces give their lives to help establish peace and democracy in the Middle Eastern country.

Speaking during the service, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said: "My brief words today cannot convey the great debt and gratitude of the Iraqi people to those men and women who joined in the liberating of Iraq.

"We continue to strive to make Iraq free, prosperous and a good regional neighbour. This opportunity for a new and better Iraq would not have been



possible without the commitment and sacrifice of British personnel."

As well as senior politicians and military figures, the service included speeches by Telic veterans and family members of those who died during the campaign.

Tracey Hazel, whose son Cpl Ben Leaning was killed in a roadside blast in April 2007 while serving with The Queen's Royal Lancers, said she felt honoured after lighting an Op Telic memorial candle.

"It means a great deal to all the families to have their loved ones remembered in this way.

"I am so proud of my son and what he did in Iraq. Today has been full of emotion, but it is important that we are all here to remember them."

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth added: "It is an honour for me to be here to show my respect for these brave men and women and to pay tribute to those who lost their lives and to the families they left behind."

500

THE NUMBER OF **EXTRA SOLDIERS** THAT COULD SOON BE DEPLOYED ON OP HERRICK, SUBJECT TO THE RIGHT CONDITIONS BEING MET, FOLLOWING AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER **GORDON BROWN**. THE ADDITIONAL FORCES WOULD TAKE TROOP NUMBERS IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN TO 9,500

Volunteers' golden ticket

TERRITORIAL troops are now able to take part in the Army Sports Lottery after a change in the rules governing the weekly draw.

Reserve soldiers can now purchase up to five tickets for each lottery and stand the chance of winning part of a cash pot in excess of £20,000.

The move comes in time for TA personnel to sign up for December's bi-annual super draw in which all prizes are doubled in value.

Lt Col (Retd) Chris Harris, secretary of the Army Sport Control Board and promoter of the lottery, explained that those taking part in the draw help the Service to continue its sporting activities around the world.

"The lottery raises significant non-public funds in support of sport, without which individuals and teams would not have the level of funding they currently enjoy," he said.

Since its introduction in September 1993, the lottery has generated £18.3

million, with £9.5 million paid out in prizes, £5 million in grants and a further £3.8 million invested in the Army Sport Control Board Trust Fund.

Entering the draw allows participants to apply for up to £400 per person to support overseas sports tours.

Money is also available to fund athletes competing at international level, travelling for winter sports or taking part in coaching courses.

But despite tickets costing just 75p, only 29 per cent of the Army enters each week.

Lt Col Harris added: "We ultimately hope to sell 100,000 tickets per week and our sales are currently running at just over 60,000."

"This is a challenging target and can only be achieved by significantly increasing the number of members."

For more information about the Army Sports Lottery, contact Lt Col Harris on 94222 3693.



NEWS IN BRIEF

SUPPORTERS of the Armed Forces have called for a new monument in London to honour those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom National Defence Association has launched a petition to build the new memorial on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square.

GRADUATES of Army Apprentice Schools in Arborfield, Carlisle, Chepstow and Harrogate have been asked to consider donating to the cost of a proposed new monument at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Contact Maj Gordon Bonner at gordon.bonner3@ntiworld.com for further information.

SERVICE personnel on front-line ops are to have a say in what the public's donations are being spent on.

The Operational Welfare Fund, launched by SSAFA Forces Help and backed by the MoD, allows troops to put in a bid for whatever they would like the cash to be put towards.

The initiative started with a mass delivery of electronic kit sponsored by Littlewoods and Woolworths.co.uk to forward operating bases in Afghanistan.

A BRITISH soldier's helmet saved his life after he was struck in the head by a Taliban bullet.

LCpl Iain Maynard, of 2 Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, was on a routine patrol in Nad e-Ali when insurgents attacked.

A bullet struck the 24-year-old soldier, narrowly avoiding his head and lodging in his helmet.

LCpl Maynard said: "It hit me about 2cm above my left eye, so I'm lucky. It only just penetrated the helmet so I have a small cut."

The astonished soldier was assisted by colleagues before being taken by helicopter to Camp Bastion for treatment.

Maj Chris Wright (RAMC), the first doctor to attend to LCpl Maynard, said: "This is one lucky man."



NEWS IN BRIEF

THE chairman of the Iraq Inquiry has appealed to anyone who believes that they could offer evidence to support his investigation to get in touch.

Sir John Chilcot made the request for public involvement ahead of a series of sessions to examine events before and during the Op Telic campaign.

The inquiry is looking at the period between 2001 to the end of July 2009, and is aiming to identify lessons to guide future foreign policy decisions.

Visit www.iraqinquiry.org.uk for further information.

A GROUP of community leaders in a town that has become synonymous with repatriation ceremonies has launched a campaign to raise cash for injured Service personnel.

The Rotary Club of Wootton Bassett has produced a 2010 calendar, which features views of the town on less sombre occasions.

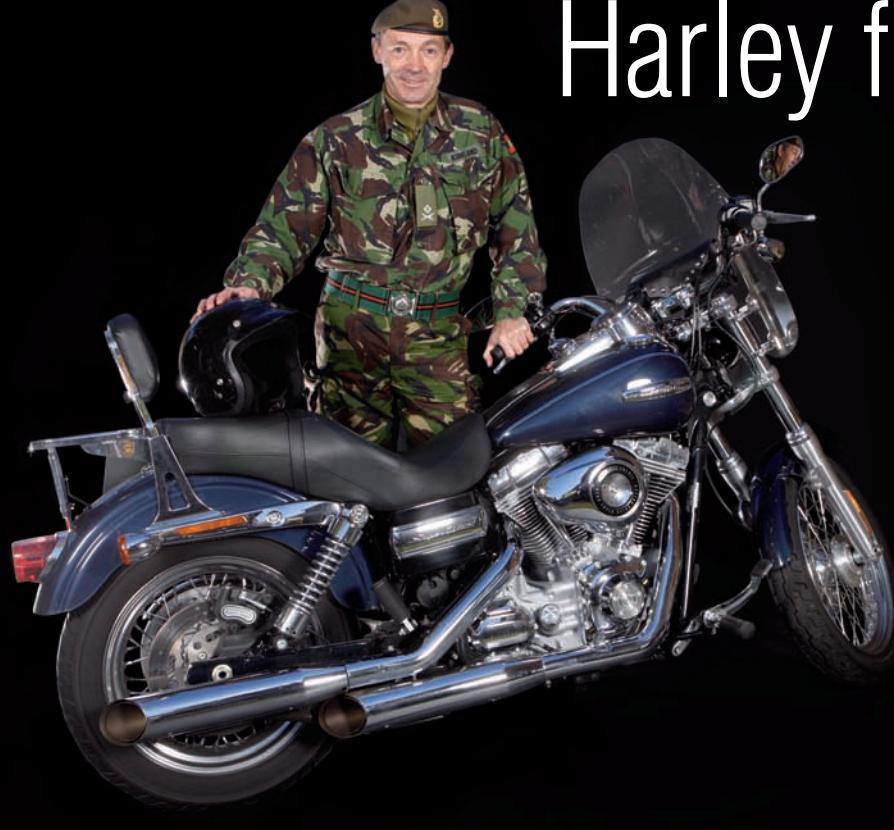
Half of the money raised is going to Help for Heroes, with the other 50 per cent going towards supporting Rotary Club activities in the UK and overseas.

See www.woottonbassettcalendar.com for further information.

52

THE LENGTH IN FEET OF GREAT ESCAPE, THE JENNEAU YACHT THAT FORMER-ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY OFFICER JOHN FAIRLEY WILL BE SAILING ACROSS THE ATLANTIC FROM THE CANARY ISLANDS TO ST LUCIA FROM NOVEMBER 22 TO DECEMBER 14 TO RAISE MONEY FOR HELP FOR HEROES. SPONSOR JOHN BY VISITING WWW.THEARC-H4H.CO.UK

Picture: Graeme Main



Harley for heroes

A MOTORCYCLING general rode his Harley Davidson from Hampshire to Staffordshire to take part in a biking tribute to Britain's fallen soldiers.

Maj Gen Lamont Kirkland, General Officer Commanding of Aldershot-based 4 Division, joined more than 5,000 other people to take part in the Ride To The Wall event, which sees bikers gather at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

He told *Soldier*: "It was an extraordinary thing to have 2,500 bikes more than there were last year.

"This event is a commemoration to fallen soldiers and it's about paying respect to them, but I think that it's also a show of support to the men and women serving today.

"As the only Harley-riding general in the British Army, I felt that I had to turn out. I've only had the bike for four-and-a-half-years, but I ride it to make visits whenever I can."

TA hit by savings measures

C UTS to Territorial Army training not directly in support of operations are among the measures being introduced by the MoD as part of a wide-ranging £54 million in-year savings package.

TA soldiers who are not due to deploy on operations will suspend all training until April 2010 in a move expected to save £20 million.

A reduction in University Officer Training Corps and Army Cadet Force activities, coupled with a temporary limit on recruiting, is expected to bring a further £9 million in savings.

The cuts have been introduced by the Defence Board to ensure that "scarce resources" are directed to current operations and follow a £43 million reduction in expenditure implemented by the Army in July.

In an interview with *Soldier*, Gen Sir Peter Wall, Commander-in-Chief Land Forces, said that while supporting operations in southern Afghanistan remained the key focus for the Army, the cost-cutting measures had not been taken lightly.

The senior officer added: "There are

a number of things that we can do to make savings and we need to be very clear on this – we are financially in quite a tight place at Land Forces.

"We have been very successful in recruiting over the past couple of years, due in part to the economy but principally because of the excellent work that has been done by our selection and training organisation.

"As a result of having more manpower, our wage bill has increased. Although we had expected some funding for this from the MoD, it has not been possible, so we have to meet it by reducing some of the activities that are not operationally essential."

Gen Wall admitted that having to make savings from reservist activities was "a real worry", adding: "We tinker with the Territorial Army at our peril – we have made these savings with the greatest reluctance."

He envisaged that the measures would have to stay into the short- and medium-term, but speculated that the Strategic Defence Review would take a renewed look at Army costings further down the line.

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Picture: Mike Weston

Future force: Soldiers from the Afghan National Army, seen here training in Kabul, are playing an increasingly important role on Operation Herrick

Wall: Afghan forces key to Herrick success

WORK to bring Afghan soldiers up-to-speed must accelerate to further improve security in Helmand, the new Commander-in-Chief Land Forces has said.

In his first interview since taking over the post, Gen Sir Peter Wall insisted that the goals of Op Herrick were achievable and was confident that British Forces and their international allies would prevail.

The officer believed the approach of clearing areas of enemy fighters, holding the ground and promoting reconstruction was paying dividends.

Gen Wall said: "In parallel, the challenge for us now is to increase the capability and size of the Afghan security forces, enabling them to take

on the roles that we are currently doing – this was something we managed to do to considerable effect in Iraq.

"Our other immediate priorities on Op Herrick are better force protection and improved protected mobility – I can also say that we have left no stone unturned in converting and shifting equipment from Iraq to Afghanistan."

The former sapper added that there could be no compromise in the campaign, pledging that the battle against insurgents would go on despite the casualties suffered on Herrick 10.

Gen Wall said: "It has been tough for us and 19 Light Brigade must take the credit for what has been the most ferocious action for five decades.

"The soldiers ensured it has been a

worse summer for the Taliban, although it is difficult to gauge how much the enemy's resolve has been dented.

"But this campaign is about more than dealing with the insurgents – it is about convincing the Afghan people that their government will give them better conditions than the Taliban's alternative oppressive regime."

Gen Wall is also adamant that British Forces have a key advantage over the Taliban – the quality of their personnel and determination to prevail.

"If, as some say, this is the PlayStation generation, then they make very fine soldiers," he concluded. "Everybody is a product of their time, but the fundamentals of soldiering never change – we are proud of them."

Rammell ponders PAC report

THE MoD is to examine its support to high intensity operations procedures in light of a report from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Armed Forces Minister has confirmed.

Bill Rammell welcomed the committee's finding that troops were working in "challenging environments" and said its recommendations would be carefully considered.

The PAC report, which focused on British troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, suggests more collective pre-deployment work is needed for soldiers heading on ops.

Rammell said the MoD would review the report and had already brought more equipment for use in training.

"We will not compromise on quality and have purchased additional vehicles for the training fleet," he said. "We are working hard to source spares from alternative suppliers to ensure that demand is met."

Responding to a separate PAC report on Service Family Accommodation, Veterans Minister Kevan Jones accepted there was "work to be done" in reducing the number of empty quarters. He added: "The report rightly recognises both the size and challenge we face."

RIFLES REDRESSED

IN our coverage of the Operational Honours and Awards in the October edition of *Soldier*, we mistakenly attributed the wrong battalion to three members of an Infantry regiment.

Commanding officer Lt Col Joe Cavanagh, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and Military Cross winners A/Sjt Mark Powis and LCpl Sean Keenan, are from 1 – and not 2 – Rifles as we had stated.

The trio received the accolades for serving in Afghanistan with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines.

We apologise for the error.



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A new dawn

Cutting-edge training at Batus prepares troops for Helmand



Prairie patrol: Pte Michael Allen (2 R Welsh) takes to the streets of the Afghan-style village of Hettar

Picture: Graeme Main

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Canadian prairie is a desolate and seemingly-lifeless environment. With mile after mile of grassy plain, it offers little excitement for the would-be tourist. But for British troops looking to hone their military skills there is one attraction that makes it well worth a visit.

Boasting 2,690 square kilometres of prairie, British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) boasts vast opportunities when it comes to perfecting the techniques that will play a crucial role on current operational deployments.

The expanse has traditionally played host to live firing exercises for the Royal Artillery's biggest guns and has been a playground for the Challenger 2 tank.

But while this vital training continues, Batus is now placing an increasing emphasis on hybrid manoeuvres and preparing soldiers for operations in non-conventional environments.

A number of new features have been added to the training ground to support this approach, the most striking of which is the Afghan-style village of Hettar.

With shipping containers skilfully converted to form an array of authentic-looking buildings, the innocent visitor could easily be forgiven for thinking they were in a searing desert environment rather than the Canadian grasslands.

A purpose-built mosque and a marketplace selling goods ranging from lawnmowers to fruit and vegetables adds to the realism, while Afghan civilians are now being used to simulate the interaction soldiers will experience when they deploy.

The advancements have thrilled Maj

Tom Holloway (KRH), part of the tactical operations team at Batus, who believes the new-look training ground is a vital resource for British troops.

"The bubble the soldiers are put in is particularly accurate and realistic," he told *Soldier*. "They get good value out of the training and we are trying to put them in situations they have not seen before so when they go on operations it is not a shock."

"It is extremely relevant. They have found it very useful and have been impressed by the resources they come across."

He added: "We have invested a lot of time and effort on producing the infrastructure and this winter there will be a deployment of engineers to finish the Batus vision."

"This will include a complete rebuild of some of our villages and the construction of six forward operating bases from which we will conduct live firing and tactical engagement simulation training next year."

Canadian firm ACS has provided up to 50 role players – including Afghan civilians – for the various training serials offered as

part of Exercise Medicine Man.

Their presence on the prairie has helped soldiers learn the importance of communicating through interpreters and has also given them an insight into the cultural differences they may encounter in theatre.

Capt Doug Nelson (3 Yorks), one of the many safety officers involved in training serials at Batus, said: "This is the first year we have used civilians in the battlespace.

"Last year we had Service personnel acting as a civilian population. They basically wandered around and it just was not that realistic."

"Now we have a mix in there. Military personnel are bolted on to provide the numbers but the key players are the ACS."

Maj Holloway added: "Soldiers coming here have been used to seeing a squaddie in a dishdash. Now we have civilians speaking in languages that are totally unfamiliar to them."

"When the serials are not running they talk about life at home which offers our troops cultural training. They are doing their bit for their country from here, it has been a very positive relationship."

As well as providing civilians for the exercises, ACS has also added a touch of Hollywood to Batus.

Its special effects department uses make-up wizardry to create realistic-looking casualties with injuries ranging from slashed faces to severed legs.

It also provides the pyrotechnics for exercises based around IED blasts and the threat of suicide bombers.

Although Hettar is the main village, there are numerous other settlements scattered across the prairie along with infrastructure such

as an oil refinery, a power station, a water treatment plant and a petrol station – all of which are used in various scenarios.

Batus has also managed to borrow a Sea King helicopter and a jet plane, both of which are used to simulate downed aircraft for training purposes.

With such progress being made, Maj Holloway believes the Canadian asset is now among the Army's elite training facilities.

"I think Batus is absolutely first class and, for me, it ranks at the top of the pile," he said. "We have not sat around acknowledging there is a fight on for resources, instead we have looked at how we can deliver relevant training for the people coming here."

"But it is not just about the troops coming in, we have 460 safety and support staff here for the summer season."

"They can be guaranteed the privilege of seeing others train first hand and that will make them better in due course." ■

They get good value out of the training and we are trying to put them in situations they have not seen before so when they go on operations it is not a shock





Ambulance call: Pictured left to right, Pte Marc Sainsbury, Pte Craig Mogford, Pte Daniel Richards and Pte Ratu Lalabalavu from 2 R Welsh evacuate a wounded Afghan civilian after practising their first aid techniques during Ex Medicine Man

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE ever-improving facilities at British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) have certainly excited those behind the scenes.

With new infrastructure providing endless opportunities for training serials, the common belief is that the Canadian prairie now boasts one of the premier proving grounds in the Service.

The high praise of officers involved in developing the facility is one thing but it is the experience of those on the ground that shapes the true image of Batus in terms of the training it offers.

Exercise Medicine Man has welcomed thousands of visiting soldiers since its launch in 1972 and troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh were among the first to undergo the new and improved Batus experience earlier this year.

With a number of recruits enjoying their first taste of large-scale Army manoeuvres, the huge swathe of prairie has provided a valuable insight into the challenges they will face when they deploy to Afghanistan next year.

Soldier spent time with 2 R Welsh during their final week of training to learn more about how the Canadian prairie has prepared them for future operations.

"We have definitely improved since the start of the exercise," said Maj Rob Johnson.

"It has been a steep learning curve. We came here with certain expectations

and were quite well prepared but we have learned a massive amount."

The exercises *Soldier* observed certainly emphasised the new approach to training at Batus. Elements of B Company were asked to escort commanding officer Lt Col Mark Wheeler to a shura with village elders before returning to base and forming part of a supply convoy to the same settlement.

The following morning saw troops engaged in an exercise to transport a generator to a hydroelectric plant in a move similar to the successful operation at the Kajaki dam in Afghanistan.

Maj Johnson said: "The training has improved year-on-year and there is a real focus on current operations – that means southern Afghanistan.

"Not only are we doing a very impressive live firing package and moving together as a battlegroup but now we also have to work very closely with a local population.

• The training has improved year-on-year and there is a real focus on current operations – that means Afghanistan •



"We are not simply firing to destroy a target, it is about talking to people. There are Afghans speaking their own language and that means we have to use interpreters or we get nowhere."

"We need them to understand the cultural sensitivities. Nothing is black and white, but they are learning."

Lt Col Wheeler added: "This time round the training has been fantastic. I can only look back to the last time I was here three years ago. We came out a few months before pre-op training for Telic 10."

"The live firing we did, combined with the physical and mental pressure we were under, were the first steps to delivering a battlegroup that was confident in its ability to fight in downtown Basra."

"This exercise is a complete hybrid approach and we have almost come 180 degrees in the training."

"We are not charging across the prairie putting rounds down the range, we are moving across in a more tactical way."

"The infrastructure they now have is fantastic. For a relatively small amount of resources the turnaround in such a short period of time has been incredible."

LCpl Robert Busby took part in a four-week exercise at Batus in 2006 and has seen a definite change in focus since his last visit.

"This time they have tried to move it round to Afghanistan and it is very good," he told *Soldier* during preparations for the shura serial.

He added: "Around 80 per cent of our company are new boys and they are getting an idea of what it is like operating from a forward operating base, going out

on patrol and securing bridges and other infrastructure in the region."

"We have not been to Afghanistan yet but we will know what has worked in terms of training when we get there next summer."

"When we were first told about the Afghan civilians we did not realise they would be actual Afghans. A lot of them do not speak English so communicating with them was quite awkward and that certainly made it more realistic."

"For a lot of our guys they did not know what to expect on tour but now they have a better idea."

Land of their fathers: Commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh, Lt Col Mark Wheeler, engages in the hybrid training at Batus by meeting Afghan village elders at a shura





Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

TRAINING exercises on the Canadian prairie drew to a spectacular close this year with a full-scale attack on the impressive Afghan-style village of Hettar.

The settlement has been the focus of significant investment at British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) and the new-look infrastructure faced the first serious test of its capabilities in the final days of the latest Exercise Medicine Man.

Soldier was invited to witness the dramatic attack and saw first-hand the incredible picture the village is able to paint of life on operations in Afghanistan.

With Hettar locked under the fierce grip of insurgents, soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh were tasked with regaining control and reinstating the governor ahead of looming elections.

The scenario is typical of what the troops may face in Afghanistan and the village is designed to familiarise them with the environment of Helmand province.

A striking mosque is the focal point of the settlement, which also boasts a bustling marketplace along with endless alleyways and dead-end compounds for the soldiers to negotiate.

Add smoke bombs, screeching fast jets and a civilian population immersed with the insurgents and the realism is virtually complete.

Working systematically through the village, 2 R Welsh defeated their

enemy after several hours of contact.

But as soon as a sense of calm descended the chaos erupted once more as a suicide bomber targeted the market, bringing new challenges for the troops.

Following the successful completion of the serial, Batus commander Col Stuart Carver (late R Anglian) spoke to *Soldier* about the changing nature of the training on offer in Canada.

"In line with the rest of the Army, Batus is moving to a campaign footing in order to support current operations in southern Afghanistan," he said.

"This means that we need to ensure the training conducted here reflects the contemporary operating environment.

"To do this, the exercises have been designed to reflect the complexity of the modern battlefield including an enemy with both a conventional and non-conventional element, the presence of a civilian population, complex terrain including urban areas and a constant media presence. They also ensure that all the force elements and resources available to a modern hybrid battlegroup are represented.

"The role of Batus is to provide the foundation training across all functional areas that a battlegroup needs in order to fully prepare it for the mission-specific training that it will conduct just prior to its deployment on operations.

"By providing these generic foundation skills we are also maintaining a residual capability in the event that the British Army is required to deploy to a theatre other than Afghanistan in the future."

The key elements described by Col Carver

Big trouble in little Hettar

Batus stages grandstand finale to its training season

were certainly evident in Hettar, as they were just days earlier when elements of 2nd Royal Tank Regiment were tasked with a rescue mission on a downed Sea King helicopter.

On their arrival the soldiers had to evacuate a number of casualties from the wreckage while dealing with a persistent media team and a strong civilian presence.

With smoke billowing from the aircraft and tension created by a potential insurgent attack, the exercise provided invaluable experience of what the soldiers may face in Afghanistan. "It was a brilliant serial," said Maj Jim Carver of Badger Squadron, 2 RTR. "The stuff at the front end of the exercise is great training for us. The boys are responding in the most positive way as they can see the relevance in this.

"It was a very complex situation. We had to deal with the police, the army, insurgents and the press, who were all there before us, and the casualties had such realistic injuries.

"This is not pre-deployment training but it is extremely relevant. It is engaging and will certainly help. The squadron has had the most fantastic time." ■



Street fighters: Troops from 2 R Welsh seek insurgents in Hettar with 2nd Lt Nathan Chronik, pictured left, leading the charge

Blade runners

Service crews delighted as iconic Chinook gets an avionics and engine upgrade

Report: Cliff Caswell

Main picture: Sgt Rob Knight RLC

WHEN a rocket propelled grenade slammed into a Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter over the badlands of Afghanistan, it had the potential to be a disaster story.

At risk of crashing in a hostile area of Helmand province, on fire and fast losing power, the crew and soldiers on board could have been just a few seconds from death – had the aircraft not been fitted with a lifesaving upgrade.

The Boeing Chinook was one of seven to have recently received the new Honeywell 714 engine – which produces up to 20 per cent more power than its predecessor – giving the pilots the lift to fly away from the threat before crash landing without any loss of life.

“A rocket propelled grenade hit is dreadful and these must have been tense moments for the crew as they realised what had happened,” said Defence Procurement Minister Quentin Davies during a visit to RAF Odiham in Hampshire.

“However, the pilots were still able to fly away from the danger area and this is a dramatic illustration of the difference that this new engine can make.”

The power plant is being rolled out across the 38-strong Chinook fleet and is one of two innovations which promise to give soldiers more protection and better reach as they move to engage Taliban fighters across southern Afghanistan.

In the second deal, defence contractor Thales is supplying digital “glass” cockpits, which will bolster the performance of the aircraft when flying at night. The two initiatives, which come at a cost of more than £400 million, will be fitted under

normal maintenance cycles with the job expected to be completed in the near future.

The upgrades give the iconic helicopter a capability far beyond its original design. A veteran of the Vietnam War, where the aircraft was used to move American troops in and out of the jungles of South-East Asia, the airframe has seen constant changes since its introduction to UK forces in 1981.

In an interview with *Soldier*, Gp Capt Andrew Turner, UK Chinook Force commander, confirmed the latest refinements would bring key benefits to troops. “The aircraft has been hugely enhanced since the first version flew in the 1960s, to the extent that the only thing that remains the same is the silhouette,” he added.

“The introduction of the Honeywell 714 engine and the digital cockpit means that we can get a lot further forward in Afghanistan and get the troops onto the ground more safely. The new equipment will increase the lift capability, broaden safety margins when they are heavy, reduce operating costs and equip the aircraft through to its out-of-service date.”

Gp Capt Turner, who is also the station commander at RAF Odiham, said that his personnel were working at the edge of their capability, enduring testing and dangerous flying conditions in theatre.

“We are involved in a very long and dangerous campaign in Afghanistan with some of the most difficult aviation operations the UK has ever conducted,” he added. “We are flying both day and night

and through dust clouds. During pretty much every sortie you are shot at – you have to expect that.”

Flt Lt Rich Elford, who serves with Odiham-based 27 Squadron, said: “The new engines are a very positive step forward and a major improvement over what we have, while the cockpit will allow us to deliver a greater footprint on ops at night.

“Obviously this is important with what has been going on in Op Herrick. In Afghanistan we have been going into the hotbeds and engaging in more difficult areas – if you poke a stick into a hornets’ nest they will try and sting you.”

Sgt Greg Wainer, a Chinook loadmaster, said: “I served in Afghanistan in 2008 and it was not unknown for aircraft to get hit back then.

“You don’t see it so much in the day, but at night you see the tracer lighting up, particularly as you enter a known point of contact.”

The latest upgrades will prove a vital weapon in an ever more testing Op Herrick campaign. New equipment provides the opportunity to develop tactics and, with more range and better night vision, there is plenty of scope to enhance the scale and depth of British and multinational ground actions.

“The Chinook is the cornerstone of our helicopter support in Afghanistan,” explained Quentin Davies. “The improvements will increase its capability and ensure it can play an even more valuable role in supporting our forces and Nato allies.” ■

‘We are flying both day and night and through dust clouds. During pretty much every sortie you are shot at – you have to expect that’



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Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Graeme Main

A BRITISH Forces theme park might seem an unlikely concept for training, but personnel have been proving that it works by going on an Army safari.

In a novel concept, tri-Service students – including those on the Advanced Command Staff Course – climbed aboard trucks to see troops in action in their natural habitat of Salisbury Plain.

En route they were able to get a close up of soldiers from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers repairing vehicles and watched a casualty go through the different stages of the medical chain.

They were also given a snapshot of the varied roles carried out by Pioneer regiments and were even ambushed by mock insurgents as they were driven to a forward operating base (FOB) in a convoy.

The Land Combat Power Demonstration proved a great success, giving the students an overview of the so-called "protect and sustain" elements of the Army and providing them with the opportunity to ask troops any questions.

"We compare the programme we have to a safari," Maj Mark Hood (RLC), a lead planner with HQ 104 Logistic Regiment who helped devise the exercise, said with a smile. "It is a tour of many different Army activities, ranging from recovering a broken down tank to seeing the medical chain.

"It effectively gives people from the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force who may not have worked with the logistic chain an insight into what to expect.

"We have 25 different units and some 400 troops taking part in the exercise."

There was plenty for the students to see during the packed three-hour excursion, which took place close to Tidworth camp and had an emphasis on realism.

The medical serials were given a gruesome edge when specialist amputee actors who, with some suitably bloody make-up, played casualties being treated in field hospitals.

"We've run this type of exercise for a while now although it has developed over time," Maj Hood added. "There is now a greater complexity – rather than briefing students to death, this is an opportunity to get them out on the ground and reinforce their learning."

With so much packed into the programme, those running the exercise found themselves at the centre of a major logistic effort of their

own. Coordinating vehicle movements and pyrotechnics as well as ensuring the visually dramatic serials were a success proved to be a testing task.

But Maj Tim Crossland (RLC), officer commanding 21 General Support Squadron, part of 3 Logistic Support Regiment, was confident that the students would be able

to gain an empathy for the look and feel of operations.

Speaking at a detailed mock up of a FOB, the officer admitted that while some artistic licence had been taken, authenticity was the watchword.

"We have a lot of moving parts on this stand, including a clutch of

vehicles that should give the students a good idea of what a combat logistic patrol looks like," he said. "The visitors join the patrol, see it come under attack and get hit by a roadside bomb. We have also kitted out the FOB with specialist gear, which they get to see in action when they arrive."

Lt Col Simon Hutchings, commanding officer of 17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC, believed the exercise was a useful way for students to see how the logistic effort had changed in the face of current operations.

"The way we provide the support has not changed, but the means by which we do it has evolved in response to the threat that we are facing," he added.

"Our equipment, for example, is now very different and what we are doing is absolutely

key in backing current operations."

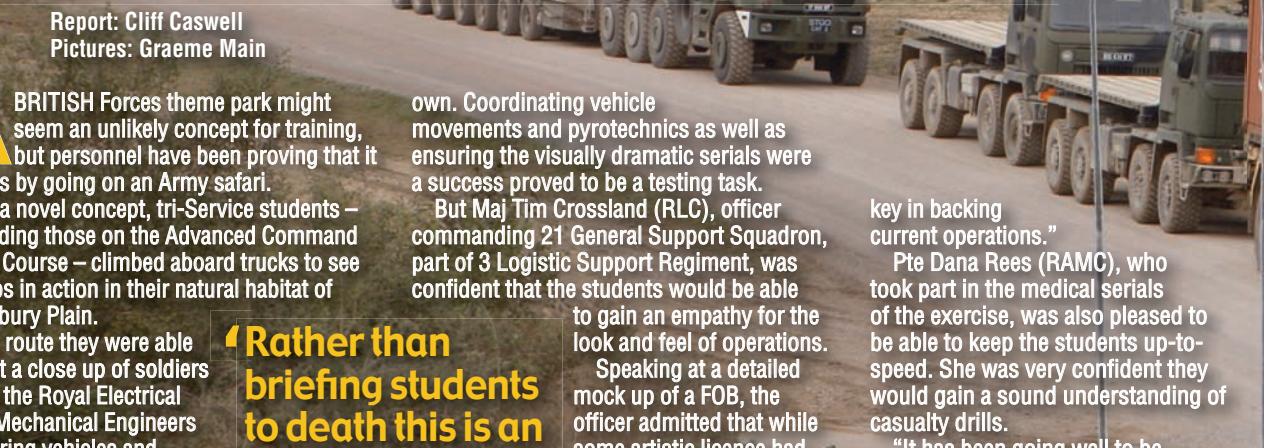
Pte Dana Rees (RAMC), who took part in the medical serials of the exercise, was also pleased to be able to keep the students up-to-speed. She was very confident they would gain a sound understanding of casualty drills.

"It has been going well to be honest," she said. "I have not been in the Army long but it is great to show people what we do and how we do it. For me the thought that I could save somebody's life is amazing."

The exercise, which ran for a week, was also appreciated by the students who boarded the trucks for the guided tour through how the Army supports, sustains and protects its personnel.

Salisbury Plain might not have provided the glamour of an African safari, but this was a most crucial tour guide that will certainly come in useful. ■

'Rather than briefing students to death this is an opportunity to get them out on the ground'



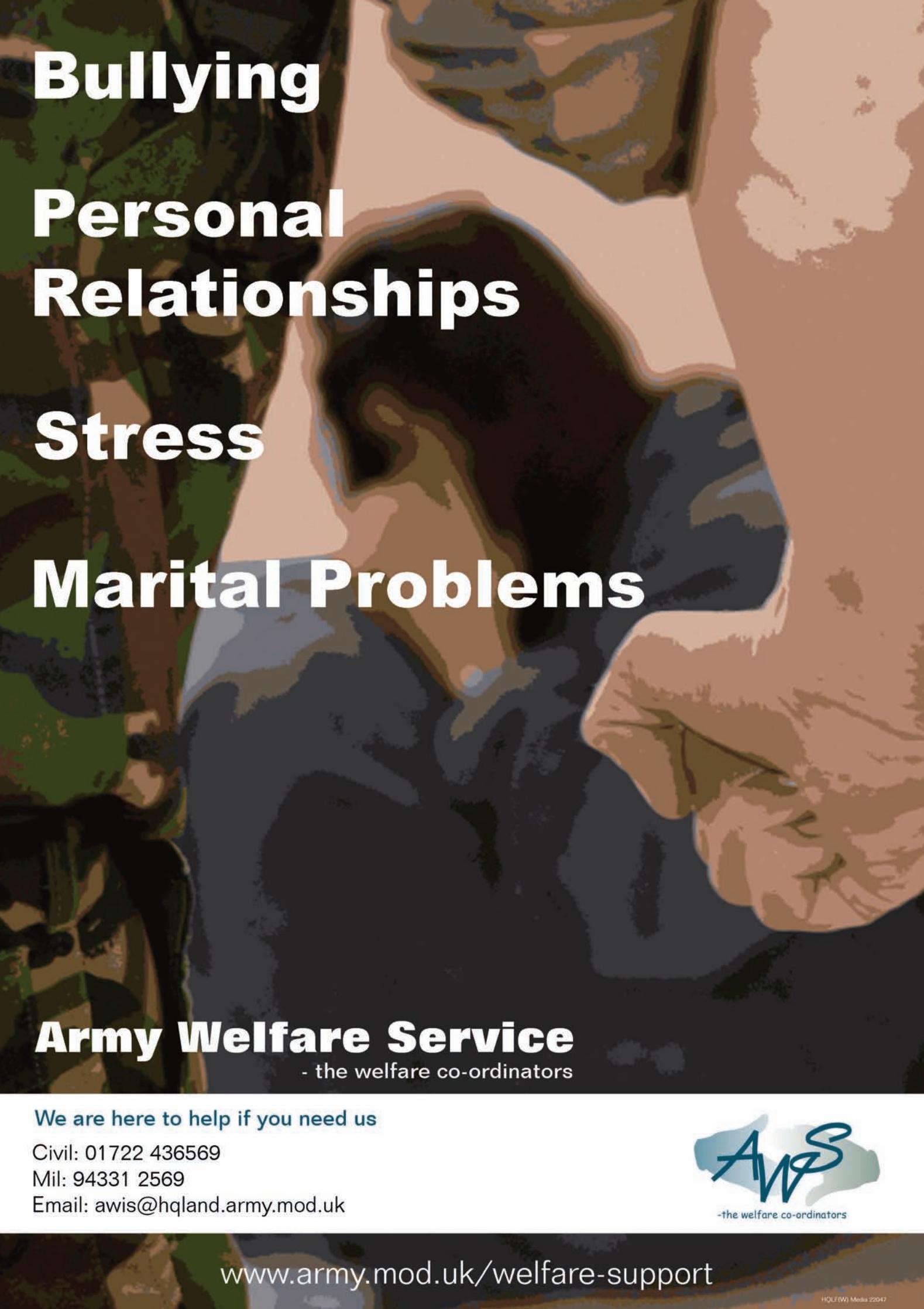
A large military truck with a tank on its flatbed, driving on a dirt road.



A close-up view of a military vehicle's rear, showing the exhaust and rear lights.

Park and ride

Students mount up for tour of Salisbury savannah



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THROW A DEADLY LEFT HOOK

The left hook is often the most explosive punch in a boxer's armoury. Mike Tyson and Joe Frazier were among the shot's finest exponents – here are the basics of throwing one:

Balance

Your back (right) foot stays put. All the manoeuvring will be done with your left, which needs to stand on its toes for flexibility.

Timing

Don't throw a left hook if you're

under fire from a volley of jabs – the time it takes to manoeuvre will see you felled instantly. You must be up close to your sparring partner and have enough energy to make the deadly punch count when you make contact.

Strike

When your opponent is weakened enough, get into position: right foot firm, left on its toes, body swinging to the left with your arm low, right hand guarding your face, left arm locked at a 90 degree angle. Swing from left to right, clocking your fellow boxer square on the chin. Get it right and they'll crumple.



SKIP

Skipping isn't just for children – ask any boxer. Skipping is a big part of their training – it's a great calorie burner, aids coordination and footwork, tones muscle and provides a cardiovascular workout.

Step 1

Choose a rope that's about the same length as your height.

Step 2

Hold the rope by the ends, with the loop behind your back at your feet.

Step 3

Throw it over your head and, without stopping, jump as it meets your feet.

Simple?

Well, keep repeating it until your timing is spot-on and then slowly increase your pace. Boxers aim to do three-minute skipping sessions – mimicking the length of a fight round. Work up from three one-minute sessions first. When that's mastered, try alternating the rope under one foot at a time – a harder skill that will enhance your timing.



Extracted from 'BE THE BEST... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.

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Tri-Service group aims to stabilise Afghanistan

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

A HIGH-RANKING Army chief has heaped praise on the professionalism of an operational group dedicated to helping the stabilisation process in Afghanistan.

Maj Gen Bruce Brealey, GOC Theatre Troops, commended the work of the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG) as the team's flag was raised at Gibraltar Barracks in Camberley, Surrey.

MSSG, formally known as the Joint Civil-Military Cooperation Group, has been expanded to encompass the work of the

military assistance to civil effect and stabilisation teams.

The group was set up with Afghanistan in mind and its aim is to help bring stability to the war-torn area by assisting with education, water supplies, businesses and health clinics.

"What we have got now is an organisation with a unified identity, something to be extremely proud of – it gives us focus," said Maj Gen Brealey.

"We are already seeing people having a much better idea of what we are trying to achieve and who with.

"Today marks an important step and recognises that this is a very important group within the Army."

MSSG's remit covers everything from war-fighting to peace support and disaster relief operations. It will also assist in mitigating the impact of military operations on the civil environment and vice versa.

The tri-Service body works alongside civilian

organisations in a mock forward operating base in Camberley to allow Herrick-bound users to become familiarised with the Afghan environment and the way of life of the country's population.

Lt Col Jonathan Brasher, commander MSSG, explained that his group ensures personnel are fully trained in different scenarios and are aware of their very important role.

"If MSSG was not there it would be an ad hoc process. Now we are bringing people together who have gone through formal training, to understand this way of operating," he said.

"With this we have much more in-depth training to achieve the task.

"I'm not saying that it hasn't been done before but now it's much better resourced and training has been much improved."

Maj Gen Brealey concluded: "In the past we were enthusiastic amateurs. Now we are selecting people who have an aptitude and who are being trained for it." ■



Culture club: The Military Stabilisation Support Group's work will ensure that British troops are able to repair and improve Afghanistan's infrastructure

Report: Cliff Caswell

CRAMPED conditions have been a fact of life for armoured vehicle crews. From the dawn of the tank, armed soldiers bulked out in full kit have had to endure an up-close-and-personal relationship with their neighbours.

In fairness, troops have rarely expected anything else. Throughout the past century, their metal battlefield workhorses have never been designed for comfort, with protection, mobility and overwhelming firepower the key concerns in battle.

But fast-forward to campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and the squeeze has become tighter than ever.

With a plethora of urgent operational requirements and upgraded armour to counter new threats, travelling around the 21st Century theatre in 50 degrees celsius heat can become uncomfortable to the point of unbearable.

Fortunately, experts are working to alleviate the strains on infantrymen and crews. With means of transport becoming more sophisticated, the MoD's Force Protection Working Group has been collaborating with industry to cut the need for a vehicle's underpinnings to be changed each time it is upgraded with a new system.

The Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA) project aims to create a single, standard electronic platform in new vehicles that will enable them to be easily adapted when the

need arises, cutting the requirement for bulky bolt-on extras.

"Interoperability is key at the moment," said Mark Stusnick, a combat systems and electronic warfare platform manager with Force Protection Inc – the company behind the Cougar chassis used for the Mastiff and Ridgback vehicles. "It is one of our main priorities and is at the forefront of what we are doing.

"These days you definitely need a modular approach to projects and to be able to introduce different sensors and weapons to your vehicle. When you are involved in a mission such as Afghanistan, you need to be able to plug in and play."

The Cougar 4x4 was chosen as the vehicle of choice for American defence contractor General Dynamics to showcase its GVA prototype. Called the Core Infrastructure

Distribution System, technicians have plumbed in a digital network that brings a new dimension to armoured warfare.

Armed with a full suite of discreet cameras mated to compact screens, crews and dismounted soldiers have full sight of what is going on in the outside world around them. Weapons can be fired remotely with the hatch down, and data from vehicle systems can be instantly accessed to diagnose any problems.

"We have essentially looked at an end-to-end solution, even down to where the equipment is mounted," said Karl Pfister, an

engineer with General Dynamics. "We have also made it easy to plumb new systems in to the vehicle."

"The crew station has a virtual dashboard and the driver can see all around the platform via the cameras. The commander also has access to these different views and video from the weapon station, and can see the overall health of the vehicle."

As well as being able to plug into electronic systems, crews can use network enabled capability to access other assets, including unmanned air and ground vehicles, and this is a key feature of the generic architecture concept provided by Thales. The mock-up of the company's Bushmaster vehicle has a raft of linked-up kit, including a package called Imagery-on-Demand.

Essentially a digital image compression and dissemination product, the feature allows operators in the vehicle to access high-quality video from sensors all over the battlefield, whether they are mounted on aircraft or units on the ground.

Also linked in to the Bushmaster mock-up is the Thales Protector remote station, which can be



Drawing board

Defence chiefs go back to basics on vehicle systems designs

fitted with a variety of weapons. And, once again, the common architecture makes for a much cleaner and more organised workspace for the crew.

"Soldiers now are certainly more switched on when it comes to technology," said Thales spokesman Paul Mottershead. "They are used to playing on their PlayStation 3s and mobile phones, so they are already familiar with network capabilities. Imagery-on-Demand is very

clever stuff and fits naturally with them.

"The Protector weapons station features thermal imaging, has a laser range finder and a colour day camera. It is an extremely good system to engage targets with and you can fit a 7.62-calibre weapon, grenade machine gun or missiles."

Overwhelming firepower is certainly a key asset against the Taliban in Afghanistan. But so too is the need to

deliver it precisely and creating a standard vehicle platform that supports a wide variety of applications is a huge advantage.

To this end, the GVA initiative will be vital in future operations. With the benefit of battle-winning data, and the ability to plug into info sources from across theatre, soldiers will be able to find, fix and engage the enemy more effectively than ever before. And they'll even be more comfortable doing it. ■

Off-road protection: A Mastiff 2 heavily armoured, 6x6 wheel-drive patrol vehicle supports the force protection of a 116-vehicle convoy during a perilous 70km journey to bases in the Sangin Valley

Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer, RLC



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READY TO RUMBLE

Sprawling depot prepares vehicle fleet for front-line action



Cat and dog: A Panther and Husky await operational upgrades at Ashchurch maintenance facility

Picture: Graeme Main



Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH the operational tempo in Afghanistan quicker than ever the need for fully-functional vehicles to support troops on the ground has never been greater.

Such a crucial role falls on the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency's (DSDA) Army vehicle depot in Ashchurch, a 272,000-square metre facility capable of holding everything from the mighty Challenger 2 battle tank to the comparatively lightweight quad bike trailer.

The vast site boasts row after row of hardware, with brand new Panthers, Jackals and Mastiffs among the huge inventory of wagons, trucks and support vehicles waiting to be deployed.

Such an array of resources could lead to the inevitable question as to why this fleet is stationed at a storage site in deepest Gloucestershire and not on the front line in Helmand province.

The answer is simple, as *Soldier* discovered when it was invited for a behind-the-scenes look at the DSDA facility.

In the commercial world a new car will roll off the production line, head to the showroom and find its way into the hands of a grateful owner, but for the Army the swift

flow from factory to driver is not an option.

"A lot of these vehicles are coming straight to us from industry and people often regard this place as a storage facility. It is a lot more than that," said Lt Col Robert Gascoigne (RLC), who is responsible for Whole Fleet Management.

"First of all we have to inspect the vehicles and conduct quality assessments – if anything is not right it goes back. If this equipment is going on operations it has to be fully working.

"We realise the soldiers want more than a vehicle. It has to be armoured, it has to be fitted with electronic counter measures and Bowman radio, which needs to be tested and working.

"These things have to be brought together, it is all done here and when these vehicles are delivered to Camp Bastion they are ready for the soldiers to jump in and go."

Personnel at Ashchurch have to juggle the demands of supporting operations with routine vehicle tasks but it is clear where their focus lies.

"Urgent Operational Requirements

(UORs) are very much our main priority, it is work we take a great deal of pride in delivering," said Maj Mark Wilson (RLC), the head of the DSDA establishment.

"We have never failed to meet a UOR deadline. All our projects are different but we look to turn a vehicle round in five days. However, it can be done overnight if needed."

Around 4,200 vehicles have been issued from the facility since October 2008, with more than 800 being sent out in support of operations.

Ashchurch has 25 military personnel working alongside a civilian staff of up to 180 people, all of whom are determined to deliver the best kit possible for soldiers on the ground.

Civil Service mechanics inspect all new arrivals in assessments that exceed

MOT standards. The companies who supply the Army's fleet also have a presence on site so any problems can be immediately addressed, rather than returning a vehicle to a factory hundreds of miles away.

"We do not hold things against them, that is why they have these facilities," explained WO2 Simon Gray (RLC), a vehicle specialist

A lot of these vehicles are coming straight to us from industry and people often regard this place as a storage facility. It is a lot more than that



on the UOR programme.

"We ask them to develop a vehicle in 12 months and they are under pressure to deliver, but we understand there will be problems."

As well as priming new tanks, trucks and transport for theatre the site is also responsible for supplying vehicles for training purposes.

This relates to both future users and maintenance personnel who have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the equipment on training areas such as Salisbury Plain.

Another question frequently thrown at the Army is why the hardware from operations in Iraq is not transferred directly to Afghanistan.

Ashchurch is responsible for housing returning kit and has recently received 900 vehicles that were used on Op Telic.

Some may be in need of upgrades and

improved armouring, given the differing nature of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, while others may have reached the end of their shelf life.

"It is a tired fleet," said Maj Wilson. "There were high demands on the vehicles in Iraq and they come back for a new lease of life before being passed on for operations or being disposed of.

"The IED threat in Afghanistan is extremely high. While there was a threat on Op Telic it was of a different nature and that contributes to the fact these vehicles cannot be shipped straight to Afghanistan." ■

Roll out: Jackal 2 patrol vehicles are kitted out at DSDA Ashchurch ahead of deployment

Interviews: Richard Long

WITH an injury-plagued career behind him it would be safe to assume that football legend Paul Gascoigne is in no rush to return to the pitch.

But the hero of Italia '90 will be doing exactly that this month as he pulls on the famous three lions jersey to lead a stellar cast of England's finest against a Rest of the World side at Reading's Madejski Stadium.

The match is being staged as a fundraiser for Help for Heroes and the Newcastle United great found the invitation to support such a worthy cause too good to refuse.

"I think what they did with the rugby match at Twickenham in 2008 was great, it was an amazing success," Gascoigne said in an exclusive interview with *Soldier*.

"Players and stars in these matches often get called legends but it's those in our Forces that are the legends."

"We see things that are happening on the news all the time but we can't have any idea what they are facing every day and the risks they are having to take."

"Then you have our wounded soldiers and what they go through with the support of Help for Heroes is really brave. Some of the stories you read and see about their road to recovery and their strength and will power are just truly amazing."

"I have had my fair share of injuries and have undergone physiotherapy and operations but you can't imagine the stuff they go through."

With Les Ferdinand, Andrew Cole, Peter Beardsley and Chris Waddle among those lining up alongside the midfield maestro, the Heroes Cup match promises to provide attacking flair in abundance.

The squad will also boast a number of famous sporting names and well-known stars from television, stage and the music world along with players from all three Services.

England cricketers Alec Stewart, Darren Gough and Mark Ramprakash will be joined by Rugby World Cup winner Kyran Bracken and Sgt James Lavelle (APTC), who has the honour of representing the Army.

The finishing touches are still being added to the Rest of the World squad but German stars Steffen Freund and Thomas Helmer have already confirmed their attendance as have former Manchester City ace Georgi Kinkladze, ex-Liverpool striker John Aldridge and one-time Arsenal winger Anders Limpar.

Sgt Glen Davidson (RMP) will have an opportunity to go head-to-head with Army colleague Lavelle while rugby stars Justin Marshall and Kenny Logan will also take to the field.

Ferdinand, who scored five goals in 17 appearances for England, first heard of the Heroes Cup in the summer, when he played in the Sir Bobby Robson match to raise money for the former England manager's cancer charity.

"We get asked to play in a lot of charity matches but you have to do those that mean something to you," the former Queen's Park Rangers and Tottenham Hotspur striker told *Soldier*.

"The Bobby match was very personal to all of the lads and what is happening with Help For Heroes has obviously struck a chord."

"It looks set to be a great game and I know a lot of the Army lads in the UK are set to be there on the night. That will be great as it's as much as anything to pay tribute to them."

Ferdinand is also looking forward to renewing a few on-pitch battles.

"There are always rivalries, especially with the German and home nations players," he said.

"I hear they have Lothar Matthaus in their team and he is always one that we get into. I think Ally McCoist and John Aldridge are playing so we will want to put one over them too."

"The game will be competitive but at the end of the day it's fun and for a

really great cause."

Strike ace Cole, who bagged 187 Premier League goals in a prolific career, will make his Legends debut at the Madejski and is delighted it is in aid of such a worthy cause.

"These people [Service personnel] face life-changing challenges and put their lives on the line every day, and hopefully we can show our appreciation on a fantastic night of football."

"Anyone who serves their country in our Armed Forces is a hero and those guys who have been out [to Afghanistan] and are currently out there are doing an amazing job."

"I hope that when we stand in line for the anthems,

alongside players from the Army team, that you know we are all saluting you."

Gascoigne added: "You miss the buzz of playing in a full stadium and lining up with your ex-England mates and in these games you get the added bonus of playing with your acting and music heroes."

"I really hope that Reading is full as it makes such a great atmosphere. If the people there are having fun we have more fun and we want to put on a show for them." ■

● The Heroes Cup will be held at Reading's Madejski Stadium on Thursday, November 12, with kick-off scheduled for 1945.

Tickets, costing £10 for adults and £5 for children, are available by calling 0844 2491871 or by visiting www.readingfc.co.uk



Lion *hearts*

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Midfield general: Paul Gascoigne takes centre stage this month as an England team of ex-pros and celebrities take on a Rest of the World side for Help for Heroes

Picture: Action Images



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Sporting chance

Service recreation champion celebrates 70th birthday

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH soldiers' skills on operations drawing constant praise from civvy street, it is easy for their sporting exploits to go unheralded.

Whether it is playing Rugby Union in front of tens of thousands of people at Twickenham or taking to the ocean waves, the Army's finest remain devoted to balancing front-line graft with recreation.

But their participation would not be possible without the help of the Nuffield Trust. Set up 70 years ago by Lord Nuffield – William Morris of Morris Motors fame – the organisation has dished out millions of pounds in grants which all three Services have used to buy kit ranging from skiing equipment to yachts.

General secretary Tom Arnold, a retired Royal Air Force group captain, told *Soldier* that the trust routinely hands out £1 million each year for the Armed Forces to spend on its behalf.

"We are here to support anything in the recreational area," he added. "Personnel come through their individual Service point of contact and those requirements are what drives the trust."

Originally set up in October 1939 with one million shares in Morris Motors – the equivalent to £49 million in modern money – the organisation aims to meet the Services' recreational needs that are not covered by public money.

It supplied everything from sports equipment to libraries during the Second World War and even provided grants to institutions such as the Union Jack Club to cover their running costs.

The organisation has six trustees – three from a military background and three civilians – who direct the trust's work, with Arnold as the sole full-time member of staff.

Money for the generous grants is generated from the original

endowment, which now forms part of a sizeable investment portfolio.

"When it comes to large, non-public projects, the Armed Forces don't get money and that is where the trust comes in," added Arnold. "All we live on is the original endowment and any gains from it being invested."

The physical results of the group's continuing contributions can be seen throughout the military.

In 2008 alone the trust delivered 248 grants to Service units to procure items including canoes, weight training equipment, mountain bikes and large-screen televisions.

Specialist kit to help injured Service personnel get back into sport – including the adaptive skiing gear used by the MoD's Battle Back initiative – was bought partly thanks to funding from the trust.

Its reach also extends into helping to get Christmas boxes delivered to troops deployed on operations and contributing towards shows put on around the world by the British Forces Foundation.

'We believe that recreation is essential and have always held that belief'

And large-scale capital projects also form a key part of the Nuffield Trust's work, with sports facilities at Tidworth Garrison, Bulford Camp, Bordon and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst among those built with the group's help.

But regardless of the scale of the project, Arnold said that the important thing for the trust was to continue to nurture the recreational side of Service life.

"It is the smaller items that we provide the most of. One hundred units per year will come to us for skis and those can then be used by a number of other chaps.

"We believe that recreation is essential and have always held that belief."

"Because of the Nuffield Trust, individual soldiers get the chance to ski or sail or even simply to get into town because their unit has a minibus.

"The Army provides the basics and we are there to provide a little additional help."

● Full details on the trust, including how to apply for a grant, can be found at www.nuffieldtrust.org ■



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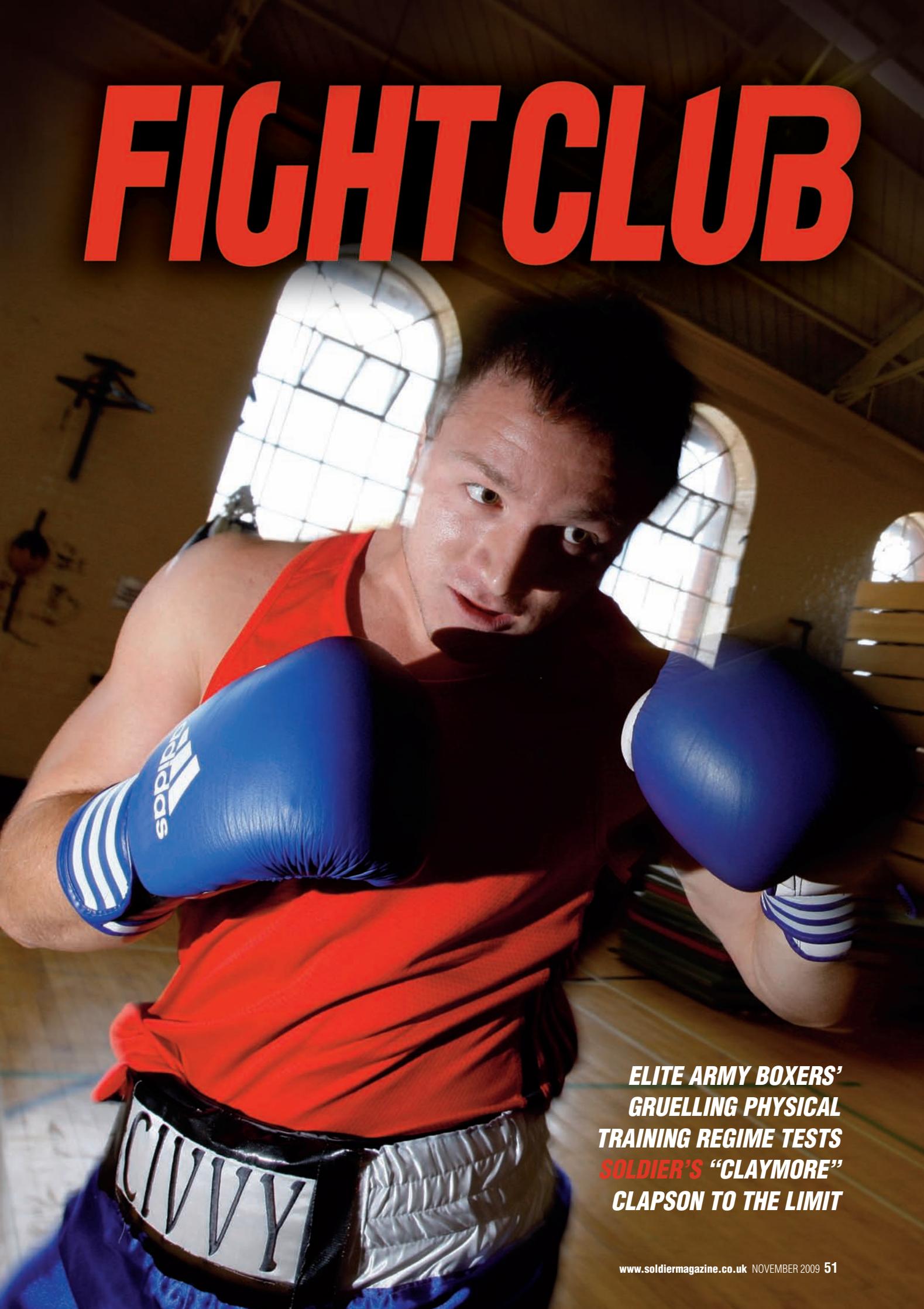


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FIGHT CLUB



**ELITE ARMY BOXERS'
GRUELLING PHYSICAL
TRAINING REGIME TESTS
SOLDIER'S "CLAYMORE"
CLAPSON TO THE LIMIT**

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

ABREATH-SAPPING 40-minute run interspersed with a few hills and what seemed like a sandy Alpine mountain was my no-holds-barred introduction to life on the Army boxing team.

Breakfast and a lie down offered a bit of respite, but it was soon back to the Maida Gymnasium in Aldershot for the second of the day's arduous training activities.

Three intensive sessions a day, five days a week, for nine months – that is the punishing regime personnel on the Army boxing team agree to take on and I had been challenged to survive one week.

"You'll last two days," were the confidence-boosting words of the newest addition to Team GB, LCpl Martin Stead (RLC), who boxes at flyweight.

But I was feeling fit and with the tough 0800 run under my belt – which I was sure would be the hardest part of the day – I did not expect any problems from my first 24 hours.

I had, however, forgotten the first rule of Army boxing – there are no easy sessions.

Along with the 30 other fighters on the squad I put on my hand wraps and slid on some ten ounce gloves ready for eight sets of pad shuttles. "One one two, one two one, one one two four," barked assistant coach LCpl Stephen

Briggs (Yorks) as I fired fists into his pads after a shuttle run.

Everything was required to be done at speed, with accuracy. Yes, I was quick over ten metres, but could I throw a fast double-jab, right-hand with precision? Maybe. Could I do it without leaving myself open to a counter-punch? No.

LCpl Briggs reminded me of my shoddy guard with a few timely taps to my wide-open face. In the ring, I would have been flat on my back on the canvas.

Now blowing heavily and with my second vest already saturated, I plodded into the main gym for eight sets of one-minute rounds on different bags. Loud music and 62 gloves slapping leather were the only sounds.

To finish off the day we had a spot of abdominal training. Before this session, the term "hammer-time" conjured up an image of a baggy-trousered rapper saying "you can't touch this". Now the phrase is synonymous with pain in the shape of a 5kg medicine ball being thrown into my mid-region.

The drill was simple: do 30 sit-ups

holding a medicine ball, then when head coach Sgt Tony Davis (APTC) shouts "hammer-time" in his distinctive Geordie accent, brace yourself while

the heavy sphere drops onto you.

Sgt Davis gave me his personal attention for the exciting part. Needless to say my stomach muscles took the most rigorous battering of their life.

With day one finished my body felt like it had completed three weeks worth of physical training in one day. That was because it had.

But fresh from my baby-like sleep I was ready for Tuesday's pre-breakfast run.

"It's shorter than yesterday's," was the only hint I could muster from the boys.

The whole team set off on a steady, sweat-inducing two-mile run to the bottom of a ludicrously steep hill, ready for instructions.

"Sprint to the top, jog down. Don't walk at any point," said LCpl Briggs. "We're going easy on you today, you've only got to do four, not six like last week."

In my experience a hill sprint has always been 20 metres of hard work followed by a rest, so to find the top was still out of sight after 150 metres was disappointing to say the least.



By the fourth repetition of the 300-metre "death run" it was a case of just getting to the summit in any way possible. Thankfully I finished without vomiting.

I was aided by the team of soldiers, picked from across the Army for their pugilistic prowess and physical determination, who could not have been more supportive.

"It's obviously a privilege to be here, so we make the most of it," said LCpl Kyle Wisniewski (1 RRF). "Training is tough but with the banter we all pull each other along."

Somehow, through the pain of shin-splints, I managed to limp through to day four where I faced my moment of reckoning.

The time had come to spar with some hand-picked contenders and taking it easy on the new boy had been ruled out.

Three lots of two-minute rounds with different fighters was the format. I was pumped full

of adrenalin and bouncing with excitement, regardless of what was in store.

The act of simultaneously moving your feet and throwing punches is tiring enough but add that to maintaining a defence against leather-cased shots fired from relentless pistons and things escalate a notch.

As a result, and after just 60 seconds of boxing, I was drained of all energy and offering little in terms of danger for heavyweight LCpl Andrew Chilcott (5 Scots).

In hindsight, the solid left jab followed by an uppercut from "Chilli" was not a surprise.

Back in my corner with claret trickling down my face, coach Tony greased me up with Vaseline before sending me out to face England boxer LCpl Steve Turner (R Signals).

The light-welterweight soaked up my best body-shots before propelling a barrage of blows into my head. I took a standing eight count.

In the last two minutes, despite running on empty I managed to breach LCpl Nick Brook's (RE) guard a few times, landing some pleasing shots before dancing my way to the last bell. It was over and I had survived.

After one more day of graft the week was finished, I was still standing and Sgt Davis was prepared to give me a pass.

For these soldiers eating, living and breathing Army boxing is a dream come true.

But as one team member said: "We love it but it's far from a cushy number."

"Most people wouldn't swap with us once they see what we have to go through." ■





1 Bastion bow

WITH Op Telic successfully concluded and British military attention firmly fixed on the conflict in Afghanistan, it is not surprising that BFBS now has a permanent presence at Camp Bastion. The broadcaster decided to mark its momentous move into theatre for Op Herrick 11 by asking serving soldiers what song they would like to be the first played. Presenter Dusty Miller explained: "In the run up to our Afghanistan opening on October 26, we asked our audience to vote for the first song that should be played. Mindful of the very particular brand of humour among our listeners, we were worried it might be **The Smurfs** – but were braced to play whatever they asked for! As it turned out, they voted for *Wake Up Boo* by **The Boo Radleys**. The first song played in any new theatre tends to get a bit of an iconic status and becomes a tune that in some ways sums up a particular tour."

2 Killer choice

FOR the Servicemen and women who deployed to Iraq through the highs and lows of the six-year Telic mission, the comforting sounds of BFBS's presenters were with them every step of the way. The burgeoning ability of the Iraqi security forces led to British troops departing theatre in April this year and it was left to Jessie Aru to set the musical tone for the end of the final mission in the Middle East. She said: "I was detached to BFBS Radio at Camp Buehring in Kuwait in March 2009, where it had moved from the Coalition Operating Base (COB) in Basra. It was the drawdown of British troops from Iraq. The desire to go home was strong, more so perhaps as this was the last time that they would set foot in that part of the Middle East. Although they were ending one op tour many knew they would soon be going to Afghanistan. The hottest track of the moment was **La Roux's** *In for the Kill*."

3 Room shaker

BASRA'S COB was a frequent target for insurgent rocket attacks and the unavoidable wail of the indirect fire alarm warning of incoming ordnance was a constant annoyance for soldiers at the facility. Regardless of the danger, Army humour won out as one of the most-requested songs during Op Telic 10 was **DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince's** aptly-named *Boom! Shake the Room*. DJ Frank McCarthy (above left) explained: "Given the number of IDF attacks on the COB during Telic 10, the popularity of this song is hardly surprising. When the alarm would go off, I'd obviously have to hit the deck asap, but on the way down I'd be trying to press a button to get all the tracks to play back-to-back while I was out of action on the floor. Occasionally there'd be an alarm when I had the mic open, so I'd have to keep on talking while struggling into body armour under the desk."



RANKED

TOP TEN BFBS SONG REQUESTS ON OPERATIONS



4 Muddy waters

NEIL Carter recalls a Telic 2 video as his top pop pick. "During my tour, 40 Regt Royal Artillery conducted an amphibious landing training exercise at Az Zubayr Port. The event was filmed and the footage, which can still be found online, showed the boat drivers dropping the lads from 38 Battery onto the landing site. What they didn't know was that they'd been set-up so as they disembarked each one sank up to their waists in the mud. It didn't take long for the video with the soundtrack of **Chumbawamba's** *Tub Thumping* to circulate. Needless to say it was one of the most requested tracks that tour."

5 Shaibiza selector

DESPITE enjoying all that Shaibah Logistic Base had to offer, Dave Simon was inundated with tongue-in-cheek requests for **The Animals'** classic *We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place* during his stint on Telic 5. "Compared to other Iraq tours this was bliss," he said. "Top food, water, showers and a two-can rule. Welcome to Shaibiza! But it was damn hot. We were in the welfare village so it was easy for people to pop in with their requests, popping their SA80s in our cupboard while they grabbed a brew and had a chat. There wasn't a day that went by when this song wasn't requested."

6 Poignant pick

THE intensity of some of the missions carried out on Telic 4 meant that joke requests were rare. Presenter Damian Watson said: "I was out in Iraq in late 2004. That tour was dominated by the Black Watch's deployment with US Forces. It was so clearly a dangerous operation that listeners stopped requesting wind-ups. The one song that stands out for me is *Last Train Home* by **Lost Prophets**. The 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment posted a film online and used the song as the soundtrack. It was requested virtually every day and will always remind me of Iraq."



Herrick bound: The welfare facilities at Camp Bastion gained a welcome addition last month as British Forces Broadcasting Service opened up a full-time station for troops based in southern Afghanistan

Picture: Graeme Main

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7 Southern sonnet

THERE are not too many people who can say they deployed on each and every Telic mission, but BFBS's Chris Pratt is one. With 13 separate operations-worth of musical tales to tell, Pratt recalls a light-hearted moment of relief from the fierce fighting in Al Amarah among his favourites. He said: "I have a multitude of memories from each one of the 13 Telics I was involved in. One thing that always takes me back to Telic 4 was when we still had a presence in Al Amarah and Y Company of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, based at CIMIC House, were involved in one of the most intense fighting periods to that date. Despite all that was going on, they kept asking for *Sweet Home Alabama* by Lynyrd Skynyrd – but renamed it Sweet Home Al Amarah, of course."

9 Bosnian beats

THE sound of **Electric Six's** *Danger!* *High Voltage* stirs special memories of an Op Oculus deployment for

Annwen Campbell-Smith. She explained: "I was in Bosnia in 2003, which coincided with the start of the conflict in Iraq. The experience of all being locked in the metal factory at Banja Luka together was very intense and BFBS Radio undertook live output 24/7. One thing that stood out was the way the serving personnel – especially the younger ones – wanted to be on the front line with their comrades in Iraq."



8 Top two

WHILE serving with BFBS on Op Telic 9, Neil Moore was called upon to spin tracks from across the musical spectrum while simultaneously

dodging incoming fire. "One lunchtime in particular stands out for me," he explained. "We had 38 rockets, several near misses of our BFBS compound, including a live one landing 18 paces from the studio. Amid all the whizzes and bangs two songs stood out. *Monster* by **The Automatic** was a real morale-booster. The other was the one that seemed to crop up most with messages from home – *Chasing Cars* by **Snow Patrol**."



10 Umm bop

AN almost-idyllic location in the southern Iraqi port of Umm Qasr during Telic 2 inspires Neil Carter's second choice. Away from Basra, BFBS set up shop within a stone's throw of the waterfront. "In April 2003 our studio was on the quayside and attracted a lot of attention. It also served as our office, record library and sleeping accommodation," he said. "From 0600, Royal Logistic Corps bakers who were normally based in Dulmen pitched up with fresh bread, buns or bacon sandwiches. As night fell, the crazy mess of the cranes and ships was silhouetted as the skies turned orange from oil wells on the horizon burning off the gas and we would sit and watch the ships come in and roll away. The **Otis Redding** classic *Sitting on the Dock of the Bay* was both ironic and poignant."

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WANT to send a message from operations to family at home? BFBS Radio has been broadcasting on DAB nationwide in the UK since May 2009, so it is easy to send a message from Afghanistan to loved ones anywhere in the UK – or anywhere else in the Forces world. Just call 9298 95298 4001 from a military red phone.

You can also submit a message by logging onto www.bfbs.com/messages or, if you are based in Bastion, pop in and see the presenters. The station is situated in Bastion 2 next to the Naafi.

Make sure family and friends in the UK have a DAB digital radio so they can check out what you are listening to all those miles away and hear any dedications that you send their way. BFBS can also be found on British television by tuning into Freesat channel 786 or Sky Guide 0211.

Home to ops

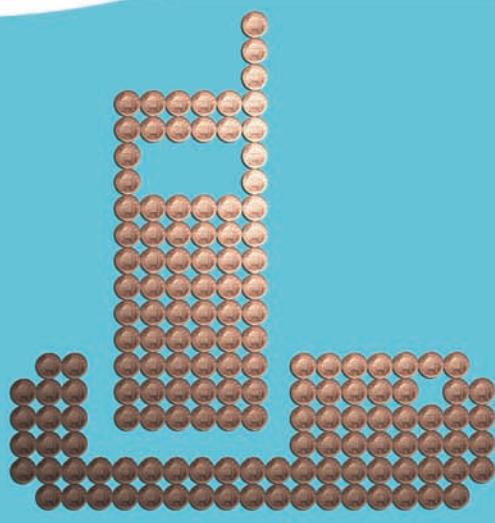
FAMILY and friends at home can also send messages, request tracks and dedicate songs to soldiers in southern Afghanistan.

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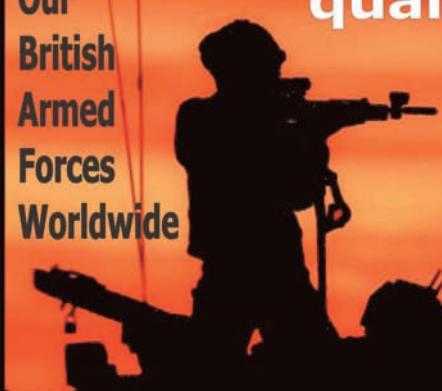
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'Officers need a dressing down'

QUIET rightly, the last 18 months or so have seen a greater number of Servicemen and women wearing their uniforms in public.

While I am not convinced that Combat 95 is the most appropriate, or smart, form of uniform, particularly for those who are office-bound, for many it is all that is currently available.

What concerns me most though is the apparent readiness to wear only part of the uniform. The most common example is the lack of any headgear whatsoever.

I left the Army less than two years ago but it seems as though there is a new dress code in place. Is going beret-free now Service policy?

I appreciate that the Armed Forces generally reflect societal changes, but is scruffy-chic the new order of the day?

I say that only because my unscientific observations suggest that this fashion statement is predominately an officer trend rather than something that goes right across the organisation; the female major collecting her children from Wilton Primary School, hands in pockets and wearing no beret; and the male lieutenant colonel, standing at the train station and eating something half-covered by a brown paper bag, again no beret. There are numerous similar examples.

By contrast, I see an enormous number of junior NCOs and other ranks – particularly in London – wearing Combat



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth, RLC

Keeping up appearances: Soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment shunned "officer scruffy-chic" in favour of "scrubbing up" for a homecoming parade through the streets of Guildford this summer following their return from operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan

95 complete with headgear, and looking as proud and smart as this form of dress permits. – **Mr S Rowland-Jones, Salisbury.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Thank you for highlighting this important issue. There is a very serious point within your remarks; one I hope the individuals concerned pick up on, but more broadly

that the officer cohort takes note of.

The British Army has a clear dress policy which all ranks should adhere to. The wearing of headdress is an important part of that, whether in public or "cutting" about barracks.

Scruffy-chic is simply not acceptable. It is beholden on commanders of all units to set the standards and enforce them.



"Her pink trainers, lack of headgear, taste for nicotine and general sloppiness may have offended you Cpl Harrison, but her story that she's a civvy and bought her Combat 95s and boots on eBay happens to be true."

AS a serving officer and resident of Aldershot, on occasions I have found myself appalled by the appearance of members of the Army in public.

I have seen guardsmen walking the streets of the town in uniform, but without headdress and smoking. And I recently saw a female soldier in North Camp, leaning against a wall outside the Post Office wearing Combat 95s and pink trainers, no headdress and with a cigarette in hand.

I often challenge individuals who do not comply with the standards of dress required of our Servicemen and women in public, but the prevalence of such events in the Aldershot area leads me to believe that some in the chain of command are not rigorously enforcing these standards or are failing to ensure that our young soldiers understand them.

Should you publish this observation, I hope it provokes debate and improves standards. – **Maj A K Thomson.**

Maj Paul Robinson, CoS Aldershot Garrison, responds: Commander

Aldershot Garrison takes a very personal interest in the highest standards being maintained by soldiers and officers within his garrison.

The way in which members of the garrison conduct themselves in the public eye is key as the public's perception of the Army is often shaped more by what they see in person rather than what they see in the media. Poor standards, shown by a few, have a disproportionate effect on how we are judged.

Garrison routine orders carry regular reminders as to the standards required and the commander has previously written to all COs and heads of establishments to remind units of the requirement for exemplary attire.

There is also a clear duty on every NCO and officer to address failures wherever they are seen. A drop in standards will not be tolerated.

Council cash conundrum

CAN anyone shed some light on how to reclaim council tax? My husband has just returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan and we are trying to secure a £140 rebate.

We live in our own property and have been advised by my husband's pay clerk and pay master that we have to reclaim the sum direct from our local council.

However, after numerous phone calls and visits to the council offices we are being told the opposite – that the rebate must be administered by the Army.

In turn, the pay clerk remains adamant that, as we own our property, it is an issue for the council. Please help as we seem to be going round in circles. – **Mrs L Nock.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

From the details in your letter it would appear that your husband should be entitled to Council Tax Relief (CTR).

The aim of this relief is to provide financial support to Service personnel deployed on operations.

In your case, as you are living in your own property, CTR would be claimed on the completion of your husband's operational tour through JPA.

In order to authorise the JPA to claim your husband's unit admin office would need to see a council tax bill for the period in question, confirming that he is liable for council tax at your property, and a letter from your local authority stating that you have not been given a discount due to deployment on operations.

Alternatively the letter from the local authority could be replaced by a signed statement to the same effect from your husband. Payment will be made as a lump sum, based on a fixed daily rate and is non-taxable.

I AM writing in response to the letter writer who encouraged the chain of command to issue cycling headgear to combat the number of Service personnel injured in bicycle accidents, "Heads-up on safety idea" (September). I believe the solution may be far simpler than that.

Last winter I had cause to regularly visit a large UK barracks where the main gate to the married quarters is on the edge of a busy road.

As a cyclist in London I well appreciate the need for lights and a high-visibility vest, so was shocked to see soldiers of all ranks leaving the barracks by bike wearing DPM and no reflective clothing, and without lights of any kind.

One would hope that safety standards could be set at a certain level and that the gate guard could remind all those



Taste of theatre: Medics treat a simulated casualty during a pre-deployment exercise at Strensall, York

Picture: Graeme Main

Sign me up to scrub up

I HAVE been in the Armed Forces for ten years, serving with both the Territorial Army and as a full-time reservist, and have completed four tours.

During my last Herrick deployment I spent quite a lot of time observing the Operating Department Practitioners (ODPs) at work in the field hospital at Camp Bastion. Seeing them in action convinced me that being an ODP was the job for me and I sought references from the medical staff I shadowed.

On my return to the UK I went to my local careers office to find out what qualifications I needed and, as a member of the TA, asked if I could get put on an access course. I wasn't given any definitive answers.

Why is it that a TA soldier offering to join the Regular Army is being passed

over? I thought the medical services were overstretched? – **Cpl M Cannan, 4 Lancs.**

Capt John Welsby, Hd Ed ODP (Mil), DCHCS, replies: Regardless of service, Cpl Cannan would need to go through the normal recruitment process, beginning at the Army Careers Information Office.

ODP interviews are held in January for intake in September, following completion of phase one training.

Whether the soldier in question would need to complete phase one training is an issue for the Army Medical Directorate and Army Personnel Centre.

The ODP cadre is currently healthy and we will only be recruiting one person for 2010 and one in 2011, so competition will be very strong.



exiting on two wheels of the policy. That said, one of the "offenders" I witnessed during a visit to the camp was an orderly sergeant, so perhaps I'm being over-ambitious.

It doesn't matter if you're going 200 miles or 200 yards, be seen! – **Giles Morgan, London.**

PS...



ALTHOUGH S Wilson, "Heads-up on safety idea" (September), believes that wearing a cycling helmet alleviates the risk of serious head injury, I have seen no compelling evidence of this in 25 years of cycling to work in London.

Helmets are designed to mitigate low speed impacts (such as falling off a bike while learning to ride) and are unlikely to be of noticeable benefit if a cyclist is hit by a car.

Evidence also indicates that riders who wear helmets are more likely to be involved in an accident than those who do not and are just as likely to suffer a serious head injury.

The cyclist I overtook this morning with his helmet dangling from the handlebars where it could be snagged by a wing mirror was obviously aiming for the worst of both worlds. – **Peter Larking, D Resettlement, London.**

Letting off steam

I'm writing in response to Ian Goodwin-Reeves' letter – "You're right, we're not different" (October) – regards those who took up their pens in response to the articles on gay Service personnel in July's issue.

I, like many others in uniformed service, am a steam enthusiast – it is a lifestyle choice. I attended the Bedford Steam Fare last month, but did not wear my uniform.

I am convinced we steam enthusiasts are equal; we are just not exceptional. I hope this letter gives hope to other steam enthusiasts out there.

However, could we please have a steam enthusiast on the front cover of *Soldier* or an article on how two steam enthusiasts are living together?

And in light of Maj Pat Owen's concerns [that "by bringing the sexuality of Service personnel out of the private and into the public domain we risk giving the enemy an advantage"], I hope that my acknowledging the existence of steam enthusiasts within the Services will not be endangering the mission in Helmand; even though I am pretty confident that Afghanistan has more than its own share of steam enthusiasts. – Maj Ian Ballantyne, COS BOWTAH (Jt), RAF Henlow.



The editor, an ever-willing envoy of equality and diversity, types: Simmer down. How about three steam enthusiasts on the cover?

This trio of unexceptional equals were snapped enjoying Exercise Topham Hat – a training programme in support of Swanage steam railway – back in 2001.



Shed some light on home safety

I AM due to finish my tour in Brunei and move to the UK in the coming weeks. As part of this process I had a pre-march out of my Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and was asked to complete a number of cleaning tasks which I believe involve a high risk of falling.

With these health and safety concerns in mind, I wrote to my 2iC who in turn raised the issue with the station staff officer.

To my surprise I was told that there is no health and safety policy in regards to SFA. Is this true? Who would be responsible for any injury sustained in the event of a fall in the home? – Name and address supplied.

Maj Keith Fisher, British Forces Brunei, writes: In response to the soldier's point about health and safety in the home, the MoD does have a policy in that it is responsible for ensuring accommodation is safe for occupancy prior to march-in.

This is carried out via a number of mandatory checks (electrics, gas, water, fixtures and fittings etc) by Defence Estates (Brunei).

When the house has been certified fit for purpose, it is handed over to the station staff officer to allocate.



Once allocated to an occupant, the "residents" become responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of the SFA under a Licence to Occupy Service Family Accommodation certificate.

A soldier who blatantly ignores their part of the certificate and fails to maintain the property by not reporting damages promptly or not keeping the quarter hygienically clean becomes liable, as not doing so is negligent. The licence states what the occupant is liable for and what we (the MoD) are responsible for as landlords.

In this case the soldier is referring to the issue of "cleaning at height" as a health and safety issue. Although the writer's point is valid, occupants should not get confused over health and safety in the home and health and safety at work. For example, in the workplace

light bulbs on ceilings are changed by contractors, whereas in the home they are changed by the occupant. Occupants are given the tools to carry out these tasks by the admin support unit. If an occupant does have an issue with having to clean items at height ahead of march-out, they can always hire someone to carry out the task for them as an element of disturbance allowance covers these costs.

Subsidised separation?

SINCE the mother of my daughter passed away, I've been entitled to Service Families Accommodation. I recently got married and, as my wife is currently living in Zimbabwe, I strongly believe that I qualify for voluntary separated status. My unit has told me that I am not eligible to claim, but having read through Joint Services Personnel (JSP) 752 I am convinced they are mistaken. – Cpl Chapwanya.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: There is a difference between separation from your family home, which is where you and your daughter live and spend the majority of your time, and separation from your wife.

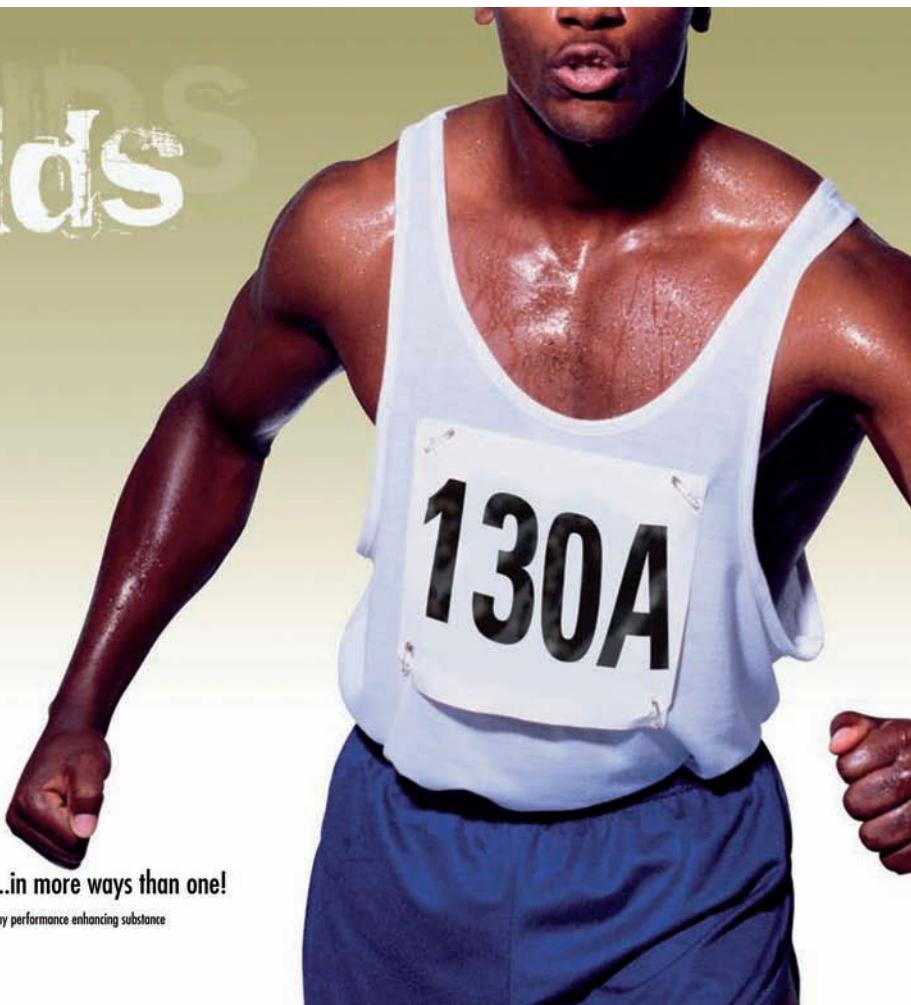
I can see how you are interpreting JSP 752 in your favour, but looking at the whole Longer Separation Allowance chapter, and in particular para 05.0117, I don't think the fact that your wife has yet to join you at your family home is a reasonable justification to claim voluntarily separated status.

Steroids

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'Ill-considered' – must try harder

WHILE I have no wish to question the suitability of The Duke of York's Royal Military School (DYRMS) and Queen Victoria School (QVS), they are not the one-size-fits-all solution to continuity of education for Service children as suggested by Flt Lt (Retd) Chipperfield, *Talkback* (September).

Having now moved 17 times in 19 years of marriage – and three times in the last two years – boarding was the only real option for my family, and it was either me (family settle in our own house and I commute) or the kids (boarding school).

The kids got it. And while the Army does pay 90 per cent of the associated school fees, let's not forget that in return it "bought" my accompanied service, which has been invaluable in ensuring that I am able to contribute effectively at work and on operations. Would accompanied service wither if Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) was withdrawn?

Our choice of boarding school was driven by what was best for our children and the suggestion that the MoD should mandate any school is, frankly, ill-considered.

I don't doubt that Flt Lt Chipperfield's own experience of DYRMS is anything less than excellent.

Indeed, I have several friends who are both ex-pupils and have children there and they cannot speak highly enough of the school in question.

However, if the chosen course is to "lose" your children then the school choice must remain just that – a choice. My wife and I looked at more than 30 schools,



Picture: Mike Weston

Suits you, sir: DYRMS boarders Brandon Valler (left) and Aaron Carr get an early taste of life in uniform

including Gordon's School (a state boarding school with a strong military tradition) and DYRMS, neither of which "fitted" our children's personalities.

Our ultimate choice of Denstone College was based on a variety of factors of which proximity to parents (two-hour drive) was only one.

Finally, the suggestion that mandating schools could "save millions" is farcical. If we really want to reduce the CEA bill, I would suggest the following:

- Apply the regulations to the letter – anecdotally all parents claiming CEA know individuals who appear able to bend the regulations to the limits and for those of us

who move regularly, those who don't are a constant source of frustration.

- Remove day boarding allowance – those in one-town jobs (C130 pilots at Brize Norton to mind) are having their children educated at MoD expense because we are not able to frame the regulations correctly.

- Pay each stage of fees up front – this is a buyer's market and I could get up to a 25 per cent reduction on my fees if I could pay five years in advance (£20,000 saving).

- Provide a confidential "cheat" line – when someone is pulling the wool over your eyes tell? Sometimes the chain of command is not an option. – **Lt Col James Galloway, CO The Scottish Transport Regiment (V).**

PS . . .



Picture: Becky Page

SOLDIER'S recent coverage of operations has been of considerable interest and I've been particularly impressed by the treatment afforded to those who have fallen.

However, receipt of October's issue was marred by what I witnessed on BBC's *Midlands Today*. A report of the funeral of a soldier showed his coffin being borne in front of a group of officers who all failed to salute the casket as it passed. In days gone by even our enemies were respected on their final journey and to fail to acknowledge our own is simply not good enough. – **Wg Cdr Colin Cummings MBCS, Yelvertoft, Northants.**

Sums just don't add up

FLT Lt (Retd) Chipperfield, "Alternative school of thought" (September), seems to misunderstand the rules surrounding CEA.

Firstly, Service parents are already compelled to consider DYRMS and QVS and all state boarding schools must sign the CEA eligibility certificate to this effect.

Secondly, the schools he mentions are selective and operate at capacity.

Unless they are to grossly expand their teaching staff and accommodation in time for the start of the next academic year, parents will have to continue to look elsewhere for their children's education.

Thirdly, CEA is capped at a specific level, requiring parents to contribute a minimum ten per cent of the fees.

By way of comparison, the parental contribution for a place at DYRMS is £550 per term, whereas at my daughter's school it is £625.

Does Flt Lt Chipperfield imagine that the rest of the costs associated with an education at DYRMS or QVS are free to

the MoD? Instead of paying CEA to the parent, for them to pass on to their chosen school, the MoD bears the costs directly.

I would imagine that the cost saving this generates is negligible and a change would most certainly not recoup the millions of pounds suggested.

Finally, it is disingenuous to suggest that parents choose schools solely on the basis of family location.

I, like most other parents, considered a large number of schools before choosing the one that I felt offered the best combination of educational and pastoral care for my child.

In our case, my wife and I are the nearest relatives to my daughter's boarding school – a journey of two-and-a-half hours.

In the current environment of tightening purse strings and greater scrutiny of the expenses of public servants, it is reckless in the extreme to trivialise this issue with ill-informed rants. – **Maj P Johnson.**



Picture: Graeme Main

PS . . .

I AM going to be one of those adversely affected by the decision to close Forces post offices in Nato headquarters and agree with *Soldier* columnist Julie McCarthy (*Home Truths*, July) that the impact on morale will be huge.

From the brief I was given, I get the impression that bean-counting logic has been applied to this issue – “I’ve reduced my budget and don’t care about the effect”. The overall cost to the MoD will far exceed the £1.7 million they hope to save (if we are to be properly compensated for the loss of this service).

Postage costs for Service families will dramatically increase and while a minor rise in local overseas allowance will cover the quiet summer months, what’s the betting Christmas mail will not be considered.

How will personnel be compensated for a reduced credit rating? If we’re prevented from purchasing from the usual online catalogue shops the credit agencies will not be able to accurately track our credit history and it’ll be even more of an uphill struggle to secure finance on return to the UK.

And what about the next election? Can postal votes be sent from foreign addresses and will they arrive in time?

How many of my friends and family will send greeting cards now that the cost of doing so has dramatically increased?

When Mrs Bloggs finds she has to start paying overseas rates for her son’s previously free (on ops) or standard UK rates (BFPO) post I’m sure she’ll complain to her MP.

Apparently all of the above has been considered and deemed acceptable, which is probably because those who made the decision won’t be around to deal with the political fallout. They’ll be long gone, having taken their OBEs for services to cost-cutting with them. –

WO2 David Eyes, SHAPE, BFPO 26.

Dawson winner, in off the post

IT was excellent to see Spurs’ Michael Dawson in the magazine last month, “White hot lane” (*SoldierSport*).

Just prior to deploying on Op Herrick 10 earlier this year, about a dozen of us from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers were invited by Tottenham to attend a UEFA Cup match.

The first person from the club we met was Michael, who pulled up next to us as he entered the car park and spent a great deal of time chatting, signing autographs and allowing the lads to have their photos taken with him.

All of this was much to the dismay of the security staff as he had blocked access to the car park for others, but Michael’s attitude was that he was looking after the troops and that everyone else would just have to wait.

He was really welcoming, as was

everyone else from the club, and Harry Redknapp was spot on.

The non-playing staff looked after us well and the fans we spoke to were really pro-Her Majesty’s Forces.

It is great to see our sports stars and clubs supporting us. It is much appreciated. Come on you Spurs. – Maj Mick McCarthy, QM 2 RRF.

Soldier’s carrot-crunching, Norwich City-supporting sports editor, dreaming of Carrow Road and planning to whip up one of Delia’s signature dishes for dinner, types: I’m with Maj McCarthy on this one.

Far from being a Premiership prima donna, Michael jumped at the opportunity to discuss the beautiful game with *SoldierSport* and is a fierce fan of all those in the Armed Forces.

‘It’s time to make housing inspections a family affair’

WRITE as a married soldier living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA).

Why is it that housing inspections are carried out on soldiers in Single Living Accommodation (SLA) but not those residing in SFA?

Regular inspections help to keep soldiers’ rooms and living areas clean and tidy and fit to live in.

Married quarters are a privilege not a right and yet I have seen some around the garrison which can only be described as pigsties, with piles of rubbish mounting up in their overgrown gardens.

I have also seen inside some quarters which are beyond filthy.

Being married should not exempt a soldier from routine checks of their quarter. Personally, I would not have a problem having my SFA inspected by Defence Estates (DE) as ultimately the property is not mine and I am only renting it. – Name and address supplied.

David Lye, DE operations housing secretariat, RAF Brampton, responds: SLA and SFA are provided under different rules and for different purposes – the two are not comparable.

The licence to occupy SFA sets out the rights and obligations of both parties and clearly states that occupants must keep their property and gardens in a generally clean and tidy condition and may not do anything to cause a nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours.

While families are free to lead their

DE OPS
HOUSING SEC



“I’ve had a not-best-pleased Mrs Harrison of number 24 on the phone... How many times do I have to tell you? We give them 48 hours’ notice and do not rush in at first light shouting ‘stand by your beds, you ‘orrible lot.’”

lives in whatever manner they choose, DE can and will take action where the terms of the licence are breached.

While DE can inspect an SFA property on giving 48 hours’ notice, the simple reality is that SFA are family homes and it would be impossible (both legally and practically) to carry out the sort of inspections you suggest and to enforce one set of living standards on family life.

PS...

FURTHER to the response to "Credit for cars, but not a computer" (October), I too have just returned to the UK following a long period in Germany.

My credit rating has remained entirely unaffected by my absence abroad. The best advice to offer on the subject is to maintain your UK credit cards while posted overseas and use them for your online purchases.

Keep up with the payments and you will encounter no problems with your credit rating. However, the demise of BFPO in north west Europe (scheduled September 2010) may well rain on your parade vis-a-vis delivery from Amazon!

– Maj Nick Morris, HQ Land Forces.

I WAS a touch annoyed by Brig Griffiths' (DPS(A)) reply to the letter in October's issue asking why the MoD has not adopted the Government's Cycle to Work scheme, through which cyclists can save up to 50 per cent of the price of a new bike. Given the Government's drive to encourage bicycle use, I feel that the department is not supporting its employees on an issue that would save thousands of them many hundreds of pounds.

Brig Griffiths' response was disingenuous and misleading, although I am sure that he was the victim of poor advice. He is right to state that the system works on hire purchase, but he was wrong to claim that the bike is returned to the employer at the end of the hire period. The usual method of payment is that the employee pays for the hire of the bike in 12 monthly instalments, followed by a small fee at the end of the period to purchase the bike (usually five per cent of the initial cost).

The second part of the reply stated that an employee would not be able to use the scheme in addition to claiming Home to Duty Travel (HTD). Surely this in itself is not sufficient reason to overlook the programme.

Two years ago, Brig Griffiths' predecessor replied to my initial letter on the topic, stating that the scheme would be adopted, but that childcare vouchers would take precedence. Since then I have sought updates from his staff, but these enquiries have been ignored. The MoD should allow employees to decide whether they wish to use the scheme as an alternative to HTD. – Name and address supplied.

HAVING completed 28 years of service, I read with concern about the very high frequency of tours and the shortfall of recruits in some of the teeth arms.

I often wonder if the answer is a short-term engagement of, say, six years with no entitlement to married quarters, boarding school allowance, pension and no automatic extension of service.

In return, those seeking a limited adventure would be rewarded with higher pay. I live in France where the Foreign Legion attracts eight times the number of applicants it needs. There are obviously adventurers out there! – David Chown, gentleman of leisure, France.



No holiday camp: A mortar team hits back at Taliban fighters during a patrol around Kandahar airfield

Picture: SAC Neil Chapman

Stupidity of slipper slight

I WILL no doubt be one of many to reply to Mr Bill Smart's letter in October's *Talkback*, but may I be the first to suggest he refrains from commenting on the British Army as he has proved himself incapable of doing so with any degree of knowledge or authority.

There is not one line of his ill-informed piffle [which called for increased pay for Infantry soldiers] that did not cause outrage and offence. Starting from the top of his offering, there are only two bands of basic pay in the Army – hardly giving a great advantage to the "technically qualified" who, like the Infantry, find themselves spread across both.

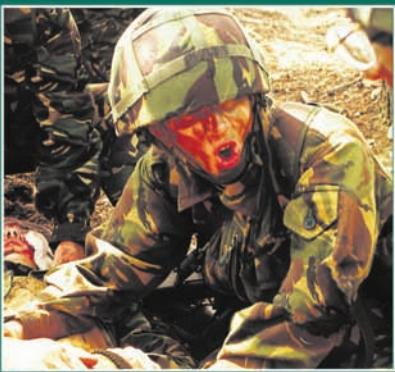
Secondly, a lot of those technicians deploy more than the teeth arms due to posting mechanisms, which can see tradesmen move from unit to unit, circumnavigating the usual deployment cycle.

Furthermore I would like to invite Mr

Smart to spend a week or two in Kandahar counting mortars. I'm sure the families of those killed in "slipper city" are relieved to hear that their loved ones died while on operations in "relative comfort". His letter also fails to acknowledge the number of REME, RLC and AGC personnel who have died. Although they may not have done so with a rifle in hand, they did so behind a steering wheel or performing another role in support of those doing the fighting.

On the money front, I'd guess that operational bonuses and tax rebates during deployments take a private soldier's pay above that of a sailor's.

If Mr Smart is that concerned about the level of pay of our young infantrymen then I'm sure they would be happy to have him buy them a drink or two in the Naafi. But please don't be offended if I don't join you, Mr Smart. I'm off to get my slippers resoled. – A REME soldier.



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'Why the uneven playing field?'

THIS is the first time I've felt the need to write to *Soldier* in my ten years of service, but I am confused by the varying entitlement to allowances afforded to different groups of personnel at British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus).

Some members of the Temporary Staff (TS) are getting Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) and Incidental Expenses (IE), while others are given a free flight home, 14 days R&R and are accumulating two days leave per month.

Both groups are serving a six-month tour in Canada, so why do the same rules not apply to all? I raised this issue with Staff and Personnel Support and was told that those in receipt of LOA and IE are not on assignment order, while the latter group have profited from a mistake made in Glasgow which saw them given assignment orders.

Regardless of any admin mix-up, surely the least that should be done is to grant 14 days leave to those left behind at Batus. — *Name and address supplied.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
There are currently two categories of TS at Batus: Army Personnel Centre- (APC-) assigned TS (153 posts), who were appointed for seven months (though this was shortened to six months due

to the cancellation of the last Medicine Man exercise); and trawled TS, posts which were to be filled by the exercising formations and units in the expectation that they would, as in previous years, rotate people through the system on three or four-month roulements.

The planners expected that no one, other than the APC's 153, would serve for longer than three or four months in Batus. The APC-assigned personnel were given leave and a trooper flight back to the UK in recognition of their longer assignment, while the trawled personnel were eligible to £10 a day IE as they would serve less than 182 days in theatre.

I understand that you may feel aggrieved at this apparent disparity, however the promise of a flight home and additional leave for the 153 was a mistake which will not be repeated – and I should add that the error did not originate in Glasgow.

We did consider removing the additional provision, but then I suspect it would have been the APC 153 writing to *Soldier* instead of you.

This issue is currently being staffed through the Land Warfare Centre (who command Batus) to ensure the most equitable solution for all concerned.



Picture: Graeme Main

PS . . .

IN a letter about commemorative medals, "Stamp out bling and buy" (August), Kevin Walker stated his anger at those who wear medals they are not entitled to and made specific reference to the Golden Jubilee Medal [right]. Does Mr Walker realise that Princes William and Harry did not qualify for the award but were gifted the decoration by the Queen?

I'd also like to point out that Princess Anne has a chest full of medals but has never served in the Armed Forces. And Prince Edward, who failed to complete his Royal Marines officer training, seems to have begun collecting a number of medals.

I am proud to say my son did complete his training to become a Royal Marines Commando and that he has since completed two operational tours in Afghanistan.

For all the moaning about "bling", I find it odd that no one has yet made reference to members of our Royal Family who, I hasten to add, I have a lot of respect for. — *Terence Wise.*



I READ with interest a letter stating that the Volunteer Reserve Service Medal (VRSM) can be gained with broken service, *Talkback* (September). In my opinion, a commanding officer – who is only in post for two years – should not have a say in whether an individual receives the award [pictured right] and personnel should have to wait, as I did, a full ten years to qualify. — *Name and address supplied.*



PS . . .

I AM not a member of the Armed Forces but am a long-standing supporter of them.

Having read with interest the letters arising from *Soldier*'s features on gay Service personnel, "Equal partners" (July), I am disappointed at the "fine in principle, but ..." tenor of most of the replies – especially the number of those disapproving of the participation in Pride events.

It would be hard to overstate the terrific reaction the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy get when they take part in such events.

Their professionalism is much admired in the lesbian and gay community and we can see that our Services are of all the people and for all the people. — *Stephen McKenna.*

WHILE at home on leave in Motherwell, Scotland, I was refused entry to the bar/pool area of my local United Services Club (an establishment reputedly for ex-Service personnel) on the grounds that I am a woman.

Apparently any male – regardless of background or history of military service – can enter and yet I, having served and continuing to serve my country all over the world, cannot.

I am absolutely disgusted and don't understand why or how the club is allowed to get away with such a policy. I intend to write to the local authorities regarding this matter and will fight to change this rule. — *Sgt Karlin Dougal, RMP (SIB), Catterick Garrison.*



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Premium property: Julie McCarthy fears that savings measures could deny some Service families the opportunity to sample the positive products of Defence Estates' endeavours, such as Sgt Bryn Davids' accommodation above, which is one of 136 married quarters being refurbished in Colchester Picture: Mike Weston

Cost-cutting should not be at expense of quality streets

OCTOBER saw the release of the Public Accounts Committee's report into the state of Defence accommodation and, as usual, it did not make good reading for either families or Defence Estates (DE).

Almost a third of those surveyed described the condition of their house as poor and the same number said that their quarter was dirty when they moved in.

The allocations process was described as "complex" and it was recommended that the MoD should "strengthen expectations" that families leave their quarter clear.

The report also focused on the number of empty, or, to use a military phrase, void houses. While the figure has dropped by 1,600 this year, there are still a number of vacant properties to be found on various estates. But with 20,000 moves happening every year there has to be slack in the system to allow the complex allocations process to function at all.

What cannot be allowed to happen is a knee-jerk disposal of those quarters that DE believes are no longer necessary.

They have already offloaded more properties than they need to and some of those are in areas where there are now major accommodation shortages. Any

ill-considered disposals, encouraged by a Government that is keen to make savings, could have dire consequences for families.

On top of this came the revelation that the Chief of the General Staff has authorised savings of £54m, on top of the £43m already committed earlier this year. In the plethora of cost-cutting measures expected to come from the Territorial Army, the University Officer Training Corps, Cadet Forces and recruiting lies the heading "Capital Works" – accommodation to you and me.

A total of £14 million worth of projects to upgrade Single Living Accommodation have either been delayed or cancelled in an attempt to save money.

The Chancellor made much of the £50 million extra to spend on places to live this financial year but little is being said by anyone on the proposed savings measure.

What we don't know is if there are further cuts to the DE budget in these cost-reduction packages. If there are, it spells serious trouble for the future of our housing. For too long our estates have

suffered from under investment and bad leadership. Now, when there is a glimmer of hope and the people at the top are actually heading in the right direction, the progress could be at risk because of finances.

Housing staff are beginning to engage directly with the communities that they are there to support, and while our enquiries are still ridiculously top-heavy with complaints about repairs, the situation is improving in some areas. What

message does it send to all those involved if they're put under more pressure to work to impossible financial targets?

Most difficult to swallow is the fact that families who have not yet felt any of the benefits of the work being done may never do so unless the DE budget can be ring-fenced well into the future. How can a Government on the one hand tell DE to do more and do it better, while at the same time reduce the amount of money available? Answers on a postcard please... ■

Now, when there is a glimmer of hope, the progress could be at risk

● **Armed Forces Minister ponders PAC report – Page 23**

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TEN details have been changed on this picture of a WMIK gunner on the streets of Sangin, Afghanistan. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 816, 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: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Mr G F Wilson**, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. Runners-up **Sgt L A Cooper-Barnes**, JSPSU, MPA, BFPO 655 and **Cfn A Duffy**, HQ Coy, 101 FS Bn REME, Wrexham, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: mark on wall; SPS flash; rank slide; wrist watch; decoration on column; wing mirror; knot in rope; front of blue pick-up truck; white wing mirror; leather strap on camel's head.



YOU could easily be forgiven for thinking that Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell was in the process of driving a hard bargain when he was snapped in an Afghan bazaar.

After all, with a floppy hat and sunglasses to trade, he could have had the pick of any carpet in the store. But our caption writers decided instead to focus on the more obscure elements of the picture (below right).

Keith Chapman decided that the stallholder's son, holding his nose, was saying: **'Are you still using those showers at Camp Bastion?'**

Other quality offerings came from Simon Harrison of Upavon, who quotes the indignant MP as saying: **'What do you mean my great, great grandfather never settled his bill when he left in 1882?'** And Mr J Dickson of Leeds reckoned the furious shopkeeper was saying: **'Only £20? I just told you where Osama is!'**

But LCpl O'Brien, from RAF Linton in



Picture: CCT Photographer

During a game of charades, Bob and Big Al correctly guessed that their host was a praying mantis

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by November 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Attack State Red*, an account of fighting on Op Herrick, by Col Richard Kemp and Chris Hughes.

Yorkshire, penned the winner, which caught our eye with its simplicity. He believed the trader, with one hand on a pillar, was the victim of a prank: **'Ok, which one of you put the super glue on the post?'** He wins a copy of *T-Force, The Race for Nazi War Secrets* by Sean Longden.



Picture: LA (Phot) Kelly McAlinden



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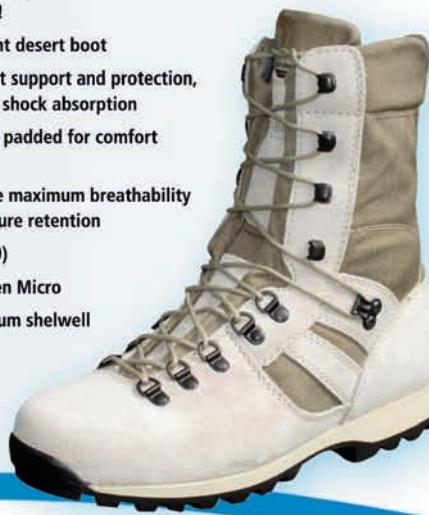
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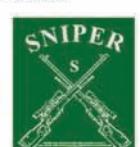
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Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

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

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SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

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

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DEFENCE DIARY

Until January 2010: War Boy, The Michael Foreman Exhibition. Exploring some of the complex themes of the World Wars. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk

Until January 2010: The Children's War. Imperial War Museum, London. Admission free.

November 7, 8, 14, 15: We Will Remember

Them. Art activity for families using military buttons to create your own Remembrance poppy. Imperial War Museum, London. Admission free.

November 28-29: Birmingham Tattoo. Massed bands, field gun competition, exciting displays. National Indoor Arena, Birmingham. Tickets £9.50 to £19.50 (concessions available). Box office 0844 338 8000 or www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk

Until October 2010: Horrible Histories: Terrible Trenches. Unmissable First World War family exhibition. Imperial War Museum, London. Enquiries: 0207 416 5000.

Until October 2010: A Secret Life: Odette Hallowes Special Operations Executive and the Nazi pistol. Imperial War Museum (North), The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000.

SEARCHLINE

Lt Ian Clark is seeking the best man from his wedding in 1959, **2nd Lt James Deville**, RASC. Contact Ian at 3 Fields Close, Baldwins Gate, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 5DJ.

David Perlini is trying to locate his father **David Jackson**. A Scottish soldier in the RASC, his last known address is 16 New Place, Trenton Road, London. Contact David by email dav.per@alice.it

PhD student **Achim Edelmann** is researching the resettlement of serving personnel and their partners shortly before they leave and a couple of months after discharge. Contact **Achim** at Faculty of Social and Political Science, University of Cambridge, Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RQ or email ae272@cam.ac.uk

Ian Lindsay is searching for a lost uncle, **Richard Francis Asher Birkett**, born in Nottingham in 1918. He joined the Royal Engineers, served in the Second World War and was stationed in Malta in November 1942. His last known address was Newark, Nottingham. Contact Ian Lindsay by email patricia.lindsay7@ntlworld.com

Eileen Hobson is looking for former colleagues from 4 Squadron, 16 Signal Regiment who served in Bielefeld, Germany between 1972-1975. Eileen would especially like to find **LCpl Steven Weatherall, Royal Signals**. Contact her by email at ehbsn@btinternet.com

Michael Peter Gates is looking for **Darren Crutchley RLC** who he served with between September 1995 and May 2002. Darren is now believed to be a SSgt based in Germany. Contact Helen Walton by email HelenWalton@cestria.org

Peter Lawrence Dykes, born December 26, 1943 at Bovington Camp is searching for his father **Lawrence Taylor**, a Cpl (841086) in the RAC. Contact Mrs G Dykes, 6 Ridgeway, Ashcott, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9PP.

Andy Fisher is looking for those who joined B1 Troop (**Lt Tim Hall, Sgt Charlie Packham, Sgt Bob Biddle**), B Squadron, Junior Leaders Regiment RAC in September 1974 and passed off in December 1975. Contact Maj Andy Fisher by email andylynfisher58@hotmail.com

80th (Cheshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron.

This unit will be disbanding in the near future. If anyone made a presentation to the unit and would like to reclaim it, please do so before the end of **December 2009**. After this date the items will be auctioned and monies raised donated to charity. Contact Capt Chris Hopkins on 01928 715809 or email 33sr-80sqn-psao@mod.uk

93 (East Lancashire) Signal Squadron. The Squadron will disband in **March 2010**. Anyone who has made donations is invited to reclaim the item(s) before the disbandment date. Contact the PSOA, Capt Dale Ikin on 01254 262444 or email 38sr-93-psao@mod.uk

Poems are being sought for *Over the Water*, a collection of verse being released to raise money for SSAFA Forces Help. Contact Christine Rodgers by email overthewater76@yahoo.co.uk or 38x-g4-cbo-booker4@mod.uk

42 (City of Manchester) Signal Squadron (V). The unit will be disbanding in the near future. If anyone who had made a presentation to the unit would like to reclaim it, please do so by **January 31, 2010**. After this date the items will be auctioned and the monies will be donated to charity. Contact Capt Steve Booth on 0161 257 3377 or email 33sr-42sqn-psao@mod.uk

REUNIONS

South Nottingham Hussars: Reunion, Remembrance dinner and church service on November 7-8 at the TA Centre, Bulwell Nottingham. Past and present members with partners welcome. Remembrance event at St Mary's Church. For dinner tickets contact Capt C Dibb by phone on 0115 926 8063.

16 Regt RA Officers' Mess: Reunion at St George's Officers' Mess, North Luffenham on November 28, 2009. Contact Maj Ali James by November 13 at 14 (Cole's Kop) Bty, 16 Regt RA, St George's Bks, North Luffenham LE15 8RL or email alison.waddie805@mod.uk

57 Battery, 32 Regiment/39 Regiment: All ranks reunion, December 5 at Wagon Lines, Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill. Contact LBdr Russell Lehman, 57 Bty, 32 Regt RA, Robert Bks, Larkhill, Wilts SP4 8QU or phone 01980 845055, email 57bty@yahoo.co.uk

RAMC Reunited: Reunion for former RAMC members (National Service, Regular, TA or widow(er)). You and a partner are invited to attend on February 12-14, 2010 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Mick McCran, 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ enclosing a C5 SAE or email michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

410 Independent Plant Troop RE: Second reunion to be held during April 2010 in Blackpool. For further details contact Mick (Scouse) Ramsay on 0151 648 2896 or email mick@rommel.plus.com

COMPETITIONS

Skype winner: Mrs Debra Willison, 28 Engr Regt, BFPO 31.

Tomorrow, Sean Kingston winners: Ms Gillian Thompson, Springhead, Oldham; G Crandles, Edinburgh; Sgt K Chapman, GSUOTC, Glasgow; J Milne, Deepcut Army Learning Centre, Camberley; Bdr D Hunter, 32 Regt RA, Larkhill.

Web watch

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www.armylibraries.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoveryppn.niceboard.com

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www.forceshomes.co.uk

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

www.baff.org.uk

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

www.armedforces.co.uk

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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.sftf.mod.uk

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

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.hmforces.co.uk

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www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equitation. Here you will be able to find the information & links you need to keep you up to date with what's going on.

www.nfassociation.org

The "Not Forgotten" Association for disabled ex-Service personnel aims to provide entertainment and recreation for war-wounded personnel to alleviate the tedium of their lives and give them something they can look forward to.

www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the Army.

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www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

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.blesma.org

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

www.nivets.org.uk

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

www.starandgarter.org

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MOD LINKS

www.army.mod.uk

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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.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to? Are you Doing Alright?

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

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MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

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

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Sharon, (45), 5'4", fair hair and green eyes. Enjoys the cinema, the theatre, music (all sorts, including Elvis, R&B, Classics), art, reading, walking, holidays, loves family, church, Christmas and cat. Divorced mum of one seeking pen pals, 40+. P067

Dave, (late 50s), 5'11", sell by date not up yet. Enjoys the countryside and is an animal lover. A very genuine bloke seeking like-minded hirsute male pen pals, 25-45 genuine replies only please. P068

Sam, short, blonde, mad, intelligent and self-sufficient. Interests far too numerous to list but a few include motor sports, F1 and superbikes. Cooking is a passion and equally slobbing around doing nothing. Looking for a single chap over 35 and someone who wants a good mate first and foremost. P069

Claire, (32), Civil Servant who according to men is cute looking, cuddly build, long red hair and blue eyes. She has a mad sense of humour and often gets told off at work for talking too much. Enjoys travel and has been all over Europe and Canada. Her favourite place is Dublin, though probably because she loves Guinness. Enjoys most sport apart from football, loves going to concerts and the pub with her mates. Seeking male pen pals over the age of 30 who like a laugh and don't take life too seriously. P071

Kat, a fun loving girl, down to earth, loves to dance, slim build, 5'3", brunette with a wild side. Enjoys skydiving, (but has only done two jumps), socialising and having a laugh. Would like to meet someone who likes similar interests, 24-35. P072

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- * The box number must be clearly written in the top left corner of all your replies.
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NOTICES

"35 (M) Signals Regiment will disband on 31 March 2010. Any officer who would like to reclaim presentation items presented to the Officers' Mess should contact the property member on 02476 854913 prior to 1 December 2009."

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NOVEMBER'S BONFIRE OF BLOCKBUSTERS

P84 MOVIES **RAGING ROBOTS**

P86 GAMES **BRIGHT SPRITES**

P88 MUSIC **SPARKLING SYMPHONY**

P90 BOOKS **PENNY FOR THE GUYS**

P92 TOP GEAR **BLAZING BIKES**



Metallic monsters:
Robots go on
the rampage in
Terminator Salvation

Picture: Industrial Light & Magic



Apocalypse now: Christian Bale attempts to save the human race from murderous robots in futuristic thriller *Terminator Salvation*

Robotic revolution

Special effects gurus bring Terminators to life in post-apocalyptic sci-fi sequel

Review: Stephen Tyler

EVER there was a reason to dislike special effect firm Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), Jar Jar Binks is it.

The floppy-eared menace's infantile voice and bumbling antics, first brought to life by ILM in *Star Wars I: The Phantom Menace*, were enough to force old-school fans to abandon the series' return and crack out the original trilogy for another viewing.

But the firm was only doing the bidding of bearded director George Lucas and a closer examination of ILM's extensive resume makes it hard for even the staunchest *Star Wars* fan to hold a grudge.

Alongside the ahead-of-their-time effects of the space-based franchise's original trilogy, ILM's boffins were the brains behind the jaw-dropping visuals featured in *Iron Man*, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull*.

The team's latest challenge has been to bring the post-apocalyptic world of *Terminator Salvation* – complete with murderous robots and explosive

set-pieces – into eye-popping reality.

One of the people tasked with meeting Hollywood's increasingly-high standards is ILM visual effects supervisor Ben Snow.

The three-time Academy Award nominee explained how his team wanted to make the fourth *Terminator* film much more than just a sequel.

"We had already seen some glimpses of what the post-*Judgment Day* looked like," he said. "But we stepped it up to give it a grittier look.

"Action films have changed quite dramatically in recent years and McG [the film's director] wanted us to extend the world of the Terminators technologically to show how these machines are hunting down humans."

Despite the obvious use of technology to craft a futuristic world with bits of kit well beyond anything on today's battlefields, *Terminator Salvation* retains a grounding in reality thanks to the use of "real" effects.

Second unit director Charlie Gibson said that he was delighted with the way the film manages to blend the real and the virtual thanks to the expertise of ILM.

"It was great because I knew we could go 110 per cent with the action sequences as I could always fall back on the visual effects if necessary.

"Our philosophy from the start was to shoot as much live action as possible and never have anything in it that was completely computer-generated to keep us grounded in reality.

"This required more work from the visual effects companies but in the end I think it is more realistic. The camera shakes and blurs and there is dust and bits of metal in the air from an explosion when you shoot live action."

For strangely-named director McG, the special effects wizards' skills mean that the *Terminator* series can finally be set in the future where a variety of machines – from water-dwelling hydro-terminators to two-wheeled moto-terminators – stalk humans with impunity.

"What got us excited was the possibility to see the future war between humans and machines that we had never really seen before, although James Cameron gave us a small look at it.

"This way, we honour the mythology of the first three films but also truly begin again. Hopefully that will be the defining characteristic of *Terminator Salvation*."

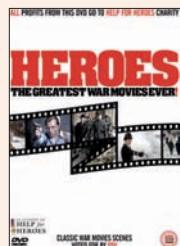
● *Terminator Salvation* is out on Blu-Ray and DVD on November 23, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. ■

From war movie greats to body-snatching grave diggers, we check out November's new DVDs...

Heroes, out on DVD from Nov 23

PICKING the best war film from the likes of *The Great Escape*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Lawrence of Arabia* is a frankly impossible task. Good job, then, that the British film industry has joined forces with Help for Heroes to put the top scenes from many of the celluloid classics together on one not-for-profit disc. *Heroes: The Greatest War Movies Ever!* goes on sale at the end of this month for just £9.99, with an average of £7 from every DVD going directly to charity. Organisers are also hoping that the Government will donate VAT from the project back to Help for Heroes, a move that will mean £9 from every sale reaches the charity.

www.heroesdvd.co.uk



District 13 Ultimatum, out on DVD now

THE year is 2013. Damien Tomaso is an impossibly acrobatic, free-running special forces commando with the self-appointed task of saving the lawless, ethnically divided streets of Paris. Surrounded by more guns than a Mogadishu flea-market he has a job on. While it is not necessary to have seen the previous film, the undoubtedly catchy French one-liners lose some of their punch through the rapid-fire subtitles. However, it is hard not to root for the good guys in this time-proven formula of over-powerful-developer-steps-on-the-small-guys-to-make-millions-of-Euros. My recommendation? Rent, don't buy.

Capt Neil Johnson, AAC

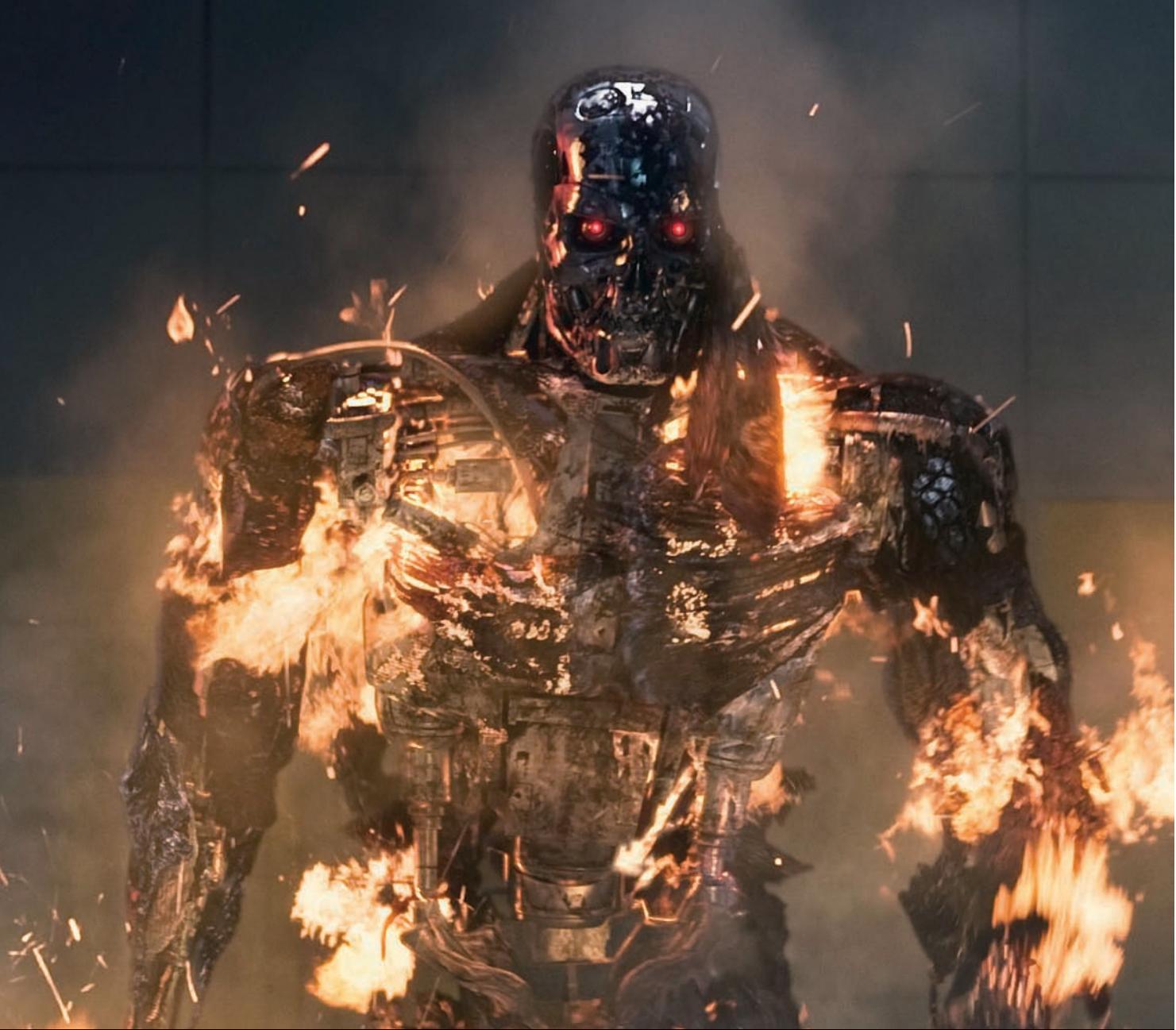


Tidal Wave, out on DVD now

BILLED as South Korea's first take on the big-budget special effects disaster movie, *Tidal Wave* is a hit-and-miss affair. Spending the first half of the film building towards the impact of a giant tsunami by introducing a series of by-the-book characters, the plot sometimes gets snagged on clumsy dialogue and questionable humour. When the water hits, however, all is forgiven as the visuals offer a disturbing insight into the deadly power of the sea which has caused so much real-life destruction and heartache across Asia in recent years. Nothing particularly original, but a gripping effort nonetheless.

Stephen Tyler, Soldier





They're back: Killer robots determined to wipe out the human race have been brought to life by the special effects experts at Industrial Light & Magic

I Sell The Dead, out on DVD now

ONE-TIME hobbit **Dominic Monaghan** stars as a graverobber in this ghoulish movie which nicely straddles the divide between the horror and comedy genres. Monaghan (perhaps best known away from the Shire as Charlie from *Lost*) puts in a solid performance as Arthur Blake, a young man facing execution for his body-snatching crimes. On the eve of his demise, Blake opens up to a priest about how he became involved in the grisly business and reveals the most lucrative part of his trade – selling the undead. Stylishly-shot with a compelling plot, this is a worthy entry into the *Shaun of The Dead* school of films.



Stephen Tyler, Soldier

Land of the Lost, out on DVD Nov 23

FROM the sublime (*Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*) to the ridiculous, **Will Ferrell's** fall from comedy greatness makes for painful watching. Playing the role of has-been scientist and time machine inventor Dr Rick Marshall in this spoof of the 70s television series of the same name, Ferrell raises a few smiles but rarely a chuckle during his slapstick soiree with a T-Rex and army of alien reptiles. A film to laugh at rather than with, not even the extremely easy-on-the-eye **Anna Friel** (*Pushing Daisies*), who stars as Marshall's research assistant, could persuade me to endure a second viewing.



Andrew Simms, Soldier

Win: You're The Boss DVDs

FOOTBALL managers take centre stage in *Michael Sheen Presents You're The Boss*, out on DVD from November 9. The BAFTA-nominated actor, who starred as Brian Clough in *The Damned United*, takes a look at the world of football management with a focus on big names such as Revie, Shankly and Wenger. *Soldier* has teamed up with Warner Home Video to offer five readers a chance of winning a copy of the DVD. To enter, answer the following question: *The Damned United* charts Brian Clough's spell in charge of which English club? Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date November 30



Deep space: The 3D version of *Avatar* offers a tantalising glimpse into the potential of emerging home entertainment technologies

Into Pandora's box

Latest James Cameron sci-fi movie inspires a new dimension in video games

Preview: Cliff Caswell

IT IS a trend that has waxed and waned in the cinema world over the years, yet has somehow never managed to fully embed itself into the movie mainstream.

Three-dimensional films have been going in and out of fashion ever since the genre was first introduced back in the dawn of the motion picture, with the medium reaching a new popularity in the 1950s and enjoying a brief revival 30 years later with the release of *Jaws 3*.

Perhaps it was the need to wear the bizarre red and green glasses, which made cinema audiences look like the monsters popping from the screen at them, that put paid to the 3D dream. But that has all changed with the arrival of digital technology, which has provided the opportunity to play video games in an entirely new dimension.

With Hollywood heavyweight James Cameron using the latest 3D techniques in his sci-fi romp *Avatar*, French publisher Ubisoft has announced that players will have the option to see the game based on the film in the same way.

With digital 3D televisions set to arrive in

shops next year, the company is convinced that this new technology will eventually catch on with the masses and that gaming could be set for a dramatic change.

While not yet available on the open market, electronics firms such as JVC and Panasonic are already producing sets supporting 3D which, when viewed with a pair of unintrusive clear glasses, provide a spectacular cinematic effect. The bar to owning one is the price – the purchase will currently set you back up to £6,000.

"I believe the first 3D movie was released in 1915, some years before there was a spate of them in the 1950s," an Ubisoft spokesman told *Soldier* during an exclusive preview of *Avatar* in London. "But now many cinemas have been investing in 3D projectors and some of the major electronics companies have been working to bring this type of technology directly to the home entertainment market."

Soldier was given some hands-on time with *Avatar* on a specialist JVC television and it undoubtedly offers an experience that has never before been seen in the video games world.

Set shortly before the story from the movie takes place, players take either the role of employees from a corporation sent to colonise the

remote world of Pandora or the Na'vi – the aliens protecting their home territory.

Both sides have their strengths and weaknesses, with the technology of the humans pitted against the stealth of their opponents.

We played two early levels of the game in 3D, in which the arriving earthlings must fly an aircraft through a jungle before battling ahead on foot, and the effects are stunning.

You quickly find yourself swaying to dodge the tree branches, rocks and enemy fire coming in your direction and there is no detraction or distortion in the images whatsoever. This is, on every front, an exciting showcase for the future.

While Ubisoft is not expecting a huge take-up of the digital 3D mode, there is the option of using the more traditional 3D specs or simply switching to a 2D version.

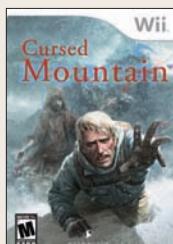
"You can use the red and green glasses if you like – we wanted players to simply pick a mode that fitted their technology and get going," said the spokesman. "Introducing a 3D version of *Avatar* is really a test bed for the future – an opportunity to explore new technology."

Avatar is one of the most interesting prototypes we've seen and it has been a long time since the future seemed so exciting. ■

From fairytale dust-ups to alien encounters, our latest round-up features a mix of the weird and wonderful...

Cursed Mountain, Wii

PREVIEWED by *Soldier* in September, this visually stunning survival horror offering is one of the most original games to appear on the Wii. Your journey through the Himalayas in search of your brother is atmospheric and tense. Fleeting shadows rapidly become hordes of ghosts and the only way to combat them is by matching the displayed moves with your remote. As you climb higher up the mountain, you require regular top ups for your oxygen tanks, which adds genuine tension to the gameplay. Occasional glitches with the combat do not significantly detract from an inventive, moody and hugely enjoyable title.



Capt Vicki Seth, AGC

Fairytales Fights, Xbox 360 & PS3

DESTINED to cause controversy, *Fairytales Fights* is a gruesome and astonishingly violent beat 'em up in the style of the 1980s classic, *Double Dragon*. In a twisted world of storybook mayhem, players assume the role of either Red Riding Hood, Jack (of beanstalk fame) or the emperor and his new clothes and have to mash their way through assorted woodcutters and other fairytale enemies. This game rightly sports an 18 certificate but proved a guilty pleasure with us for its slick delivery and extremely strange sense of humour. If you are of the same off-the-wall disposition, you'll like it too.



Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

World Snooker Championship 09, Wii

SNOOKER games have been around since the era of the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64, but they've clearly come a long way in the past 25 years. This offering from Blade features the top 32 players in the world, 15 accurately recreated venues and the option to play pool if you fancy a more straightforward match. Graphics are well-rendered although you'll find yourself in the old-school overhead view for most of the game. Winning matches or completing challenges gains you points, which you can use to improve your skills. Although best suited to the enthusiast, this is a fun and very well-executed package.



Capt Vicki Seth, AGC



A new dimension: *Avatar* allows players to take control of the human colonists or the resident aliens in one of the most colourful shooters we've seen

Fifa 10, All formats

THE popular football title makes its annual appearance with all the latest players, teams and kits to enter the major leagues. The game is as polished as ever, with flawless animation, great graphics and beautifully-rendered stadia in which to play out your matches. Latest features include a new dribbling system to give players greater control of their solo runs, the ability to create custom set pieces and a more realistic manager mode. It's all good stuff and fans will not be disappointed, but you have to wonder whether these games are significantly different year-on-year to justify what is a fairly steep asking price.



Cliff Caswell, Soldier

Dead Space Extraction, Wii

A PREQUEL to last year's sci-fi horror outing, this Wii exclusive title is essentially a first-person shooter with a few puzzle elements bundled in. You're plunged into an interstellar colony thrown into chaos following the discovery of a mysterious ancient artefact. At its height, the action in *Extraction* is frantic, slick and extremely well executed. The only problem is that the cut scenes often last for a long time, and there seems to be no way of skipping through once you have seen them. Nonetheless, *Soldier* enjoyed this romp, which is graphically superb and delivers a disturbing yet somewhat plausible adult storyline.



Cliff Caswell, Soldier

Grand Slam Tennis, Wii

THIS is a fantastic way of keeping the tennis fever alive way into the winter. Not only are the background graphics and stadium sound effects excellent, but the interplay functions, such as changing venues and tournaments and building your own player, make for hours of fun, with or without the kids. Some of the more outrageous 1980s' hairdos combined with bang-up-to-date tennis fashion ensure that creating your players is almost as engaging as jumping like a maniac around the living room delivering forehands with aplomb (grunting is optional). This is a great offering and definitely one for the Christmas list.



Capt Shaun Fardy, AGC



Universal appeal: The Regimental Band of the Coldstream Guards' stirring album *Heroes* is in the shops from November 30

Band in a million

Musical Guards hit the big time after snaring seven-figure recording contract

Interviews: Joe Clapson

THE world famous Regimental Band of the Coldstream Guards is set to do battle with the likes of Lady GaGa, Jay Z and whatever *X-Factor* has to offer in the music charts.

The talented soldiers have signed a £1 million contract with record giant Universal Music and will release its stirring *Heroes* album on November 30.

Inspirational pieces such as *Where Eagles Dare* and *I Vow To Thee My Country* set the tone for the collection, which is sure to jerk a few tears and call upon a few stiff upper lips.

The exciting signing is the first with a major label for the country's oldest serving military band and means the musicians can list Eminem, La Roux and Amy Winehouse as their colleagues.

But the step into the pop arena should not prove too difficult for the Guards, with music guru Daniel Glatman on board to guide them through the maze of the commercial music industry.

"From the moment I heard them play *Where Eagles Dare* I just knew I had to get involved," said the man who managed boyband Blue and

discovered the Fron Male Voice Choir.

"It would be criminal not to make their incredible music more widely available to the Great British public."

Heroes, which also features a rousing version of *Ride of the Valkyries*, was recorded at London's upmarket Air Studios, with all musicians cramming into a sound-proof booth more accustomed to bands of a smaller variety – Coldplay and Razorlight to name-check just two.

Speaking about the switch from playing at prestigious ceremonies for the Queen to having an album recorded for mass consumption, CSgt Dave Desmond explained his astonishment.

"It's a bit surreal really but it's great to be able to bring our music to the nation and show what we are all about," said the trombonist.

"Personally I enjoy playing *Nimrod* – it really does make your hair stand on end every time."

LSgt Darren Hardy, a flautist, added: "It's still sinking in but it's starting to dawn on all of us how many people will be listening to our music."

"I never in a month of Sundays thought this would happen. We are in the public eye quite a lot with parades but I never thought we'd play for a record label like Universal."

The Coldstream Guards perform their duties

as soldiers under the motto "Nulli Secundus", meaning "Second to None", and with *Heroes* they have no plans to play second fiddle to the so-called music A-listers.

Musn Sophie Johnson said: "It's really exciting – to think we could be up for a BRIT award is absolutely fantastic."

"Although recording in a studio is new to us, we had no problems getting to grips with things and if anything we are the professional ones compared to some artists!"

Heroes will be released under Universal's Decca label, which specialises in classical music.

Managing director Dickon Stainer said: "If they're good enough for the Queen, they're good enough for Decca."

With the release of the album it is hoped the country will get behind the Guards and spend time thinking about the sacrifices soldiers have made and are making on operations.

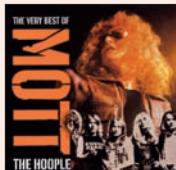
Graham Jones, director of music for the Coldstream Guards, said: "Our music has the power to move and inspire people in a very positive way."

"We're delighted that our talented musicians will be able to reach and share this with a much wider public." ■

From Pitbull's flea-bitten offering to The Soldier's perfect Christmas gift, we check out the latest releases...

The Very Best Of, Mott The Hoople

EVEN with the current trend for old bands reforming after several years apart, the return of **Mott The Hoople** caused a few ripples, and quite rightly so. Despite the outfit's all-too-brief tenure at the top they provided some of the most enduring tunes of the seventies and they are all present and correct on this release. The anthemic *All the Young Dudes* leads the way in fine style, while *Roll Away The Stone* and *All The Way From Memphis* still sound good three decades after they were first aired. Many of today's rising stars have cited the interestingly-coiffured band as their influence. Listen to this 20-track collection and you will see why their music continues to inspire.



Steve King, MoD

Rebelution, Pitbull

FLICK through the wave of music channels on television and you are sure to stumble across the wretched sounds of this urban artist. I have really tried to listen to this pitiful offering, but it is the kind of shouty, angry, ghetto music I abhor. I like to think I have eclectic taste (**Thievery Corporation, Underworld, Carole King, Buzzcocks, Pink Floyd, Katherine Jenkins**) but I really can't stand this **Pitbull** album. I can only think it must be fashionable to like this dross at the moment. Decent hip-hop such as **De La Soul** and **English Beat** I can cope with but this is not a patch on either of them. It is mass-produced crap and this album is a rabid dog that should be put down.



Capt Jim Berry, R Irish

Coming Home, The Soldiers

ALTHOUGH the world of consumer pop is one I generally try my best to avoid, this first offering from **The Soldiers** does not sound quite as contrived as I had initially feared. The album mostly consists of well-executed cover songs including *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, *Lean On Me* and *Tears in Heaven* which, although over-produced, allow the natural vocal talents of the three serving soldiers to shine through. It was a little sickly-sweet for my tastes but, with Christmas fast approaching, and album sales supporting the Army Benevolent Fund, Help For Heroes and The Royal British Legion, this is the perfect gift idea for mums and grans throughout the country.



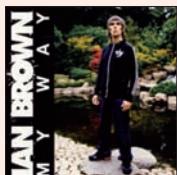
Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)



Marching on: The Regimental Band of the Coldstream Guards will be assaulting the charts after signing a £1 million record deal with Universal Music

My Way, Ian Brown

THE former **Stone Roses** frontman returns for his sixth solo outing in a diverse collection of songs bursting with personal insight. Despite pulling in some mixed reviews elsewhere, I do not think either fans or casual listeners will be disappointed with *My Way*, where the songs range in style from the pumping 80s-inspired synths of *Marathon Man* to the gentle warmth of *Always Remember Me*. Brown's inimitable voice and swaggering Mancunian attitude bring a definite edge to the album, in which he pays a brief reference to his old band in the track *For the Glory*. All in all this is a polished effort from the northern indie rocker and comes well recommended.



Cliff Caswell, Soldier

She Wolf, Shakira

COLUMBIAN beauty **Shakira** has made a dramatic return to the music scene with a raunchy video for her new album's title track, *She Wolf*. If you are worried that the artist has lost her musical gift and succumbed to taking her clothes off to sell records, there is no need for concern – Shakira's voice is as beautiful and quirky as ever. *She Wolf* is full of her trademark eccentric flavour and up-tempo Latin rhythms and the more you listen to it, the more appealing her funky sound becomes. Shakira's lyrics are deep, breathy vocals may not be to everyone's taste, but for those looking to escape the banal popworld, *She Wolf* is a fine album to hunt down.



Emma Winterbottom

Leaving Everything Behind

FOLLOWING a successful tour supporting screamy electro-rock outfit **Enter Shikari**, Glasgow-based sextet **Flood of Red** are in the midst of releasing a raft of singles from their hugely anticipated debut, *Leaving Everything Behind*. With 14 tracks included on the album, there are some interesting rhythms and soundscapes to be had. However, the listening experience is very samey and there isn't much to hang around for after the first few numbers. Underpinned by a melancholic undercurrent, anyone giving this album a go will require endurance and resolve in abundance if they plan to listen to the whole album in one sitting. It can be done, but that doesn't make it a good idea.



Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC



Afghan by air: Chinook pilot and Distinguished Flying Cross-winner Maj Mark Hammond delivers a bird's eye view of the battlefield

Chinook chronicle

Decorated helicopter pilot brings purple perspective to Britain's Afghan air ops

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

YES it's yet another book on operations in Afghanistan. But, before you stop reading, let me assure you that this account offers a unique perspective of the fighting.

Immediate Response is an insider's view of the Royal Air Force, written by an officer in the Royal Navy and featuring a hero familiar to all those serving in the Army – the Chinook.

Synonymous with British operations in Helmand province, the story of this tandem rotor helicopter and its part in the fierce fighting of 2006 is told from the cockpit by Maj Mark Hammond.

Having joined the Royal Marines in 1989, the author's career prior to Op Herrick shapes his outlook and is worthy of review.

After building up experience and flying hours at the controls of the Gazelle and Lynx, Hammond was attached to the US Marine Corps, where time spent flying the Huey Cobra gave him an insight into the use of attack helicopters.

Having mastered the small and agile Cobra, the pilot added a very different aircraft type to his flying logbook – the much larger and more

powerful Chinook – which is where this Afghan account begins.

The author's down-to-earth narrative style will appeal to *Soldier* readers from the opening line. Although Hammond was assisted by a co-writer, his character is well to the fore in the majority of *Immediate Response*'s chapters.

Indeed, there are only a couple of passages that hint at the work of a ghost writer – descriptions of events that are overdramatic and don't ring true.

Hammond's own delivery is very much what you would expect from a Royal Marine; punchy, gritty and straight to the point. His description of life in the Joint Helicopter Force is accurate and engaging, and you can almost hear the inter-crew banter as you turn the pages.

The promotional blurb for this book boasts that often used marketing phrase "unputdownable", and for once the PRs aren't far from the truth – *Immediate Response* is very readable.

The booteck view of the RAF is delivered in true bootee-style with a healthy dose of humour, colourful language and a whiff of cordite laced with aviation fuel.

For the layman the explanations of the daily dilemmas faced in Helmand by Chinook crews are presented in a simple no-nonsense manner

and with minimal aviation jargon. And for those who wonder what goes on in the Chinook cockpit at those critical moments in combat this is an informative and at times gripping read.

Many will be familiar with the medical emergency response team and its life-saving role. It can be an extremely dangerous duty and is well summed up by Hammond.

"The longer we stayed on the ground the more time we gave the Taliban to fix the target in their sights," he writes. "The helicopter was a big, steel hundred-foot target full of fuel. We were basically a huge flying, rumbling bomb and if we got hit in the right place we went boom. The casualties weren't safe until they were in Bastion. That's not a conversation we would ever have with them."

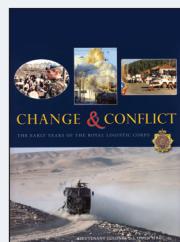
An overriding theme of the book is the determination of the Chinook crews and their escorting Apaches to keep battered outposts in the fight. Hammond was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross shortly after his return to England and, on reading his account, it is easy to understand why he and so many of the Chinook Force were held up as heroes.

The author's nobility is further underlined by his decision to donate five per cent of the royalties from his book to Help for Heroes. ■

From conflict in the cradle of civilisation to a cyber warfare caper, a scan of this month's literary releases...

Change & Conflict by Lt Col David Owen

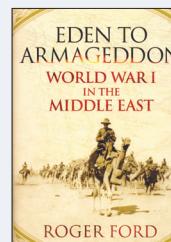
FORMER RLC officer **David Owen** has created an outstanding record of his corps' formative years; producing an account that is exceptionally readable and beautifully illustrated. *Change and Conflict* encapsulates the full range of logistical support given to the many operations the British Army has been involved in since 1993. The RLC's personality is superbly captured by the author, with chapters devoted to both the antecedent corps and the soldiers who serve today. This book is essential reading for anyone with even a tenuous connection to the loggies and at £25 it will make an ideal Christmas present.



Maj Eddie Elms, AGC

Eden to Armageddon by Roger Ford

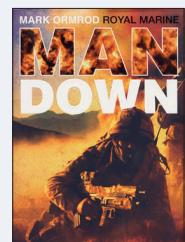
THIS book charts the gradual downfall of the Ottoman Empire from 1875 to the outbreak of the First World War and gives an in-depth narrative of the conflict which led to the demise of Mesopotamia and creation of Iraq. Notably, it then discusses the botched handling of the aftermath in which the roots of numerous contemporary conflicts lie, giving it a relevance to the modern day. Although the level of detail offered by author **Roger Ford** may put some readers off, this is an engaging, well-written and comprehensive history of the Great War in the Middle East that would make a fine addition to any bookshelf.



Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC

Man Down by Mark Ormrod

THIS exceptional story will touch the hearts of both the Service and civilian communities. Beginning with the IED blast that delivered the author, Royal Marine **Mark Ormrod**, from Helmand to Selly Oak with serious injuries, *Man Down* charts a remarkable ten-month return to duty. Full of praise for the amazing work accomplished by the military medical fraternity, Ormrod tells his story of relearning to walk on "bionic legs" in typical booteck fashion. Readers of early **McNab** and **Ryan** books will love the way he describes the gritty details of fighting the Taliban and life in a forward operating base. A hoofin' read.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC

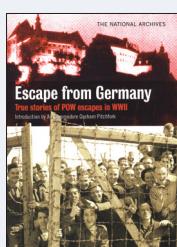


Mountain rescue: A trio of Chinook helicopters conduct a pickup of British soldiers in the highlands of southern Afghanistan

Picture: MoD, Crown Copyright

Escape from Germany

National Archives
PUBLISHED by The National Archives to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the escape from Stalag Luft III, *Escape from Germany* recounts the dangerous – and occasionally desperate – bids to break for freedom made by Royal Air Force prisoners of war during the Second World War. From the famous “great escape” tunnels – which have been immortalised by Hollywood – to less well known, but no less daring, feats of bravery and ingenuity, this book is all the more gripping and powerful because it is wholly made up of personal diary entries and interview transcripts. Fascinating and awe-inspiring.



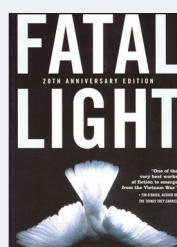
Capt Shaun Fardy, AGC

Fatal Light

by Richard Currey
THIS 20th anniversary fictional re-release follows a US combat medic's tour of Vietnam from pre-draft and deployment to his return home to small town America.

Richard Currey's poetic writing style may not be to everyone's taste as the story is told in dream-like short clips, jumping in time from chapter to chapter, which can be confusing. And if you're looking for action and adventure this book is not for you. However, this haunting short story can easily be read in an afternoon and it provides a rare insight into the psychological effects Vietnam had on those who fought there.

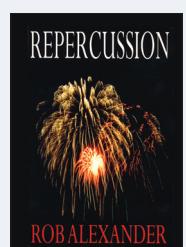
Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH



Repercussion

by Rob Alexander
PENNED by a former sapper, this novel tells the story of ex-soldier Ginger Symonds, who is quietly enjoying a new career as a writer when he unwittingly becomes caught up in a cyber terrorist attack. While **Alexander** tries to weave a very complicated storyline, involving what seems like hundreds of characters, into a credible plot, *Repercussion* is very confusing and its protagonists are implausible. However, Alexander's constant sycophantic references to Paras and bootnecks will make it an enjoyable read for some and, as a plus, a percentage from the sale of each copy is going to worthy charities [Blesma and Combat Stress].

Capt Vicki Seth, AGC (ETS)





Red devil: The Aprilia RSV4 Factory provides a mean ride for motorbike enthusiasts. To find a dealer, visit uk.aprilia.com

Dream machine

Aprilia rolls back the years to manufacture a pedigree sportsbike for the future

Review: Harvey Mushman

REVARIED by many as the sportsbike of the year, the Aprilia RSV4 Factory has hit the showrooms and the world superbike circuits with undeniable success. But what is all the fuss about?

Well, for starters just take a look at the thing, sharp as a Monday morning crease, angular, angry, yet inviting at the same time. The 1,000cc superbike from Aprilia is the perfect mix of fashion and function. If you're in the know, you'll have seen Max Biaggi doing his thing on the world superbike newbie this year.

Standing in the corner at the start of the season were superbike new boys the BMW S1000RR and the Aprilia RSV4. Looking back now, only weeks from the end of the year, the BMW is still growing, finding its feet and keeping its head down all the while. The RSV4, however, is out the back smoking fags with the cool kids and sharing the spoils that only pulling podiums can bring.

Since the mid-90s the litre sportsbike category has been dominated by the Japanese. Heavyweights on the road and lightweights on the

pocket, nobody could ever see a bike bettering them. Especially an Aprilia.

On the track the Aprilia is undoubtedly good, but what's it like in the hands of the majority, riding on everyday roads rather than fending off the advances of the world's best riders through the twists and turns of the world's best circuits?

On the road the Aprilia requires some riding recalibration. Thumb the starter, listen to the thing boom into life like a hung-over sergeant major and prepare to stand to.

Even clicking a gear gets your heart racing as the exhaust changes tone, letting you know you are ready for the off.

Pitch perfect low speed fuelling is a godsend, but the finger-light radial brakes feel a little too strong initially, such is the initial bite. Once you're settled in though, you'll feel at home squeezing the life out of the lever as you negotiate into your favourite set of bends.

The RSV4 turns in like a tired pre-Para private – quickly. You look, you lean, you're done. Simple. Try and ride it like a Japanese litre bike and you'll miss the point.

The V4 engine alone is a mechanical marvel, torquey and pliant at lower revs, it doesn't hunt or feel heavy on the throttle. Hang on to a gear, let

the revs climb and you'll be treated to a £14,999 ride that's worth every penny, and more.

The heart of the V4 is pure thoroughbred. Take the bike to a track, hit sixth gear and the Aprilia is capable of reaching an absurd indicated top speed of 189mph.

Even though the bike has the dimensions of a late '90s two-stroke race machine it still manages to make you feel comfortable.

The reach for the bars isn't a long one, which is most definitely a positive thing for riders.

The reach for the pegs isn't a long one either though, equalling aching legs within a tank full of fuel, which buys you around 120 miles.

Yes the Aprilia RSV4 Factory is expensive, but the best of the best always is. Every part on the bike has been designed with just one thing in mind – winning.

Sleek on the outside and muscular on the inside, this road warrior has more than proven it is capable of out-stripping the competition on the international stage and early sales figures in the UK are extremely healthy too.

● **Soldier wants recruits to put top gear through its paces. Apply by emailing styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk** ■

Soldier gets in the saddle to try out Aprilia's latest range of road bikes...

Mana

TWIST-and-go scootering meets manly, chest beating motorcycling. An 850cc twin is coupled with a sophisticated but simple-to-use transmission. Turn the key, twist the throttle and you're away. Whether you're heading to work or play is entirely up to you as the Mana is more than capable of both. Practical touches like the under seat fuel tank and helmet storage are a welcome change from normal bike dynamics. A new GT version is available with ABS, making this one of the most capable all-rounders out there at the minute.



£6,699

Dorsoduro

THIS funky-looking 750cc streetmoto is more suited to cutting across town than winning Supermoto races. The Dorsoduro is selling in strong numbers because of its easy-to-ride nature. It looks the part but it also excels at everyday biking. Don't be afraid to look at one of these if you intend to wrack up big miles as the Dorso doesn't get uncomfortable after half-an-hour like you think it might. It's comfortable, friendly and very practical. Picture a G10 watch designed and built by Gucci – as functional as it is beautiful.



£6,599

Shiver 750 GT

REALLY benefiting from improved parts and construction processes, this, the second generation of Shiver, is solidifying its position as a serious contender in the middleweight sector traditionally dominated by the Japanese. Like others in Aprilia's model range the Shiver offers multiple mapping and fly-by-wire fuelling and allows you to flick between sport, rain and touring settings at the touch of a button. This is the bike that turns everyday journeys into an engaging experience. Exactly what you'd expect from a 95bhp Italian twin.



£6,499



Blazing a trail: World superbike competition newcomer the Aprilia RSV4 Factory is holding its own against the traditionally-strong Japanese manufacturers

RSV 1000 R

THE Italian sportsbike bargain of the year thanks to the arrival of the RSV4. The RSV 1000 R is aggressive, exciting to ride and brimming with the kind of technical features you would expect from a race-derived bike. Magnesium engine, Ohlins fully adjustable forks and ram air all add up to an experience that will leave even the most determined road and track riders satisfied. If keeping up with the Jones' is your priority you might want to splash out on the RSV4 Factory. But you'll be more than capable of turning a few heads on one of these.



£9,299

RS 125 Max Biaggi Replica

MAX Biaggi on a mini budget. Complete with a roaring two-stroke for die-hard fans of noise and big lean. Lots of seasoned bikers look down on machines with smaller engines, but that is not the case with the RS 125. The RS has built up a strong following in the sub-culture of the teenager. It has been around seemingly forever and for very good reason. Don't be fooled by the fact that you can fill the engine to capacity with the remains from a pint of beer, the RS has full-fat power and the suspension components to hold its own against larger sportsbikes.

£3,999

Tuono

BONKERS bike that requires the mental approach of a drunken taxi queue, as if pushed too hard it can get a little punchy. The Tuono is already a well-established name in the Aprilia fold and is rumoured to be sitting in front of the promotion board for 2011. It takes serious focus to get the best from the unclothed version of the superb RSV 1000 R, but the rewards are worth it. If you can't get a test ride and want to know what it feels like to ride one, get a mate to drive a Ferrari flat out while you stick the top half of your body out of the sun roof. Hard? Definitely. Fun? Absolutely.

£8,399



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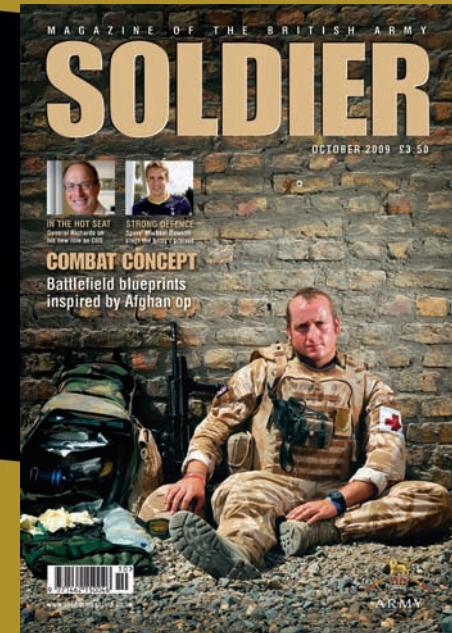
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LORDS OF THE RINK
Army ice warriors
face off in Batus
Hockey League

Cool customers: Batus Hockey League players line up for the new season. From left: WO2 Russ Ward (AGC), Sgt Jim Kirk (AGC), WO2 Matt Regan (REME), SSgt Rob Woodley (AGC) and SSgt Neil Oakley (RLC)

Picture: Graeme Main

PREMIERSHIP hard man-turned-big-screen-actor Vinnie Jones provided a stern test for REME footballers during their three-match tour of Los Angeles.

The ex-Wimbledon and Wales midfielder starred for the Hollywood All Stars in a 4-2 win over the visiting side who warmed up for the clash with matches against Hollywood United and Real Hollywood Football Club.

The REME side's itinerary also included a training session with coaches from the LA Galaxy, a tour of the Home Depot stadium and tickets for a Galaxy match.

THE Football League has confirmed Help for Heroes as its official charity partner for the 2009/10 season.

Fans from across the country backed the organisation in an online vote that saw five charities shortlisted for support from the League.

The partnership will result in fundraising opportunities, the provision of match tickets for members of the Armed Forces and a VIP day at the Wembley Stadium play-off finals.

REME soldiers have been celebrating success across the board at the Army Canoe Union surf kayak championships.

With mixed surf greeting competitors at Saunton Sands it was the REME who adapted best with Cfn Shaun Skelding, Cfn Andy Androsiuk, Capt Del Elesmore and Cpl Luke Kemp all winning their respective classes.

Maj Chris Elesmore (Int Corps) broke the stranglehold by claiming victory in the women's competition.

Stars come out for heroes

COMBINED Services boxers will have the daunting prospect of fighting in front of 19 former world champions when they lock horns with the Metropolitan Police early next year.

The card will form the highlight of a star-studded Legends and Heroes evening, which aims to raise £50,000 for Help For Heroes at The Royal Courts of Justice on London's Strand.

Some of the biggest names in boxing will be ringside for the event including former WBC and WBA world heavyweight champion Tim Witherspoon and undisputed WBC, WBA and IBF welterweight champion Lloyd Honeyghan.

Olympic bronze medallist and WBC super middleweight champion Richie Woodhall (pictured) will also be among the VIPs along with middleweight and super middleweight champion Glenn Catley and Billy Schwer, a former British, Commonwealth and European lightweight champion.

Speaking at the launch of Legends and Heroes, event director Maj (Retd) Sam Livy said: "The boxing world is falling over itself to help us with this project.

"The World Boxing Council (WBC) and the champions have been fantastic. The event is growing massively, we have got 19 world champions supporting us and we have had to increase the size of the venue due to the level of popularity we now have."

American Witherspoon, who defeated

British hero Frank Bruno in a career spanning 69 fights, said the invitation to join such a stellar cast in support of a great cause was too good to turn down.

He added: "We have two of the most powerful countries in the world at war and our soldiers are putting their lives on the line to try and bring about change.

"We have to raise money for our troops, that is why I am here."

Woodhall was inspired to take part after seeing television programmes featuring wounded personnel.

"Seeing soldiers who have lost limbs really brought it home for me," the Commonwealth Games gold medallist said.

"To think they have to live the rest of their lives without an arm or leg is horrific.

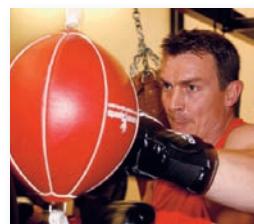
"When this war is long gone they have to live with those injuries."

It is hoped Legends and Heroes will become a fundraising series with different sports represented at each event.

The boxing evening will see 600 guests dining alongside legends from the ring and Army heroes.

Pipers from the Irish Guards and the band and buglers of The Rifles will provide the musical entertainment and there will also be a charity auction featuring rare boxing memorabilia to boost the fundraising total.

● For more information visit www.legendsandheroes.co.uk ■



Silver Stead shines on GB debut

ARMY boxer LCpl Martin Stead (RLC) fought his way to a silver medal in his tournament debut for Great Britain.

The confident lightweight was part of a four-strong team that travelled to Finland last month for the Tammer Tournament, a contest that sees fighters from around the globe trading blows in amateur bouts.

After defeating a Polish opponent in his opening fight Stead made light work of an Estonian challenger in the semi finals, recording a 10-0 points win.

But with a gold medal in his grasp the junior NCO suffered an agonising defeat in a close-fought final, where a countback was used to decide the victor.

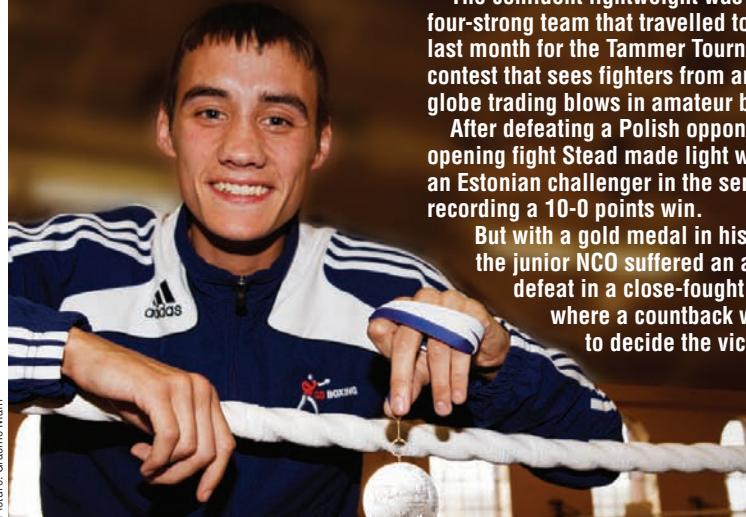
"I am over the moon with it [the silver medal]," Stead told *SoldierSport*.

"I had the gold in my hands and I thought I had done enough. I'm not sure if they were expecting me to get anything but I came away with a silver."

With a successful debut now under his belt, Stead is determined to cement his spot in the Great Britain team and push for a place in the England squad at the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

He said: "This is what I have been training for. I have represented England before so Great Britain is the next big thing and I want to stay in that team. The Commonwealths are looking very good for me."

Army boxing coach Sgt Tony Davis (APTC) added: "Just missing out on a countback shows he is on top of his game. Hopefully this will propel him to further international selections."





Golden gloves: Army ace Spr Adam Whitfield (RE) puts his ring skills to the test in a sparring session with super middleweight champion Glenn Catley

Catley's got the cream

Interviews: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY boxing's big guns limbered up for Combined Services duty in the new year with expert tuition from super middleweight champion Glenn Catley.

The 36-fight veteran, who defeated Markus Beyer to lift the WBC crown in 2000, visited the Army's Maida Gymnasium in Aldershot to put the fighters through their paces as they prepared for the 2010 Legends and Heroes showdown with the Metropolitan Police.

The bouts are the pinnacle of a star-studded evening which aims to raise £50,000 for Help for Heroes.

A morning of theory-based exercises was followed by an afternoon in the ring where Catley went head-to-head with the Service heavy hitters in some light sparring sessions.

'When Help For Heroes asked if I was interested I was there at the drop of a hat'

The former British middleweight champion told *SoldierSport* he was delighted to be involved in Legends and Heroes and is looking forward to seeing the Combined Services climb through the ropes next year.

"Without question this is a fantastic event and when Help For Heroes asked if I was interested I was there at the drop of a hat," he said. "Boxers, like soldiers, have to go out and fight. We have a referee but for them it is the bullet that decides the winner so it is vital they get the support they need."

Catley was clearly impressed by the talent on show and believes some of the fighters could make big names for themselves in the sport.

"They seemed to have enjoyed themselves and I am happy to be here, it is a great cause," he said.

"They are all young lads and I was like them once. Even though they have

a main career in the Army there is no reason, given the facilities and coaching they have, that they cannot become world champions themselves."

Combined Services head coach Sgt Tony Davis (APTC) has yet to finalise his team for the clash but revealed Army stars Spr Adam Whitfield (RE), LCpl Steve Turner (R Signals) and LCpl Martin Stead (RLC) will all be matched for bouts.

Whitfield, who has aspirations of making the England squad for next year's Commonwealth Games, said he was thrilled at the prospect of performing in front of some of the biggest names in world boxing.

He said: "This is where I want to be, if you cannot perform under pressure what is the point of being in the game?"

Turner added: "It is inspirational. These are the people we want to be like. I have had two fights scrapped this season so this is a big event for me.

"It will be great to fight for the Combined Services in front of so many famous names." ■

Irish eyes smile on Forces heroes

Services charity gets a boost as Exiles aim to take the sting out of Wasps' tail in cup clash



Interviews: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

TWO of Rugby Union's leading lights lock horns this month in a heavyweight cup clash with added significance.

High-flying London Irish hope to raise vital funds for Help For Heroes when they host fierce local rivals

London Wasps in the Anglo-Welsh Cup at Reading's Madejski Stadium on November 8.

The Exiles have been proud supporters of the Services charity and for one player in particular it is a cause

very much close to home.

Burly second row forward Andy Perry served for 12 years with the Royal Marines before turning to professional rugby and is well aware of the sacrifices being made by today's soldiers.

"It is important we raise awareness about the fantastic job the guys are doing abroad," he told *SoldierSport* in an exclusive interview at the club's training ground in Sunbury-on-Thames.

"It is vital we get our troops back as safely as possible. It is a very difficult time for the soldiers and their families so the more support we can give them the easier it will be."

He added: "I would just like to say best of luck to all the guys out there, the people back home are fully aware of your fantastic work and I hope you come back quickly and safely."

Help For Heroes also has strong significance for head coach Toby Booth.



Services supporters: Head coach Toby Booth (main picture) and second row Andy Perry (inset) lead London Irish into this month's Anglo-Welsh Cup clash with Wasps, which is raising money for Help for Heroes

"A friend of mine is a major in the Royal Marines," the 39-year-old said.

"He has done tours of duty and I have heard stories about that from him, which is why this is personal for me.

"He has talked about the physical and emotional rehab that people need on their return from conflict.

"From a club point of view it is important people realise the privileged position we are in and this will remind the players how lucky they are."

London Irish have already claimed a 28-16 win over Wasps this season and this month's cup clash promises to be equally entertaining.

Booth said: "Wasps versus London Irish is always a massive fixture. We are local rivals, they have been a great team and we are one of the best emerging

sides. There are bragging rights up for grabs and we intend to take them.

"We singled out this game for the charity as it is normally a close affair and a very physical encounter, so it should provide us with a real sense of occasion."

The Exiles have made a flying start to their league campaign and were just a point behind leaders Saracens as this issue went to press.

"Barring 40 minutes of average play in our first game we have performed pretty well," a delighted Booth said. "We have a lot of players going away with their national teams and that reflects where we are going.

"We encourage them to be the best and be determined in everything they do and that is reflected in their play."

It is important we raise awareness about the fantastic job the guys are doing abroad'

Perry joined London Irish in the summer after four years at Newcastle and hopes the Wasps fixture will help establish him in the starting fifteen.

The 34-year-old, who starred in five Twickenham matches for the Royal Navy versus the Army, said: "I have been involved in every game so far.

"The second row pairing of Bob Casey and Nick Kennedy is the best in the Guinness Premiership so it was always going to be difficult for me to make an impression.

"I have to bide my time and look to make an impact coming off the bench."

The Help for Heroes cup clash will get under way in spectacular style with the Black Knights Royal Artillery parachute display team performing ahead of the 1500 kick-off.

Tickets start at £20 with concessions for all Service personnel. For more information call 0844 2491871. ■

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Ice men: Batus Hockey League's Sgt Jim Kirk (AGC) tests the reflexes of goaltender WO2 Matt Regan (REME)

Lords of the rink

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

TEMPERATURES in the Batus Hockey League look set to soar this winter with the arrival of star signing Sgt Ben Wedgewood (REME).

The Army team captain will bring added quality to a competition that sees the best players from British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) going head-to-head on the ice.

Wedgewood will join the Flyers, a squad largely comprised of personnel from 29 Fld AAC, as they take on the league's five other sides – the Orange Oilers, the Icemen, the Chieftans, the Flames and the Black Oilers.

The teams have already faced off in a series of friendly matches and are due to lock horns once again in a BFBS competition and the Commander's Cup in December before league action starts in the New Year.

SoldierSport spoke to Wedgewood shortly after his arrival in Canada and the skilled centre said he was looking forward to the challenges Batus will offer.

"I have been pushing for nine-and-a-half years to come out here," he added. "Since I arrived I've been on the ice five times a week. Back in the UK I was lucky to get on once a month.

"I came here for the work and the lifestyle, the hockey is a bonus for me.

"My aim is to get in the base team and

get involved with the coaching so I can help the players learn and improve."

Unfortunately Wedgewood will have to put his commitments with the Army team on hold but hopes to be part of the REME side that takes on its Canadian counterparts in Toronto this month.

Icemen goaltender Capt Roy "The Sieve" Pierson (RA), the officer in charge of hockey at Batus, was delighted to welcome the league's newest addition and is looking forward to seeing his players develop their skills.

"It is great to have him here," he said. "The league ranges from first year novices with no ice time to those who are dedicated to the sport so it is good to have him in the mix." ■



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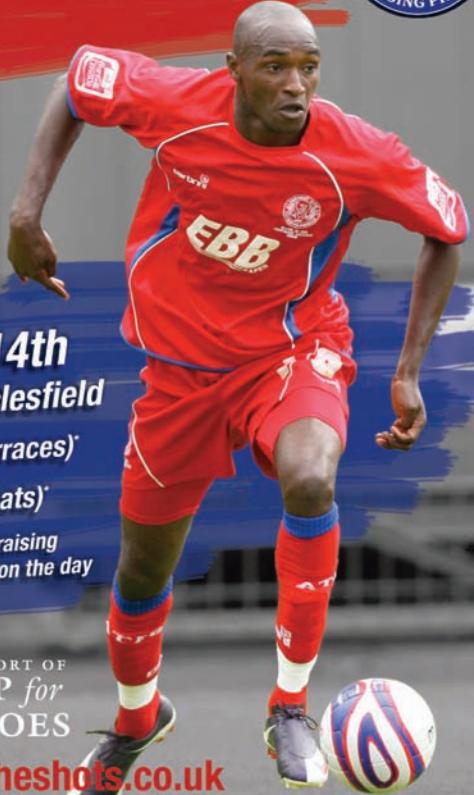


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ONE MESSAGE



Pedal power: Army cyclists brought the curtain down on their outdoor season by claiming victory in the inaugural Inter-Services road race championships

Leaders of the pack

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

ARMY cyclists stamped their authority on the Inter-Services road race championships thanks to a combination of skilled team riding and power from the saddle.

The Service took to the circuit at Upavon airfield in determined mood and saw Spr Mike Cripps (RE) and Capt Dave Walker (RLC) chase down the Royal Navy's early lead to take the top spots in a keenly-contested race.

Royal Air Force cyclists fought hard to secure third and fourth place finishes but strong rides from Maj Shaun Green (REME) and Spr Heinrich Venter (RE) ensured the Army secured the title.

The race was the first-ever Inter-Services contest and WO1 Darren Clarke (REME), of the Army Cycling Union, was delighted with the performance of his riders.

"We have put a lot of effort into developing this team," he told *SoldierSport*. "We have been competing in a lot of civilian events and stage races

and we have great strength in depth.

"Most of our cyclists are at a similar level and that means we have a lot of cards to play in race scenarios.

"Because we have such good team morale we are able to compete for each other, some guys will lay down their race for teammates to succeed. Tactics and teamwork play a crucial part in what we do."

The Navy's leading cyclist set a blistering early pace that saw him open up a two-minute lead.

But Cripps and Walker kept their cool and systematically reduced the deficit as their opponent tired.

The Army went on to claim seven of the top ten places in a stunning performance on their race debut.

For Walker the chase proved particularly rewarding as he was crowned Service champion on the same track just a week earlier.

With cycling enjoying an Olympic Games-inspired boom, a strong field entered the Army championships.

Cpl Paul Hamnett (RAMC) pedalled to glory in the novice class while Lt

Nicole Evans (AGC) tasted success in the women's road race.

Civilian Russell White, the national disabled road race and pursuit champion, won the gala event with Walker finishing second to take the Army title.

Cpl John Aspell (1 Para) and Cpl Deacon Cuttermam (1 Rifles) also gave encouraging performances to secure their place on the Inter-Services team.

With strong showings in both events Clarke believes that the sport has a bright future.

"I run a lot of civilian races at Upavon and the standard in the Army is the equivalent of the elite level competition I see," he said.

"In footballing terms we are a Championship team. The results of Bradley Wiggins and Mark Cavendish have dragged the professional scene up even further but I definitely think we are bubbling under that national level."

- For more information on Army cycling, visit the group's website at www.armycyclingunion.co.uk ■

SPORT SHORTS

THE next basic UK football referees course will be held in Aldershot from January 18 to 22.

Those interested in taking part are advised to book as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

For more information about the course, contact Graham Brookland by email at graham.brookland@armyfa.com

THE Adjutant General's Corps (AGC) squash championships will take place in Aldershot on November 12 and 13.

All standards are welcome to take part and the AGC will be looking for players to tour Hong Kong next year.

For more information contact Maj Phil Ashman on 07748 325073.

PLAYERS from Aldershot Town Ladies Football Club have been stripping off to star in their own charity calendar in support of Help For Heroes.

The project, inspired by the film *Calendar Girls*, aims to raise £10,000 with proceeds also being donated to Cancer Research UK.

To order a copy of the calendar, visit www.footygirlscalendar.com

THREE serving family members have completed the adrenalin-fuelled Saab Solomon Mega Avalanche in the stunning setting of the French Alps.

The formidable race sees mountain bikers negotiate glacial snow and some of the toughest black ski runs in the area as they descend from Pic Blanc at 3,300 metres to Alemont at 720 metres.

WO2 Chips Rafferty, who serves with 15 HQ Brigade training team, took his place in the race alongside his sons Cpl Joe Rafferty, a PTI at RAF Bulmer, and OCdt Alex Rafferty of DITUS Loughborough University.



Picture: Peter Meade

TEAMS from across the Services took part in the second annual Adjutant General's Corps (AGC) Polo Cup at Tidworth. The tournament was split into two divisions and the Royal Navy walked away with the overall title, defeating the Infantry 3-5-0 in the final. Division Two produced some hard-fought matches between the Royal Artillery, London University Officer Training Corps and two AGC teams. The officer cadets capped an impressive tournament by beating the AGC red team 3-1 in the second final. The event was also held to raise money for SSAFA Forces Help.

Narrow loss scuppers Reds' Inter-Services hopes

THE Army suffered heartbreak in their quest to claim the Inter-Services Rugby League crown as they crashed to an agonising 11-10 defeat against the Royal Navy.

With a narrow victory over the Royal Air Force already in the bag the Reds were looking to complete a clean sweep as they headed to the tournament's final fixture in Portsmouth.

The match started with impenetrable defence from both sides as players thundered into tackle after tackle in fierce protection of their try line.

Army hopes were dealt an early blow when skipper WO2 Sly Silvester (RAMC) was knocked out in a challenge that left him unable to play the remainder of the half.

After conceding a string of penalties the Reds came close to opening the

scoring when flying winger LCpl Tim Tamani (REME) chased down a kick only for the ball to bounce inches from his fingertips and out of touch.

Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) put the first points on the board with a penalty before Tamani made up for his earlier disappointment by crossing in the corner to complete a flowing team move he started deep in his own half.

With a 6-2 interval lead the Army started the second period in determined mood but a series of mistakes and soft penalties allowed the Navy to establish a foothold and the sailors added a try of their own to level the scores.

Tamani smashed his way over the line for his second score of the day but the match turned when a dropped ball during an Army penalty move resulted in a vital transfer of possession.

The Navy took full advantage from the ensuing attack to cross the line and tie the scores at 10-10.

With momentum on their side the hosts delivered the knockout blow courtesy of a well-worked drop goal.

The result left each Service with one-win-a-piece as the RAF lifted the trophy thanks to a superior points difference.

● **The Army women's team completed their total dominance of the Inter-Services tournament as they smashed their Navy rivals 72-0.**

An early try set the champions on their way to victory as the sailors struggled to cope with the Reds' excellent lines of running.

The Army Academy team also tasted Inter-Services success with a 46-4 win over the Navy. ■



Picture: Roger Thompson

COMBINED Services rugby stars renew their battle with the world famous Barbarians this month in the annual Remembrance Day fixture. Three tries inside ten minutes helped the Baa-Baas to a 33-14 win last year (pictured above) and the Services will be out for revenge when the sides face-off at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium on November 11, kick-off 1915. Tickets for the clash cost from £5 to £10, with admission free for under-16s. For more information call 01252 334415.

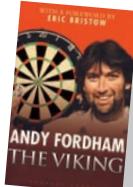
FORDHAM FREEBIE

DARTS sensation Andy "The Viking" Fordham has taken time off from the oche to pen his autobiography.

The book provides an intimate portrayal of one of the game's most popular players and covers his rise to British Darts Organisation world champion in 2004 along with the decline in health that almost claimed his life just three years later.

SoldierSport has teamed up with Pennant Books to give one reader the chance to win a signed copy of *The Viking*. To stand a chance of winning, just answer this question: In what year was Andy Fordham crowned world champion?

Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by November 30.



THE OFFICIAL BRITISH ARMY FITNESS GUIDE

AVOIDING INJURIES

ILIOTIBIAL BAND (ITB) SYNDROME

The ITB is a band of connective tissue that stretches from the hip to just below the knee, along the side of the thigh. It can become overtight and inflamed, causing it to pull or rub against surrounding tissue.

HAMSTRING TEARS

Muscle tears in this area result from excessive strain on the muscle, either as a result of a sudden movement or a repeated pattern of movement (an overuse injury).

ACHILLES TENDONITIS

This is inflammation of the achilles tendon along the back of the lower leg. You may feel stiff and tender at the back of the heel, particularly when rising up on to your toes.

KNEE PAIN

Patellofemoral syndrome is often a result of the kneecap maltracking, causing inflammation and pain beneath it.

SHIN SPLINTS

This term broadly describes inflammation of the connective tissue that attaches to the main shinbone, the tibia.

ANKLE SPRAIN

Turning your ankle may just result in a slight stretch of the ligaments, while a full-blown sprain will actually tear the tissues.

DID YOU KNOW?

Military studies show that smokers suffer from a higher incidence of musculoskeletal injuries than non-smokers.

PREVENT IT BY...

Strengthening the glutes, avoiding too much downhill running or running on cambered surfaces, correcting overpronation where the foot rolls in too quickly or too much on landing.

PREVENT IT BY...

Warming up thoroughly is important, as is working on your technique. Stretching can help as can not building up your training too quickly.

PREVENT IT BY...

The best ways to avoid achilles tendonitis, which can often be felt in the morning, are to stretch your calves, wear the right running shoes and perform calf raises.

PREVENT IT BY...

Strengthening the thighs by doing squats, lunges and step-ups, stretching regularly and wearing appropriate running shoes.

PREVENT IT BY...

Changing your shoes regularly, not running on hard surfaces all the time, stretching the lower legs.

PREVENT IT BY...

Watching your step, strengthening your ankles using single-leg balances or a wobble board.

SPORT SHORTS

GLASGOW Rangers donated more than 1,200 tickets to Armed Forces personnel for their Champions League clash with Unirea Urziceni last month.

The offer, worth in the region of £50,000, was made after the Romanian side decided not to take up their away allocation for the match.

But the strong presence of Army personnel failed to inspire the Glasgow giants as they crashed to a 4-1 defeat.

SAILING star Lt Emma Clarke (RAMC) has been celebrating success in the prestigious Endeavour Trophy at Burnham on Crouch.

She crewed the winning boat in the RS200 class working alongside sailing legend Geoff Carveth.

The trophy forms part of a champion of champions series that sees crews competing in identical Topper Xenon dinghies to provide a level playing field.

MILITARY charity Project 65 has launched a gruelling five-day challenge to raise vital funds for wounded personnel and their families.

Forces March will see the Armed Forces, Fire Service and Police going head-to-head with civilian and corporate teams to race 131 miles from Ilfracombe, North Devon to Bulford Camp, Wiltshire.

They will complete five marathons in five days as they bid to win The Mark Hale Trophy.

The prize is named after Capt Mark Hale of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, who was killed in Afghanistan while trying to save the life of a fellow soldier.

He led a team of eight soldiers from 2 Rifles in a charity rowing challenge for Project 65 in June.



final word



We asked soldiers about the experience of putting their skills to the test on the Canadian prairie

INTERVIEWS: RICHARD LONG
PICTURES: GRAEME MAIN



Pte Nathaniel Bevan (R Welsh)

I have really enjoyed it. I have been involved in recce patrols, fighting patrols and convoys. It is my first time out here and my first time as a driver so it is a big learning curve. I am glad we came out here before being deployed as it has given me a great insight into what to expect. The use of Afghans in the villages has also been a big help.



LCpl Callum Loughlin (REME)

I am happy I came as it has given me so much experience. I have seen a different side to life in the REME and it has given me an idea of what trade I want to do. I was put in the power pack section and that has given me a greater understanding. The work is hard but you gain a lot of knowledge and there is a strong emphasis on the adventurous training and sporting opportunities.



LCpl Ricky Allen (R Welsh)

This is my first time at Batus and I have found it to be a great experience. We have a lot of new guys so it is beneficial for them to see what it is like when we go away and to get experience of the challenges we will face. I am missing my wife and son but it is good training. I think the use of Afghan civilians is brilliant and hopefully it will stand the guys in good stead when we deploy.



Pte Ross McCullough (RLC)

I am fresh out of training. I was only in the regiment for three weeks before coming here so it has been a good learning curve. I did not understand much of my trade at the start of the posting, but I have learned a lot and it has been brilliant for my career. Batus also offers opportunities for sport and I have been involved in the Commander's Cup for football and softball.



Pte Ross Moore (R Welsh)

I just finished my training and came straight out here. It has been quite hard. I have not worked with Warriors before so I have had to learn very quickly, but the lads have helped me a lot. Batus is good and this has been the right training, even if it is fast and furious. I have done lots of serials, learned how to greet Afghan civilians and experienced minesweeping.



Pte Anthony Fahnbulleh (RLC)

I have been here for well over two months and the work has been really fast. I have been doing a job I would not normally do, working with chemicals, industrial gases and lubricants, which means that when I go for my class one course I will be ready. This has been a fantastic experience for me. The environment out here is really good and I have enjoyed my time in Canada.



Cpl Mark Getty (REME)

I have been here for a month-and-a-half working in the power pack repair section and it has been brilliant. This is my first time here and my main aim was to gain experience of working on power packs. Batus has given me that. If you are prepared to do a lot of hard work this is the place to be. The workload is pretty constant but there are great opportunities to play sport.



LCpl Des Mullaney (RLC)

It is very fast paced. I have recently done my B1 training so I have brought up-to-date knowledge with me and can train the lower rank. Out here there is a lot more they can learn and that enables them to be better at their trade. Gaining that level of experience would just not be possible in the UK. I have also taken part in a number of charity events including a ten-kilometre run.



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