

SOLDIER



MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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ARMY

Negotiating a Rocky road

THIS month we take a closer look at the British Army set-up in Canada.

Whether it's the adrenalin-fuelled world of ice climbing within the depths of Grotto Canyon (pages 32-35) or the unrivalled learning opportunities presented to Service mechanics on the prairies (pages 36-38), the benefits of training in north America have never seemed clearer.

Keenly aware that many of our readers continue to wait for redundancy news this month, *Soldier* spoke to the incoming Commander Land Forces, Lt Gen Adrian Bradshaw, about his priorities (pages 27-28).

The officer's insights and frank comments will no doubt reassure readers that senior colleagues remain in touch with feelings on the ground.

In direct contrast to this, I remain amazed that there are still people across defence who believe nothing but positive sentiments and messages should be relayed back to UK troops amid all this uncertainty.

Who are these individuals trying to kid, I wonder? Do they think that if the Service doesn't openly confront the flux faced by its people, everything will go away? If only.

Thank goodness those at the top recognise the need to be realistic: the British Army has much to look forward to but is not currently in a happy place.

With that in mind, please keep us in the loop as to your opinions, concerns and questions (pages 55-61).

And in the meantime, enjoy the issue. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor



S. Goldthorpe.

"This sport keeps me in the Army"
Off-road racers reign supreme (pages 90-91)

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Under 23s mount title challenge



Report: Jim Chapman
Picture: Graeme Main

VISITING Welsh farmers to discuss food security and the country's future is not something you'd normally consider important. But for 2013 WO1 Bruce Pratt (Pax), pictured below, birdwing among helmets, is the man to do it. He is a key element in developing one of the most important areas of the Royal Welsh's work.

The veteran of eight tours of Northern Ireland and 10 years in the Royal Welsh Cambrian Patrol for the last 12 years will now be spending his final year in the Service out in the real world.

He is the first member of the Royal Welsh and one of an 80-strong team of army-wide Bovis Beeswax, the former member of 1st Bn Royal Welsh, who have been asked to explain the logistics behind the annual Royal Welsh Show.

"As the organiser you need to do about 10,000 things to make sure the show is a success, pitch for the right sites as you are essentially asking for permission to use land," he says.

"But as long as the farmers are on-side and you've got the right people, it's a walk-

along the way," says WO1 Pratt.

"It's a chance for young farmers to issue a full set of orders and conduct a meeting with the Royal Welsh to see what's been done.

Since 2009 the training officer has been involved in the show and every year as more than 100 teams of eight are invited to compete in 40-hour slots in the welfare training area, he lets live under a poncho in the rain.

"They are put in different

situations as they are sent into foreign territory, meeting local pastoral experts

and learning about the local culture.

"It's a chance for young farmers to issue a full set of orders and conduct a

meeting with the Royal Welsh to see what's been done.

Working in partnership with growers, the Royal Welsh has been able to get soldiers to use a fantastic training area, it's been a great success and a very positive and challenging situation.

"The Royal Welsh is the only army unit that's not afraid to get out with tractors and horses on a few occasions," says the farmer.

"I think the Royal Welsh have a great

team and the Royal Welsh are great.

Along the way, he adds, "it's a walk-

along the way," says WO1 Pratt.

"It's a chance for young farmers to issue a full set of orders and conduct a

meeting with the Royal Welsh to see what's been done.

"There have also been times when

the Royal Welsh have been asked to

attend a show and the Royal Welsh have

been asked to come along and help out.

"It's a walk-along the way," says

WO1 Pratt.

</



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THE **informer...**

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Reduced Force heads for Helmand

SUCCESSFUL Afghan-led missions will be vital this summer if a positive transition to home control can be realised, the next commander of Task Force Helmand has said.

Brig Rupert Jones will take 1 Mechanized Brigade to southern Afghanistan next month to begin Op Herrick 18 with nearly 8,000 troops – 1,000 fewer than his predecessor.

Speaking ahead of the tour, the senior officer explained that this would be the first fighting season in which the Afghan National Army (ANA) would take charge, with British soldiers stepping back on 80 per cent of missions.

"It's vital that local forces come through the next six months having made progress," Brig Jones said.

"And they are very confident that they will succeed.

"We are training, advising and assisting the Afghans. That is transition and that is how we'll hand over."

However, the commander admitted that the ANA is not currently in a position to defend its country without foreign assistance.

"They are still relatively dependent on us in the area of enablers such as fire support and provision of surveillance and some medical support," he added.

"Over the next 18 months British troops need to incrementally step back from providing that and build up the abilities of home-grown forces."

Brig Jones – whose father Lt Col "H" Jones received a posthumous Victoria Cross after leading a charge against the Argentinians during the Falklands War – is firmly focused on the danger of green-on-blue killings, which accounted for a third of British fatalities last year.

"Our troops face any number of hazards and the insider threat is one of them," the commander conceded.

"UK and indeed ANA soldiers have been killed by these attacks but our personnel are closer to their Afghan partners than they have ever been and through training, our people are well prepared to deal with this."

Lt Col Robin Lindsay (Scots), commanding officer of the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group, added that British Servicemen and women had been given bespoke lessons to deal with the threat of rogue assaults.

"We have worked with scientific and



Well prepared: Members of 1 Mechanized Brigade train ahead of their Op Herrick tour

cultural advisers to help detect warning signs," he revealed. "It's all wrapped up in a training package that runs throughout our preparations specifically to counter this threat."

One team within 1 Mechanized Brigade, the Brigade Advisory Group, will prove vital in understanding the needs of the ANA and gaining intelligence from local people.

Confident that he and his colleagues will forge strong ties with their foreign counterparts during the mission, Sikh multilingual Rfn Jagjis Lahari (4 Rifles) said: "I suppose I will be quite useful for integrating with the Afghans because I can speak Dari, Urdu and Hindi."

"They are used to seeing full beards like mine and as I am very close to their culture I think I'll be able to help my friends on both sides."

Despite media speculation on the political pressures behind UK drawdown in Afghanistan, Brig Jones was keen to emphasise that fewer soldiers were being deployed on Op Herrick 18 because there was no longer a requirement for them.

According to the officer, the formation's gruelling two-year training process has been the best preparation in its history.

"It really has been tremendous and exceptionally well resourced; all the

troops will say this is the best package they've ever been on," he said.

"The British Army in Afghanistan is the best equipped force this country has ever fielded – they want for nothing."

Commenting on the enemy his troops face in the coming months, Brig Jones added: "The Taliban are not the set-up they once were.

"They are finding operations increasingly hard and their command network is struggling.

"However, this is not going to be a bed of roses.

"Helmand remains a potentially dangerous place and it will be contested, but the Afghan Security Forces are ready for the challenge which they face."

On track:
Brig
Rupert
Jones



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Foreign focus: Further international training packages such as Ex Civil Bridge are likely

New era for overseas work

SERVICE personnel are braced for an increase in overseas missions following the announcement of the government's international defence engagement strategy.

The plan sets out how the UK's non-combat defence activities will in future focus on building relationships with other countries in order to share expertise, extend UK influence, prevent future conflict and improve stability in certain regions.

As a result, the British Army is expected to undertake more partnering tasks in locations across the world, including India and New Zealand.

Secretary of State for Defence Philip Hammond explained: "Taking advantage of our transition from combat operations in Afghanistan and the resulting increase in available forces, we are exploring innovative ways of using some Army capabilities on a wide range of defence engagement tasks and intend to pilot this as the Service restructures its

adaptive brigades.

"We will exploit our recent operational experience, develop our capabilities, our cultural understanding and language training, and demonstrate our commitment and support for our allies and partners including the United Nations, Nato and European Union."

Col Don Bigger of the Army International Branch said the plan was good news for personnel.

It will see an increase in the number of joint international exercises British troops participate in, such as Ex Civil Bridge in Kenya and those in France which followed the signing of a defence cooperation agreement with the country back in 2010.

"Soldiers will get to train abroad, becoming more used to foreign climate conditions, different cultures and languages," the officer explained. "You join the Army to travel the world, not hang around Salisbury Plain, so troops can certainly feel reassured by this."

British personnel boost Mali mission

TROOPS from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment will be among 40 UK personnel to take part in the European Union training mission in Mali, the MoD has announced.

A team of 21 soldiers from the unit will carry out infantry drills with local forces fighting extremists in the African country, while a further 12 British troops will conduct mortar and artillery packages.

The United Kingdom will also provide four military headquarters staff and three civilians from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's human

rights and gender team.

With an advance party already deployed, the main contingent is due to travel to the troubled region later in the spring.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "British troops will play an important role in the mission, enabling the Malian authorities to restore order and deny a safe haven to terrorists."

The operation marks a significant partnership between the UK and Republic of Ireland, which will contribute six infantry training personnel to augment the group.

TRAVEL TRANSFORMED

■ ALLOWANCES for travel to the UK have been amended to make them more flexible and include some overseas Service personnel who did not previously qualify.

The changes include payments under the get you home (overseas) scheme, schoolchildren's visits and concessionary travel for families.

One key alteration means it will be easier to split the get you home (overseas) allowance entitlement over two trips.

The payment can now also be used towards a flight to a non-UK destination by non-UK spouses of British personnel.

Troops in north west Europe who receive the continuity of education allowance can now claim for the use of a private car for schoolchildren's visits. Previously only flights and train journeys were valid.

For more information on the policy changes read ABN 02/13.

BENEFIT BOOST

■ SERIOUSLY injured Service personnel and veterans will be entitled to new financial support from April.

Worth around £7,000 per year, the Armed Forces independence payment is designed to cover the extra costs incurred as a result of wounds.

Part of welfare reforms being undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions, the scheme is an alternative to the new personal independence payment.

Unlike the latter entitlement, individuals claiming the benefit will not be required to undergo assessments.

The money, which is neither means tested nor taxable, will be paid to those awarded a guaranteed income payment of 50 per cent or more under the Armed Forces compensation scheme and will not impact on eligibility to other benefits.

Minister of State for Defence, Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Mark Francois (pictured above), said the change demonstrated the government's commitment to the military covenant.



● Great expectations

- pages 27-28

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Fond farewell: A moving scene signalled the completion of ceremonial duties for 2 PWRR

Last post in London

MEMBERS of 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment have closed the gates of the Tower of London for the last time after two years on state ceremonial duties in the capital.

The role change has added significance as it could be the final occasion the light role infantry battalion undertakes public duties for a regular period.

The Army 2020 plan outlines that the commitment will pass in full to the Guards Division.

After taking part in various public events in 2011 and 2012 including the royal wedding and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Tigers will now return to a busy training cycle culminating in a live-firing exercise in Kenya.

During their time in London the

battalion's troops played a central role in the military support to the Olympics and Paralympics as well as providing personnel to the garrison on the Falkland Islands.

Lt Col Ollie Stokes, commanding officer of 2 PWRR, said: "This formation has worked extremely hard to maintain the highest standards in its ceremonial role; the effort has been magnificent.

"Next we must take forward this disciplined approach in order to transform to a fighting light role, ready for operations as the theatre reserve battalion."

Capt Ed Farren, who led the final guard at the Tower, added: "Ceremonial duties have been challenging but I feel a great sense of pride at having taken part in this time-honoured tradition."

Deloitte delves into talent pool

BUSINESS advisory firm Deloitte has launched a programme to help Service leavers move into the private sector.

The military transition and talent scheme aims to recruit skilled ex-soldiers to the outfit, as well as introducing them to the business world and providing them with key attributes and networking opportunities.

Chris Recchia, an ex-Army captain who is leading the initiative, said: "Over the last ten years we've seen some of these people join our company, and we now have more than 50 staff from a

military background working at Deloitte.

"We hope the programme will open the door for ex-Service personnel who want to make the move into a commercial environment."

Following the success of an insight day last year, the organisation will be running quarterly events for those interested in learning more.

"Although not everyone who attends an insight day will want a career with the firm, we hope that they will build a lasting affinity with Deloitte," the former officer added.

OPERATION MAKEOVER

■ SERVICE personnel are being asked to get involved in a new Channel 4 show aimed at rewarding well-deserving people with a touch of Hollywood glamour.

Producers are seeking nominations for the makeover series, which will feature projects from home renovations to red carpet-style pampering, and they believe Army partners or colleagues could make ideal candidates. Call 01273 224800 this month to make a recommendation.



ON-SCREEN SUPPORT

■ THE Army has released a new online film to offer advice and guidance for personnel and their families as they prepare to leave the military.

Transition to Civilian Life covers a range of issues including education, employment, housing and health.

The resource can be viewed on the British Army YouTube channel along with a second film aimed at helping soldiers who are leaving through redundancy.

HIMALAYAN HIKE

■ A ROYAL Engineer is preparing to walk unsupported along the Great Himalayan Trail to raise funds for various Service charities.

Capt Doc McKerr will tackle the 1,250-mile route in aid of the Gurkha Welfare Trust and SSAFA Forces Help.

The 30-year-old will depart for Nepal this month and aims to complete the trek in less than 100 days.

For details visit www.east2westnepal.org



TRANSITION TALK

■ FORMER Service personnel and their families are being asked what can be done to improve the move to civilian life.

Lord Ashcroft, the prime minister's special representative for veterans' transition, has launched a website for people to report their experiences.

Contributions will form part of his official review, which will end later this year. To take part visit www.veterantransition.co.uk and click on the "have your say" page.

MICROLIGHT MISSION

■ INJURED troops will attempt a world-first microlight flight to the South Pole next year.

The Flying For Freedom project will involve a round trip of more than 3,000 miles at altitudes of up to 10,000 feet in temperatures as low as -30 degrees Celsius.

It is part of a wider scheme to establish flying recovery centres across the UK. For more details visit www.fly2pole.com





“I WANT TO GO OUT AND MAKE A STATEMENT, FORCE A STOPPAGE AND SILENCE MY CRITICS”
– PRIZE FIGHTER PREPARES TO IMPRESS, PAGES 86-87

Pictures: Steve Dock



Home improvements: Money from both the British Contingent and British Forces Cyprus has funded repairs to Ledra Palace Hotel

New lease of life for landmark living quarters

BRITISH troops deployed as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus have received funding for long-overdue upgrades to their accommodation blocks.

Hundreds of personnel from 101 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Group stationed in Nicosia's Ledra Palace Hotel on Operation Tosca are among the first to benefit from the money.

Situated in the heart of the buffer zone between Turkish and Greek territory, the building had fallen into disrepair.

But the most urgent renovations are now under way thanks to around £79,000 from the HQs of the British Contingent and British Forces Cyprus.

Maj Malcolm Birkett (3 Yorks), the formation's quartermaster, explained: "Ledra Palace was once the only five-star hotel on the island – Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton used to stay here

all the time – but there haven't been any upgrades since the 1970s and parts of it are falling apart.

"It is owned by the Cypriots and is a listed building so it is difficult to get permission to do anything, even the smallest repairs.

"The United Nations also has very little money to invest."

Commenting on the cash injection the officer said: "This has allowed us to begin improvements to the soldiers' accommodation and purchase 100 dual function air conditioning and heating units, which is vital as it is chilly in winter but can reach 45 degrees in summer.

"We have also begun a project to upgrade the outside area of the soldiers' bar, which was dangerously run-down."

New kitchen equipment has been installed and troops have taken delivery of 30 televisions from the Services Sound and Vision Corporation, Wi-Fi

aerials from Forces broadcaster BFBS and new gym apparatus courtesy of ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

"Obviously the conditions aren't anywhere near as bad as in Afghanistan but the guys are still away from home with a job to do," continued Maj Birkett.

"We've made a start on this project but are coming to the end of the tour so it is the guys replacing us from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps who will really feel the benefit."

Cfn David Robertson, a Reservist soldier from 127 Field Company, was recently moved into an area of refurbished living accommodation.

"The first room I was in was pretty bad," he admitted.

"There was plaster hanging off the walls and when people jumped up and down upstairs, it fell off."

"It's much more homely now and has made a big difference."



...a top-of-the-range LED torch

LAST month's spine lines competition was inspired by our coverage of creative former soldier Adjani Okpu-Egbe.

(Fernand) Leger, (Robert) Delaunay, (Paul) Nash and (Franz) Marc are all artists who have dabbled with the abstract in their paintings.

This month we have teamed up with survival specialist Lifesystems (www.lifesystems.co.uk) to offer ten lucky readers a state-of-the-art Intensity 180 torch.

With an RRP of £35, this pocket-sized piece of kit has an impressive battery life and is up to six times brighter than standard torches.

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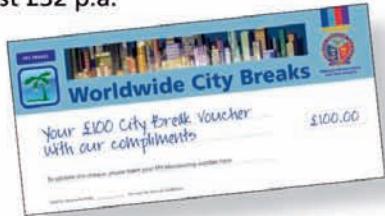
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Ban over breached trust

Company loses £1.2 million of soldiers' cash

A BUSINESSMAN whose letting agency lost £1.2 million of British soldiers' money has been disqualified from becoming a company director for nine years.

The Insolvency Service handed Paul Smith the ban following an investigation into his Blue Force Property Limited venture.

Its outcome revealed there had been inadequate ring-fencing of Mr Smith's accounts which meant that when his company went into liquidation in March 2011, there was a £1.2 million gap in the books – all of which was owed to Armed Forces personnel.

More than 300 Servicemen and women lost money, the majority of whom were from the Army.

Blue Force Property was set up in 2004 exclusively for individuals from the military, to assist them in buying residential properties and letting them out while they were serving overseas or living in Forces accommodation.

The company managed the lettings, collecting rents and encouraging customers to pay into property management accounts that were supposedly set up for each client individually, from where the mortgage, bills and expenses for their dwelling would be paid.

Mr Smith, 47, of Manningtree in Essex, and his staff repeatedly assured soldiers that any surplus

funds would be held securely in a ring-fenced account.

However, in reality all of the money went into one central account from where thousands of property-related payments were being made.

The business then moved funds into its own trading account and to those of an associated company.

These transactions meant that when the firm went into liquidation, Service personnel lost their money.

David Brooks, a chief examiner for the Insolvency Service, commented: “Many of those who lost out as a result of the company's demise were stationed overseas and had no choice but to trust Blue Force to look after their affairs on their behalf.

“This trust was broken and the money – money that many of them had risked their lives in order to earn – was lost.”

He added: “Directors who seek to gain an unfair advantage over their competitors by using clients' funds to prop up their own accounts will be investigated.

“This behaviour is unfair to those who play by the rules and protect their customers' cash and, most of all, it is unfair to those who risk losing their money.

“The Insolvency Service will seek to remove these people from the business environment.”



Picture: Sgt Russ Noan, RLC

COMMUNITY SERVICE

■ SOLDIERS have embarked on a project to help young people build all-terrain buggies while acquiring valuable new qualifications in the process.

Troops from 22 Signal Regiment Light Aid Detachment and their Reservist colleagues are leading a series of courses to develop engineering, teamworking and life skills among teenagers in Stoke-on-Trent who are not in employment, education or training.

Brig Gerhard Wheeler, commander of 143 (West Midlands) Brigade, said: “In helping men and women from the area to develop the expertise they need for work or further education, we hope in a small way that we can repay a community that has supported us so well in the past.”

The two-year initiative is being jointly run by the British Army, city council, the Prince's Charities, Stoke-on-Trent College and Connexions.

WO2 Raymond Miller, the youth engagement warrant officer for the project, added: “The young people who complete the course will gain a City and Guilds qualification in mechanics as well as learning new skills which they can take on to whatever they choose to do next.”

“Teaching them in a military environment also offers great experience to our junior troops in developing their own knowledge.”

Medics take on tough new fitness test

SOLDIERS from 16 Medical Regiment have tested their powers of endurance in a new test to find the fittest member of the unit.

The event saw the Colchester-based Service personnel put through their paces in a 150-metre swim and a six-mile run, which included a circuit of the Merville Barracks assault course, rolling tyres and carrying full Jerry cans in complete battle rig.

First across the finish line was vehicle mechanic Sgt Robert Williams (REME), who completed the challenge in a time of 39mins 59secs.

“The contest was tough but great fun,” he said.

“Fitness is very important to me and I put a lot of effort into my training.

“I hope I've set an example to the guys I'm responsible for of the standard that this regiment expects.”

Combat medic technician Pte Carin

Cook, the top ranked female soldier, added: “Keeping fit is crucial to the job we do and if you're not good enough when you arrive at this unit you have to work at it quickly.”

Organiser Sgt Ronnie Cordner, who is in charge of fitness activities for the regiment, used the test to boost inter-squadron competition and assess the capabilities of fellow personnel.



He said: “I was hugely impressed by the effort and competitive spirit on display in this contest.

“As airborne troops, physical endurance is one of our top priorities.

“On operations we're expected to be fully self-reliant and able to parachute in and march off the drop zone, carrying all the equipment needed to both serve our role as medics and survive.”



Picture: Cpl Obi Igbo, RLC

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Troops give gizmo the thumbs-up

BRITISH troops in Afghanistan have become the first in the world to use a pocket-sized helicopter that helps to navigate across difficult terrain.

The Black Hornet nano unmanned aerial system (UAS) allows dismounted patrols to quickly gain a bird's-eye view of their surroundings or to see around obstructions such as crops or buildings.

Capable of performing in harsh environments and windy conditions, the mini airframe provides reliable video footage and still images, which are viewed remotely by the user on a small handheld screen.

Weighing just 16 grams and measuring 12 centimetres in length, the device can be stored in a soldier's backpack and used by any trained member of a patrol.

Unlike its larger unmanned aerial vehicle cousins, the Black Hornet is not registered as an aircraft and therefore falls outside of complicated air regulations.

Each two-kilogram set comprises two of the systems, a visual display unit, base station with hand controller and spare parts.

Maj Simon Graham (RE) from

the Equipment Directorate at Army Headquarters explained how the groundbreaking gizmo would dramatically improve troops' situational awareness.

“The terrain in central Helmand is dissected by high walls, irrigation ditches, large compounds and dense vegetation, with crops growing up to two metres high,” the officer said.

“As a result, a patrol's observation can be extremely limited and their ability to move is restricted.

“The speed-into-action of the Black Hornet will give soldiers a man-portable method of looking into dead ground and identifying enemy and civilian locations.

“The intention is for the system to be used by dismounted close combat troops, including the RAF Regiment and the Brigade Reconnaissance Force.”



Procured as an urgent operational requirement, the project was delivered by Marlborough Communications and Prox Dynamics at an approximate cost of £20 million.

Since last May, 92 of the 150 units ordered have been fielded to formations undertaking Operation Herrick or mission-specific training.

Minister for Defence

Equipment, Support and Technology, Philip Dunne, said the pioneering device had been designed specifically with modern Forces personnel in mind.

“By exploiting the potential of emerging technology in the marketplace, the United Kingdom is the first nation to bring a nano UAS into service,” the politician added.

“In doing so we are providing a rapidly deployable, flexible and affordable asset to enhance situational awareness for the soldier on the ground, which will potentially save lives.”

● Digital dossier – page 57

WALKERS WANTED

■ SUPER-FIT soldiers are being urged to sign up for the biggest ultramarathon charity event in the UK – the Trailwalker challenge.

Organised by the Queen's Gurkha Signals and Oxfam, the race raises more than £1 million each year and sees teams of four running or walking 100 kilometres across the South Downs within a time limit of 30 hours.

The competition attracts widespread interest in the civilian world but more entries are needed from the military community.

The 2013 leg will be staged on the weekend of July 27-28 and more information can be found at www.oxfam.org.uk/trailwalker/the-challenge

NEW STARTER IN CYPRUS

■ BRITISH Forces in Cyprus have welcomed a new commander.

Maj Gen Richard Cripwell assumed responsibility for UK troops in the country during an official ceremony at Flagstaff House.

The senior officer's last posting was in Kabul, where he oversaw the transition of security from Isaf to Afghan forces.

His predecessor, AVM Graham Stacey, has moved on to work as deputy commander at Joint Forces Command in the Netherlands.



LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN		
SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
£45,000	<p>POUNDS FOR POUCHES</p> <p>Members of 71st (City of London) Yeomanry Signal Regiment (Volunteers) raised funds over a year to provide assistance dogs to injured members of the Armed Forces and emergency services. The campaign culminated in a charity boxing match between the Army and police at Wellington Barracks.</p>	<p>Hounds for Heroes</p>
£3,000	<p>FANTASTIC FOOTBALL</p> <p>Personnel from 208 Battery, 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery helped to organise a charity five-a-side football tournament in Dingle, Liverpool. More than 24 local teams took part in the event including Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Merseyside Police.</p>	<p>Help for Heroes</p>
£2,000	<p>PARA PERSISTENCE</p> <p>Soldiers from The Parachute Regiment took on members of the University of Essex Rowing Club in a race to cover the furthest distance on rowing machines inside 24 hours. In total the teams clocked up an impressive 859 miles, with the paras covering 31 more than their student opponents.</p>	<p>Rotary Club of Colchester, University of Essex Students' Union, The Parachute Regiment Charity and Combat Stress</p>

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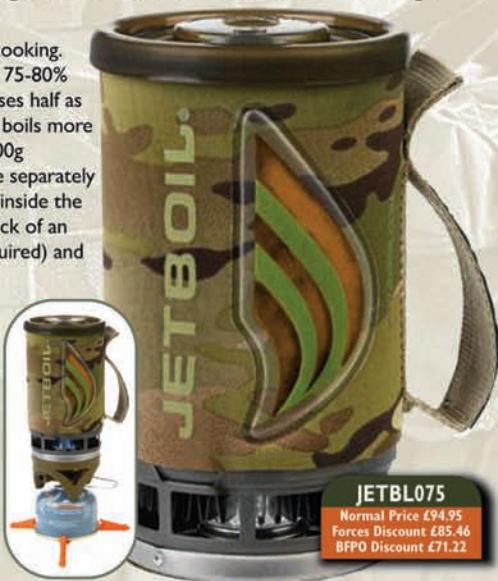


JETBOIL FLASH CAMO

Heat, eat and drink from this lightweight ultra-efficient and compact 1 litre personal cooking system - now featuring a brand new multi-terrain camouflage base and companion cup.

The Jetboil has sparked a revolution in outdoor cooking. Boiling two mugs of water in just two minutes at 75-80% efficiency, the Flash Carbon is twice as fast and uses half as much fuel as conventional gas stoves. The Jetboil boils more than 50 mugs (12 litres) of water from a single 100g isobutane/propane cooking gas cannister available separately here. All components can be stacked and stored inside the 1 litre cooking cup. The system lights with the click of an integrated igniter system (no lighter/matches required) and within two minutes provides two cups of boiling water for cocoa, coffee, instant soup or a gourmet freeze-dried meal. The newly designed burner secures the igniter, protecting it from bumps along the road. The Flash™ is designed to be one of the safest cooking solutions out there. The cooking cup clips onto the burner, preventing accidental spills, and the fuel canister tripod ensures overall stability. The insulating cozy has a colour-changing heat indicator that signals when contents are hot.

Size: 18cm x 11cm approx (packed).



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Weight loss wonder

A HEFTY teenager was so determined to enlist in the Reserves that he shed almost a third of his body weight in nine months.

Declan Whiting has been praised for slimming down from 18 to 13 stone so that he could join 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

On initially approaching the unit in January 2012, the student was told that he would have to shape up before he could sign up.

Undeterred, the 19-year-old civilian decided to fight the flab, visiting his local Territorial Army centre for a weigh-in once a month to prove he was serious about joining.

The former couch potato has since passed recruit selection and started his basic training with the unit's A (Fire Support) Company.

"I was in the Army Cadet Force from the age of 13 to 17 and really enjoyed it," explained the Reservist. "When I was younger I wasn't that heavy but I was big for my age."

"After giving up playing rugby and leaving the cadets, I gradually started to put on the pounds and it just got out of hand."

"I was fully expecting the recruiting staff to mention my weight but they were really nice about it and I wasn't at all offended."

"I just wanted to know what to do about it."

With his older brother serving in the Royal Logistic Corps in Germany,



Before and after: Pte Whiting dropped from 18 to 13 stone

the single-minded slimmer said he opted for sensible food consumption over faddy diets.

"I have changed what I eat but only in terms of the calorie intake," Pte Whiting said. "I certainly don't starve myself and eat exactly the same food as I did before... just not in excess."

Sgt Kelvin Neal, who monitored the teenager's weight loss, said that his original body mass index fell into the obese category.

"We are not permitted to give dietary advice because we are not professional dieticians," explained the senior NCO.

"But we can offer help with generic training programmes, plus we mentor the recruits."

"Over the months Pte Whiting reduced his BMI significantly, which has set him up for a much healthier lifestyle even if he hadn't joined the unit."

Praising the new Serviceman, the sergeant added: "He has been an ideal candidate and has put a lot of effort into joining this battalion. I wish I could get more recruits like him."

The Reservist is hoping to study computer science at university and is now considering a career as a Regular soldier.

"This experience has turned me into a bit of a fitness freak," Pte Whiting admitted.

"If I don't do any exercise for a day I get really restless."



Front-line first for recruitment

A GROUNDBREAKING series of adverts aired direct from military operations has given audiences a snapshot of what life is really like as a Territorial Army soldier.

The 60-second snippets were broadcast "as live" from Afghanistan at the end of last month in a brand new campaign to encourage more people to join the Reserves.

Shown on ITV, the vignettes transported viewers directly to the front line by capturing part-time personnel going about everyday duties alongside their Regular counterparts.

The promotional clips kick off the year-long "TA live" project, a series of public events and activities aimed at illustrating the opportunities available in the organisation.

Maj Gen Ranald Munro, Deputy Commander Land Forces (Reserves), said: "There has never been an advertising campaign like this.

"It is an incredibly exciting opportunity to bring the Reserves to life and show just what a soldier does on the ground."

To view the recruiting clips again log on to www.youtube.com/armyjobs



SPECIAL COMMISSION

■ A Reservist with an unusual day job has taken part in a special project to commemorate ten years of joint US-UK operations in Afghanistan.

Knifemaker LCpl Paul Macdonald crafted a ceremonial blade using steel from the ruins of America's World Trade Centre after his company, Macdonald Armouries, was selected to produce the item by the US Army's Special Operations Command.

Known as a first pattern Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife, the British-made weapon is destined for display in Fort Bragg alongside a second model created by an American firm.

Both pieces are replicas of the kinds of arms born by UK and US elite forces during the Second World War.

"To make each blade unique and symbolic of the start of operations in Afghanistan, each manufacturer was sent a single piece of steel recovered from the wreckage of the twin towers," explained LCpl Macdonald (pictured above) of the Intelligence Corps.

"It was a somewhat sombre experience to receive and handle it: the weight alone felt indicative of the devastation it was a part of."

The knife took the soldier about three days to make, a painstaking process of cutting, grinding, sanding, polishing, etching and nickel plating.

Once complete, all parts were assembled and the leather scabbard hand-cut, dyed and stitched.

Despite having produced many similar items in the past, the 40-year-old Serviceman said the commemorative blade held special significance.

"Being part of the British Army instilled a personal sense of pride in making the knife and also towards my Service life," he added.

"It has without doubt been our greatest honour to create."

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



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INSPIRING LEARNING



Scene of tragedy: The Dorset road where a UK soldier died after his stag party last year

Road deaths hit home

A SERIES of fatal road crashes are behind a new campaign to get soldiers taking greater care when walking home after a night out.

The “final destination” poster (pictured below) encourages troops to travel in taxis rather than by foot.

It has been produced by the MoD in an attempt to cut statistics which show that Servicemen and women are three times more likely to perish in traffic collisions than members of the general public.

By raising awareness of the issue among soldiers and the chain of command, it is hoped further deaths could be prevented.

“Road accidents are our second biggest killer of British military personnel after operations in Afghanistan,” explained Mike Moate of the defence road safety team.

With an average of 34 troops lost to crashes each year, previous statistics have revealed motorcycling to be the main area of risk for individuals.

However, the civilian expert said it is actually when they are pedestrians that soldiers are in the most danger – particularly after drinking alcohol.

“Many people think of road safety as something that needs to be considered while driving, cycling or riding a bike but recent figures show that all such thoughts are far from the forefront of people’s minds when they are on

foot,” Mr Moate added.

“There is a real belief that when Service personnel come back from operations they carry on thinking they are invincible.

“While your average civilian might consider the consequences of a certain situation, troops are inevitably exposed to higher risks and can sometimes get addicted to that buzz.

“There’s a pattern of the same thing occurring again and again; people putting themselves in harm’s way, not walking on the pavement and sometimes impaired by drink.”

One soldier who lost his life on Britain’s roads was Spr Matthew Cottrell (RE). The 24-year-old died after being hit by a coach as he walked back to his barracks along the A35 in Poole, Dorset, following his stag night last year.

Tpr Edward Heal (KRH) was fatally struck by a vehicle in Somerset in 2011 after walking home in the early hours of Christmas Day.

And three months ago a 21-year-old Serviceman died after being hit by a police car as he walked along the A31 Hogs Back in Surrey.

“If you are involved in a road traffic collision it is not just you who will feel the impact,” warned Mr Moate.

“The primary message is for troops to consider road safety when they are pedestrians. We need unit commands to help us encourage this too.”



GOOD DRILLS

MOTORCYCLE MISSION

AN 18-year-old is embarking on a 24,000-mile motorbike ride in support of injured troops. Oliver Plunket will ride a Yamaha 660cc Tenere from Argentina to Alaska to raise £100,000 for Fisher House, a home for the families of soldiers being cared for at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham. The student, who is due to attend Exeter University on an Army scholarship, will complete the trip in July. Visit www.olliesodyssey.org.uk



NURSE NOMINATIONS

TWO soldiers have been named as finalists in the national Nurse of the Year 2013 awards. Lt Col Catherine Shephard of the Army medical directorate and Capt Mark Reed from Headley Court have been shortlisted in the defence nursing category for their role in improving blood transfusion services. Organised by the *Nursing Standard*, the event’s winners will be revealed on March 12.

A STIFF PRICE

VIAGRA tablets were among almost £6,000-worth of medical supplies stolen from RAF Marham in Norfolk, the *Daily Mail* reported. The missing pills came to light as part of a Freedom of Information request about thefts of military gear. The MoD said it took any losses very seriously and that robust security processes were in place. As well as their more well-known application, the blue tablets can be used to treat low blood pressure and altitude sickness.



CHURCH CHEAT

AN American has been arrested for defrauding a US church of benefits by falsely claiming she had four sons who died serving in the so-called war on terror. The scam saw the mother-of-two collect more than £600 in donated clothes, house items and furniture before her son turned her into authorities.

BAD DRILLS

When his country needed him, Martin was there.

The Royal Star & Garter Homes is a charity that provides brilliant care to disabled members of the nation's military family with high care needs.

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As a charity, we do not receive any direct government funding and rely on the generosity of our supporters to fund the high level of specialist care that we provide.

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Picture: Cpl Gabriel Moreno, RLC

Under attack: Members of The Parachute Regiment learn to drive back hostile crowds

Paras perfect disorder drills

SOLDIERS have been learning how to deal with the public disorder they may face as the Army's global rapid reaction force.

Exercise Eagle's Banner saw members of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment work together to defend one another and drive back a mock hostile crowd.

Held at Stanford Training Area in Thetford, Norfolk, the week-long package culminated in a large disturbance with fellow soldiers acting as rioters to bombard their colleagues with abuse and missiles.

With the battalion set to lead the Airborne Task Force from May, its troops will be ready to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice to conduct roles ranging from non-combatant evacuation missions to war fighting.

Maj Markis Duggan, officer commanding B Company, explained the serial was essential in order to prepare Service personnel for contingency work.

“Public disorder has been an enduring theme of military operations in recent years, with the British Army facing unruly crowds in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Iraq,” he said. “We therefore need to develop the appropriate skills.”

Sgt Nick Pugh (Para) added: “The key to dealing with these kinds of scenarios is situational awareness, controlled aggression and the ability to communicate clearly.”

“It’s the first time many of our soldiers have done this kind of thing and that has been a rather steep learning curve which they’ve coped with brilliantly.”

Close ties forged with French cadets

FRENCH officer cadets have been given a taste of life in the British Army's rapid reaction force as the two organisations forge ever-closer ties.

A group of ten from the Ecole Militaire Interarmes de Saint-Cyr Coetquidan undertook a month-long visit to 16 Air Assault Brigade.

The trip was part of the ongoing military cooperation between the two countries which has seen the formation work with the French 11e Brigade Parachutiste to develop an intermediate combined joint expeditionary force for contingency operations.

Visiting soldier 2nd Lt Luc Roman-Amat worked alongside members of 8 Field Company (Para), 7 Air Assault Battalion, Royal Electrical and

Mechanical Engineers.

“I have been given a really good view of everything the unit does, from repairing vehicles and weapons to how junior personnel are trained and selected for promotion,” he said.

“There were lots of new ideas and I learnt about many different ways of working, which I will take back to France with me to shape how I operate as a platoon commander.”

The European troops are training to become commissioned officers and the placement was also intended to develop their knowledge of the British Army.

From taking part in infantry and helicopter drills to familiarising themselves with weapons and vehicles, personnel gained a varied insight into

SOCIAL SCHOOLING

■ A GROUP of students have been shown how to organise their social lives using the same methods the Service implements when planning operations.

The Army Engagement Group (AEG) taught pupils on the public services course at Harlow College the “seven questions” process used to plan missions, which balances objectives against enemy intentions and resources.

The youngsters then took the same approach to decide the best way to act in a tricky situation, for example when their partner’s birthday clashed with another night out.

Col Simon Browne, commander of the AEG, said students were quick to adapt the principle to their own needs.

“They identified the risks and the requirement for careful consideration of factors like timing, transport and money,” he said. “Soldiers going out to talk to young people humanises the military, but teaching some of our methods has demystified the Service as well and this is an approach we’re keen to take to other colleges.”

The session, which was the first time the AEG had expanded beyond their usual presentations, also included a brief on the roles of different ranks.

BROADCASTING BOOST

■ A NEW package from the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) will give troops access to a wider range of TV and radio from next month.

Alongside the current provision of Sky Sports 1 and 2, additional sports coverage will be aired.

The full repeat of all of BBC One and ITV shows will continue, along with a channel tailored to Forces families.

On-demand viewing will also be made increasingly available.

the capabilities of the adaptable brigade.

2nd Lt Charles Pradel, one of three cadets working with 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, added: “Going to Otterburn in heavy snow was a highlight. Compared to the French Army there was more use of helicopters and we do not do live-firing exercises.”



Picture: Cpl Obi Igbo, RLC





THE BIGGER PICTURE

A SOLDIER from B Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles interacts with Afghan children while patrolling an area of Nad-e Ali in Helmand province. The troops have been working alongside colleagues from 4th Mechanized Brigade during Herrick 17, operating from Patrol Base 4, which can be seen in the background. Picture: Cpl Jamie Peters (RLC)

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● **WHAT** are your top three priorities over the coming months?

To continue prosecuting successful operations in Afghanistan, which means ensuring troops remain properly equipped and as well trained as possible. Reducing the threat to our people in Helmand province continues to be a particular priority. Enormous energy is going into countering the IED threat and ensuring British soldiers are alert and culturally aware so they can interact safely with our Afghan colleagues and spot the potential risk of insider attacks.

Preparing for new missions in other parts of the world is also key. For example, there has been an indication of intent to support French and West African operations in Mali (page 9) and we are waiting for further details on what the British Army's role will be there.

Finally, looking after our people and ensuring that we preserve and improve the quality of life for Service personnel and their families.

● **WILL** Army restructuring and drawdown mean that focus shifts away from Op Herrick this year?

No. Just because we are stepping down the numbers of troops in theatre does not mean there can be any reduction in the amount of attention we pay to every one of our deployed soldiers.

There is now superb continuity between brigades going to theatre, each time the training and preparation process gets better, and we must continue this right up to the very end of combat operations in Afghanistan.

WE WILL
GET PEOPLE
AWAY ON
NEW TASKS
THAT DRAW
UPON
LEADERSHIP
SKILLS

● **HOW** do you intend to address low morale in the face of further redundancies?

This is without doubt a painful process; there is no getting away from that. What we can do, however, is to ensure people understand the parameters for selection and that they have all the relevant facts and information as soon as that is available.

We must continue to look after those who are made redundant and help them with the transition to civilian life.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

New Commander Land Forces, Lt Gen Adrian Bradshaw, has big ideas for the British Army.

Here, he answers your questions on combat operations, cuts and contingency...





I THINK WE ARE ENTERING A PERIOD WHERE SOLDIERING IS GOING TO BE A REALLY GOOD THING TO DO



● **HOW are the cuts affecting senior soldiers?**

We have all lost colleagues at every level in this process and there have been reductions in the number of senior staff.

It is painful to us all to lose friends who have given loyal service to their country.

● **WHAT makes you think those full-time troops who have been forced out of the Service would want to rejoin as Reservists?**

I understand that for many this will not be an immediately appealing option given that they may be feeling quite hurt.

But the fact is that we are moving towards an integrated Army where Reserves will be regularly deployed on operations and where there will be lots of opportunities for these personnel.

Reserve service will be a great way for people to bridge the gap between a full-time career in the military and a new life in the civilian world.

● **WHAT will be your most significant challenge in this new job?**

Among the most pressing tasks will be returning to contingency at the same time as organising ourselves into the Army 2020 structure.

Recovering people from Afghanistan and getting them into a training cycle that delivers a Force ready for the spectrum of conflict we may face from tomorrow, and ensuring we are properly resourced with the right equipment, will also be a challenge.

It is going to be a fascinating undertaking and will require close following of world affairs to see where UK interest is focused.

● **WHAT will be the main motivation for serving soldiers once Op Herrick is over? How will you keep troops interested?**

Transition to Army 2020 is going to be a dynamic process. It will open the door to stimulating overseas training packages and regional engagement, and who knows what's around the corner in terms of operational missions.

Much of our equipment in use in Afghanistan is the best we have seen in a generation, and we look forward to seeing it integrated into the contingency Force.

I think we are entering a period where soldiering is going to be a really good thing to do and there's going to be plenty to keep us stimulated and busy.

A new focus on defence engagement (page 9) will also see us getting people away on new tasks that will draw upon leadership skills and provide excellent opportunities for junior officers and NCOs in particular.

I am incredibly optimistic and excited about it. ■

**The partners who grieve,
The injured who suffer,
The families who struggle,
The veterans who remember,
The aircrew who fly,
The children who wait,
The homeless who shiver,
The seamen who sail,
The unemployed who despair,
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FUTURE WARRIOR

Cutting-edge simulation
delivers forward-facing serial



Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

FOR some, the idea of playing a video game as part of your job would seem too good to be true.

However, troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh have been doing just that to help plan for future operations.

The latest phase of the Urban Warrior package saw some 190 soldiers from C Company take part in the largest virtual experiment the British Army has ever run.

Held at Warminster's Land Warfare Centre, the computer-based serial replicated live exercises previously conducted at the Cenub urban training facility in France.

Using a simulated programme based on the exact layout of the French compound, troops repeated the tests they had done for real back in December in order to assess the impact of different assets.

"It's amazing to see the map they've created," commented Sgt Haydn Poyner.

"It's pretty much identical to what we saw in Cenub."

"As soon as we got on it we knew where we were, where we needed to be and where everything was."

"One of the advantages here, though, is that they can put extra objects in like buildings, cars and trees to make it more realistic."

"This offers increased cover and gives the enemy more places to hide."

Each element of the group experienced the action as they would in real life, from dismounted troops and drivers with ground views to snipers, artillery or aviation assets with an overhead picture.

And just like gaming consoles, the system was operated via keyboard, mouse, steering wheel or Xbox-style controls depending on each soldier's role.

However, even the company's most obvious computer game experts had to modify their approach to master Virtual Battle Space 2, as the system is known.

"I play PlayStation but this takes a while to

get used to," admitted Sgt Poyner.

"It is like a much more grown-up version of *Call of Duty*.

"When you're playing at home you are more focused on fighting as an individual soldier but within this environment you need to work as you would do in reality, as a whole platoon and a unit."

"If you get injured or 'die', that slows everyone else down."

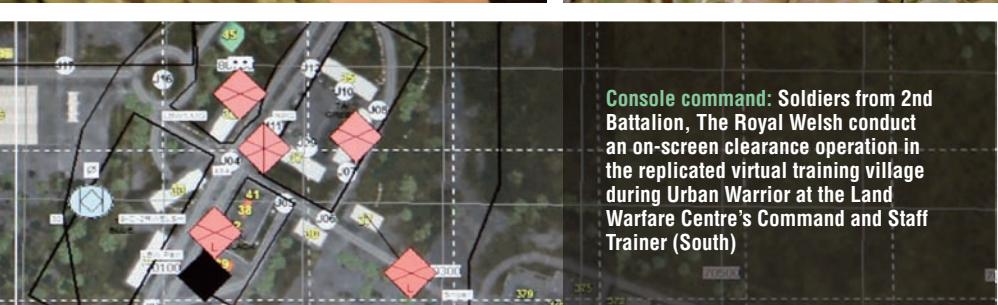
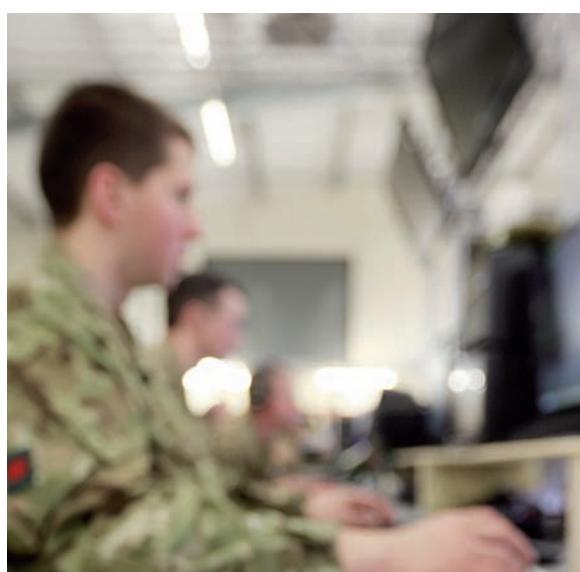
Trevor Milburn from Niteworks, the industry consortium responsible for the programme's development, said that while some older Service personnel were not as enthusiastic about gaming, younger soldiers had reacted positively to the experience.

"A few of the controls are complicated with about ten different buttons," he explained.

"It takes a young mind and some of the teenagers here are very adept at it and have taken to it well."

"It's familiar to them and they're saying 'yes, this works for us'."

Around 500 computers had to be integrated



to enable the experiment to take place but despite its complexity, the challenging programme was created in just three months using established technology.

"Virtual Battle Space 2 is based on Armed Assault 2, a commercial gaming engine," continued the scientist.

"We've taken what we call off-the-shelf capability and the advantage is that there is billions of pounds' worth of research which goes into making these platforms so you're using something that has been taken that much further forward."

"It's easier to develop and that's why we could do it in such a short time frame."

Col Tim Law (pictured above right), from the Army's Directorate of Force Development, described how the virtual phase of the project represented the cutting-edge of technology.

THIS DEGREE OF SOPHISTICATION IS GREATER THAN THE BRITISH ARMY HAS EVER WORKED WITH BEFORE!

"It was clear in France what value the tactical simulation systems added and here we have taken that one step further," said the senior officer.

"This degree of sophistication is greater than the British Army has ever worked with before.

"It means that we have been able to determine what's well replicated and what's not so well replicated in the virtual sphere.

"For example, the ability of a soldier to do his job is clearly not the same on a computer as in a real building and his situational awareness is not as good. However, our capacity to add clutter to the simulated setting such as civilians and day-to-day activity can't be repeated in the live environment."

Data gathered throughout the two-year Urban Warrior programme will not only be used to determine how armoured infantry

could operate most effectively in a built-up area but also to assess how similar innovative methods may be exploited more routinely in the future.

Formal results from the "experiment in experimentation" are still some months away but Col Law explained there were already clear insights.

"Without pre-empting the findings, there are lots of observations on the way future rules of engagement might affect us in an urban environment, the techniques used to clear buildings and the way we structure ourselves in order to best deliver capability," the officer added.

"One of the main objectives is to understand how to experiment with different ways of doing business and how to bring that into our doctrine from now on."

"I think one outcome of this simulation serial will be the production of a British Army field manual on experimentation, which will allow a wider audience an understanding of its application." ■



FROZEN FEAR FACTOR

**SOLDIERS SCALE
NATURE'S ICY WALLS**

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

BLOOD drains out of your hands and sweat drips from a panicked brow while you hang from two ice axes, 20 feet from the ground.

In the middle of a forest at the foot of Canada's Rocky Mountains, that is the adrenalin-charged predicament facing British troops.

Ice climbing is a challenge that stretches the mental and physical prowess of even the toughest Servicemen and women.

However, despite the activity's wide availability at Trail's End Camp the pursuit has yet to reach the levels of popularity enjoyed by other packages at the Alberta-based adventurous training centre. >>





“Canada is world-famous in the field of ice climbing; it is the venue to do it,” explained the facility’s chief instructor WO1 Paul Chiddle (RAPTC).

During an outing to Grotto Canyon, expedition members explained what they got out of confronting the natural formations.

“I hadn’t done anything like this until I got to Canada and now I love the sport – once you do one ice route you want to get back on and do another section,” said Cpl Liam Armstrong (AAC).

“When you look at something that is so awesome and think you can’t get up it but then manage to reach the top, the sense of satisfaction and achievement is immense.

“For the guy who is leading there is a lot to think about such as where to build the belay to ensure a student doesn’t get hit by falling ice.

“It’s also brilliant for keeping you on top of your personal admin as you have to be aware of your kit at all times; if your gloves are wet they will freeze and once that happens your hands will be in agony and your day is over.”

At the start of the activity, personnel follow their lead climber armed with several sharp tools on their hands and feet.

“In this area you’re only ever ten minutes away from brilliant ice climbing – you can park up at the roadside and walk to some of the most spectacular locations,” WO1 Chiddle added.

“In Canada we have ‘water ice’ which means it forms at the angle of the terrain and every screw you put in will provide good protection.”

Expert instructors from Yamnuska Mountain Adventures, a company contracted by the Army to provide world-class outdoor training, begin their sessions by demonstrating how to attach rope to a safety harness and work with belays on the ice face.

Within four days, their participants have gone from tentatively walking on crampons to being able to negotiate multi-pitch climbing routes on sheer frozen blocks some 30 feet high.

On day five, those who have never previously encountered such formations may even find themselves at the front of the rope as a lead climber.

Just as on combat operations, this training requires individuals to control any fear, maintain stress levels, stay calm and look out for their buddy.

Even those with experience of tough outdoor pursuits find themselves pushed to the limit of their courage when it comes to putting faith in a few sharp points on the ice.

Technique, physical strength and mental toughness are all the name of the game.

“Even though the rope is 100 per cent taut, getting up and down is still a major achievement for students,” continued WO1 Chiddle.

“There’s a lot going on in your mind as you are scaling a sheer face with a drop beneath you.”

So why is the course less popular than other winter sports on offer at Trail’s End Camp?

“We find ice climbing difficult to fill because a lot of lads just want to go skiing and think this activity is a bit too much hard work,” admitted

With an axe buried into the squeaky ice, it is just the hand’s grip coupled with mental agility that stands between soldiers’ success and failure’



the chief instructor.

"But once people actually do it they want to come back."

Talking through his experience of the course, Sgt Michael Critchley (REME) said: "I'm a keen rock climber and enjoy mountaineering so I really wanted to try this but when the ice was in front of me it was a daunting prospect.

"I just thought 'somehow I've got to get up that'."

As with most personnel who take on this unique test of nerves, the soldier was not defeated.

"I was slipping and grabbing when I missed an anchor point and even though I was on a rope, the thought that I could fall was always in the back of my mind," he added.

"When I got to the top there was a massive sense of achievement."

Maj Rab Black (RAPTC), officer commanding Trail's End Camp, highlighted the importance of the frozen fear factor in developing British Servicemen and women of the future.

"Nerves build up in the soldiers even on their drive to the climbing area," he revealed.

"There is a sense of foreboding but nobody stays inside the vehicle – they will all walk to the location, look at the task ahead and then attempt to conquer it.

"Although it's a completely alien activity to mount a steep route with only four points to help, they do it and that ability to tackle the unknown transfers to all aspects of their job."

With an axe buried into the squeaky ice, it is just the hand's grip coupled with mental agility that stands between soldiers' success and failure on the ascent.

This activity might be far removed from the challenges of current operations but as a tool to take troops to the edge of their terror threshold and allow them to win personal battles, it is unparalleled. ■

ICE CLIMBING: Have you got what it takes?

TO be successful on the ice, individuals have to be **DISCIPLINED** in maintaining three points of contact on the surface while always keeping their **HANDS ABOVE THEIR HEADS**.

Troops must progress at a **SLOW AND STEADY** rate.

"On a multi-pitch climb you must **USE YOUR AXE** even when your arms feel like they might fall off," said Cpl Liam Armstrong (AAC).

"And there's also that **TRUST** you must develop in your mates to **HOLD ON** to the rope that is protecting you."



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

EVERY year thousands of troops travel to the vast Canadian prairies to conduct armoured, infantry and artillery live-fire training using the Army's largest fleet of vehicles.

Battlegroups of 2,000 or more Service personnel move into the British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) to utilise the full spectrum of military kit and equipment during Exercise Prairie Thunder.

However, without the winter rehabilitation programme to ensure that every item on the lengthy

inventory is in sparkling condition, the Alberta-based proving ground simply would not function.

For the 2013 cycle it has been members of 3 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers who have worked tirelessly on this vital repair element to deliver an equipment capability that will allow Servicemen and women to prepare for operations from April.

"At the end of the training season we take all vehicles from the battlegroups and make sure the right ones are put on the correct programme for winter repair," explained Maj Jez Johnson (REME), officer commanding the

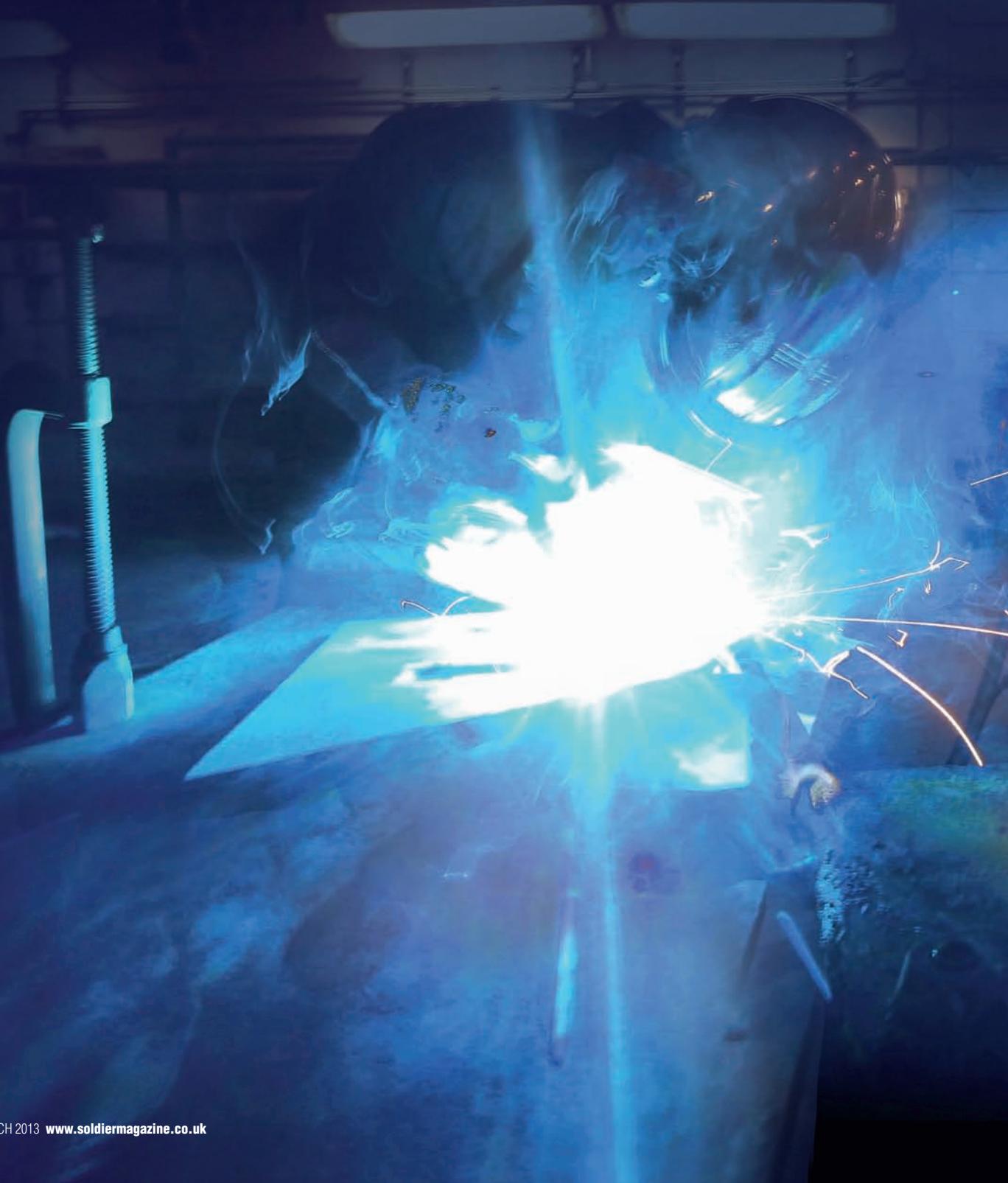
extensive Batus workshop.

"From fixing a compass to checking over a Challenger repair and recovery platform, REME troops of all trades have a giant undertaking to ensure everything is ready."

With a motto to "keep the Thunder rolling", the fast-moving operation requires seamless integration and cooperation across a wide array of trades and command posts.

High-tempo 12-hour shifts for six days a week are a necessity if workshops are to meet their deadline for checking, fixing and pushing out all kit onto the country's mock battlefield.

And with 1,500 platforms to be examined – from armoured vehicles,



trailers and generators to white vans, buses and quad bikes – there is a vast amount of training for the more experienced technicians to deliver to their junior colleagues.

WO2 Mark Lynch (REME), officer in charge of the B Vehicle Support Group, explained how the rehabilitation programme presented challenges like no other.

"Batus is one of the only places where we will completely rebuild a Land Rover from scratch," he said.

"As soon as changes are made to different machines we must learn everything about them, how to fix parts and be in a position to train others on the processes involved."

The Serviceman added that being presented with a continuous conveyor belt of equipment to be knocked into shape had definite benefits.

"Usually getting a vehicle mechanic trained to class three would take six months but out here, because of the intensity of the work, we can get people qualified in half the time," WO2 Lynch continued.

"The engineering that goes on at this site is unbelievable."

In addition to undertaking military MOTs on hundreds of platforms, the soldiers inspect thousands of power supplies, electronic systems, weapons and rounds of ammunition plus tens of thousands of miscellaneous items.

Despite such a demanding list, Maj Johnson believes the experience is a valuable one for those involved.

"Not only are we carrying out a mission and task, we are providing guidance on equipment as well as facilitating adventurous training at Trail's End Camp," the officer added.

"We are not on combat operations but we're second only to Op Herrick in terms of the amount of work that comes in."

Located inside a building resembling a giant pit stop, this year's project is in the hands of 500 troops and roughly 65 permanent staff who work at the facility alongside civilian experts from the Canadian >>



REME REHAB

MECHANICS TAKE UP TOOLS IN CANADA
TO PREPARE FOR EXERCISE SEASON



« Department of National Defence.

Army mechanics strip the likes of the giant Titan from top to bottom before sending it out as if brand new, while contending with the country's challenging climate which can leave them toiling in -40 degree Celsius temperatures and several inches of snow.

"We have to allow time to account for the cold and deal with vehicles sliding on ice," revealed Maj Johnson.

"Not only do we have a monumental number of platforms to fix but we must battle the difficult environment as well."

In a separate department, soldiers with skills in all things metal are charged with looking over aluminium armour, belly plates and a seemingly endless list of other items.

"Everything metal that needs repairing comes our way," said metalsmith Cpl Simon Chester (REME).

"It's the best training opportunity that we can get, even better for trade skills than being on operations in Afghanistan."

Dedicated mechanics undertaking the winter repair programme claim that they carry out more productive man-hours in one month than during half a year on duties in the UK.

And a quick walk around the Batus garage proves as much.

Many troops arrive as novices but by working on complex equipment every day to facilitate a world-class

serial for their colleagues, they become experts.

"What goes on behind the scenes here is enormous," said Maj Johnson.

"There's no way the lads on the training ground realise what happens in the workshop to get the exercise season up and running." ■

IN NUMBERS: WHAT GOES THROUGH THE WINTER REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

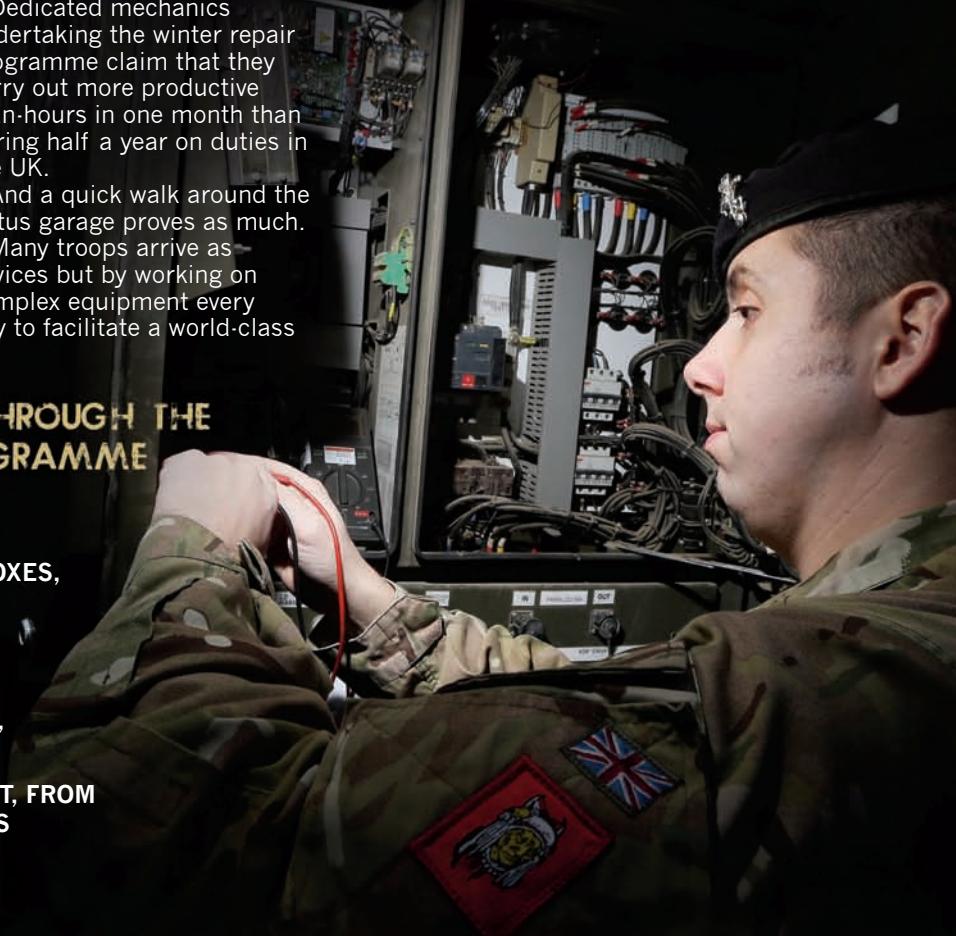
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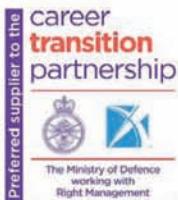
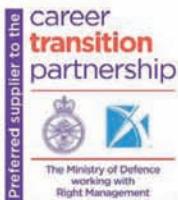
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THREE years ago LCpl Andy Willans (AAC, pictured below) broke with a 14-year habit while deployed on Op Herrick. To mark this month's No Smoking Day, the 31-year-old Serviceman shares his personal advice on how to give up...

Choose a day to quit ahead of time. This will allow you to mentally prepare for when you finish a pack.

I went cold turkey and haven't touched a cigarette since but this may not work for everyone so seek advice from your medical centre on the help available. A lot of it is free, even when deployed.

When you quit your body can replace cravings for nicotine with a desire for food. Try not to snack. Munch on healthy things like fruit and drink plenty of water.

Tell your friends and colleagues that you have given up – primarily so other smokers won't hassle you too much! You will always get some that aren't as supportive as others but the majority should respect your decision.

Find things to distract yourself with at times when you will be most susceptible to boredom as this is when cravings can be the worst. I started going to the gym twice a day which helped me get fit and vent my frustrations because of mood swings.

Try to change your routine as much as you can. If you always had a fag with coffee first thing in the morning, swap that drink for something else.



Avoid hanging around smoking areas as much as you can as this can increase temptation. One thing I found very effective was having a sniff of a can when it's full of stale fag butts mixed with water. The stench is horrible and a good way of putting you off.

After a week or so of giving up your taste and smell will have improved so you get a whiff of other smokers. This is something that I still utilise today – smokers stink!

Don't give in to the temptation to have "just one" or use the excuse of social smoking. You're either a smoker or you're not. I had the advantage of being on ops so there was no alcohol and by the time I arrived in Cyprus drink didn't affect my cravings.

Take it one day at a time and give yourself a treat every now and again to celebrate your achievement. You could even put the money you save to one side for something special.

Make the most of improvements in your health and fitness. After quitting I took up rugby and posted my fastest personal fitness test time ever, even quicker than my best in basic. I feel healthier now than I have in years and I don't get ill as often as I used to.

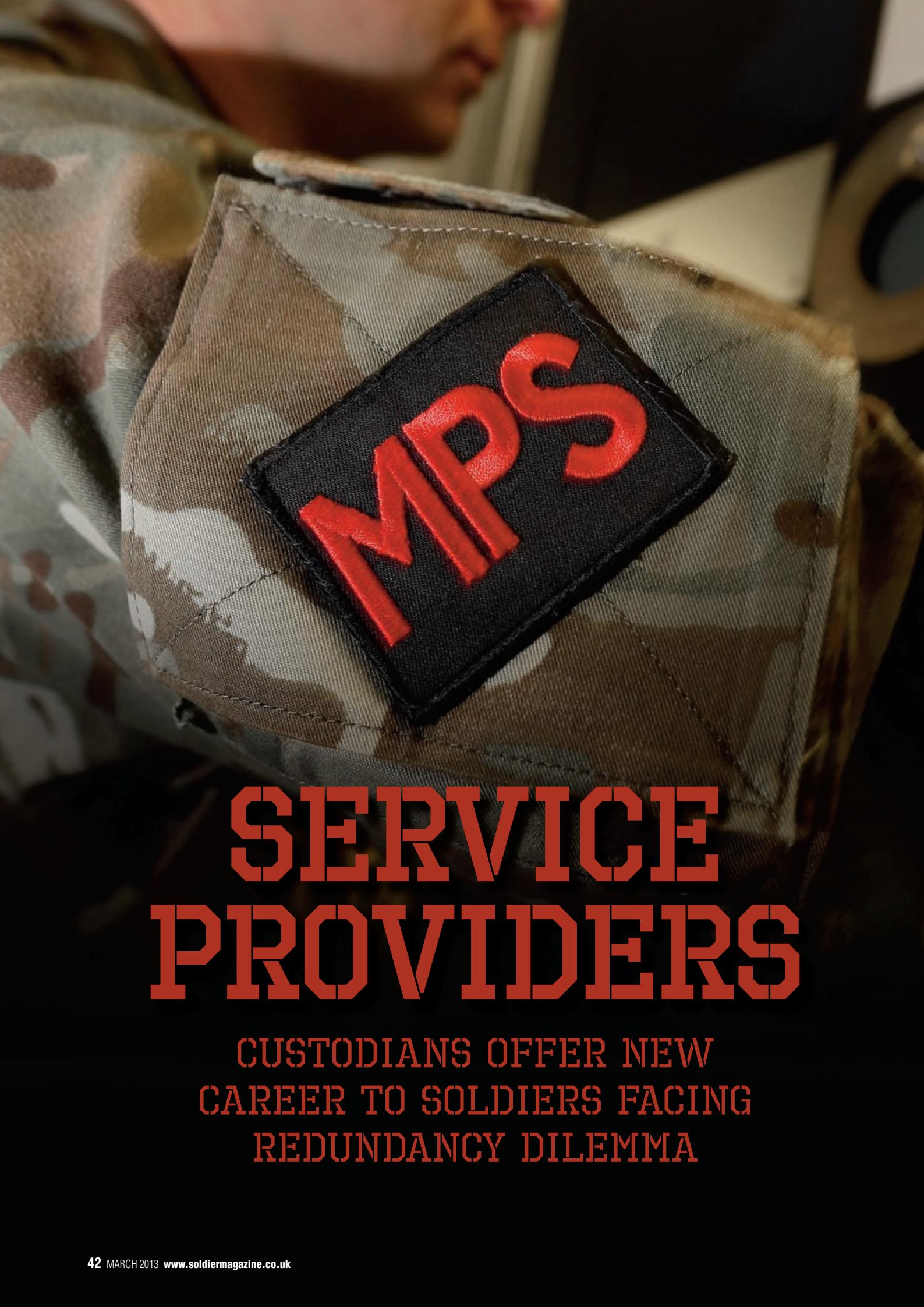
Don't give up giving up and if you do slip, don't get disheartened.

● For more information visit www.nosmokingday.org.uk

HOW I QUIT

TRIED AND TESTED TIPS FOR DITCHING THE FAGS





MPS

SERVICE PROVIDERS

CUSTODIANS OFFER NEW
CAREER TO SOLDIERS FACING
REDUNDANCY DILEMMA

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH 26,000 troops across 250 career fields eligible for redundancy in the latest tranche of Service reductions, it is safe to assume that most regiments will be losing numbers rather than adding to their ranks.

However, the Adjutant General's Corps (Military Provost Staff) is bucking the trend and with the unit facing an 80 per cent uplift under Army 2020 the race to attract new recruits is now on.

The cap badge is often associated with the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester and while this forms a mainstay of the soldiers' work the role expands much further.

The ongoing commitment to operations in Afghanistan means personnel have a continuing presence at detention facilities in Camp Bastion and Kandahar.

And with changes being made to the way tier one facilities are managed, with MPS troops being tasked to run regional centres in the UK, the need to expand is obvious.

"Our role has changed and evolved," explained regimental sergeant major WO1 John Wharton (AGC (MPS)).

"We are not just running the MCTC and deploying on operations. We will be manning tier one facilities while offering an enhanced ability at the top level.

"The diversity of detainees is matched by the diversity of our staff. We had a recent transfer from the Corps of Army Music and we have former engineers, medics, infantrymen and clerks.

"The skill set in this cap badge is phenomenal.

"With the uplift that is now underway we want quality individuals to come across. I'm sure there are high calibre people who are facing redundancy.

"We are trying to get the identity of the cap badge out there. We have been around since 1901 but most people assume we are the Military Provost Guard Service."

Those thinking of transferring must be

ranked at corporal or above. Candidates undergo an assessment week before receiving instruction on the custodial NCO course, which covers a variety of subjects including control and restraint, working practices and rules and regulations.

Once part of the corps, personnel have the chance to take on a number of roles from working within the Operational Training Advisory Group to becoming instructors, dog handlers and custodial advisers.

There are further training opportunities in subjects as diverse as hostage negotiation and first aid.

The main focus for the MPS is the rehabilitation of detainees and staff strive to ensure those returning to units or being discharged are in a strong position to progress.

"Rehabilitation works," custodial NCO course director WO2 John Moore (AGC (MPS)) told *Soldier*.

"For those soldiering on they can go back to their regiments and look at a possible junior NCO cadre.

"For those leaving the Army we run NVQ level two and three courses so when they get out they can hopefully have a head start. It gives them an extra tool in the bag when it comes to life on civvy street."

Moore transferred to the MPS in 2004, having spent ten years with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

He has since served in Iraq and Afghanistan with his new cap badge and has also completed a maritime detention piece and a short-term training team posting in Uganda.

"It was the people side of things that really appealed to me, helping fellow soldiers and mentoring them," he explained.

"If you want to be active and perform varying roles there are opportunities here.

"It is not just locking doors. We have moved from punishment to control and rehabilitation. We are here to help.

"Cap badge is not a barrier, it enhances what we do and gives us diversity."

Anyone interested in transferring to the MPS should contact the unit's recruiting team on 94660 6798 or 01206 816798, or email mpsv.colchester@btconnect.com >

Left to right, Provost power: The tier one detention facility at Merville Barracks. MPS personnel conduct a room search at the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester





AS THE MPS RECRUITING CAMPAIGN GATHERS PACE, SOLDIER SPOKE TO PERSONNEL WHO HAVE MADE THE MOVE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE IN THEIR NEW TRADE

« HAVING served with 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, including on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, SSgt Colin Vella transferred five years ago.

He is a platoon commander in D Company, where he works with troops being discharged from the Army.

“It is all about rehabilitation and resettlement training so these soldiers are prepared for civilian life,” he said.

“We have a great education centre which is utilised to offer as many courses as we can.

“I wanted a fresh challenge and to give something back to the Army.

“I like the instructing and teaching side of things and working with the detainees.

“There are a lot of different jobs here so you can multitask. It is a totally different way of life.”

SSgt Vella is about to deploy on another Herrick tour and is keen to test himself in a different capacity.

“It will be a new challenge but the training has been very good and we have a clear understanding of what is expected,” he added.

“I will be in charge of a temporary holding facility and will be there to look after the detainees and make sure things are done right.”



SGT Gavin White is the projects senior NCO and is tasked with providing community and charity work for detainees.

Roles include fence painting and unskilled labour at local schools and other organisations which are aimed at boosting future career opportunities.

He explained: “It is mainly for the guys who are being discharged and allows them to get out into the community.

“It stands them in good stead and is something extra to put on their CV, alongside the qualifications they have gained in the Armed Forces.

“I come from an infantry background and served for ten years with the Grenadier Guards.

“I wanted to change trades and the MPS provided a different aspect to life in the Service and allowed me to give something back to the Army.

“It has been a good challenge; there is variety and I would recommend it to anyone thinking of transferring.

“As with any job there is a lot of hard work and effort involved but you make it fit your personality.”



AFTER serving with 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps Sgt Baz Foxon joined the MPS to build a new chapter in his Army career.

As a custodial sergeant he looks after the welfare of detainees and offers advice and guidance on any personal issues.

“Here you get to assist people on a daily basis, from minor to major problems,” the NCO said.

“You can work with them and help them achieve a personal goal that will make them a better person than when they came in.”

Sgt Foxon is also about to deploy on operations, where he will be in charge of Afghan detainees.

He said: “The handling is exactly the same as in the UK: they are treated with respect.

“This will be my main tour and it is something I’m looking forward to.

“When I return I will go back to A Company but postings will be available in the near future.

“I want to learn different parts of the job and in four or five years I would like to be a subject matter expert in all areas. I also hope to become a staff sergeant and move to facilities across the UK.” ■





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Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

VISITING Welsh farmers to discuss land access and the merits of horseback travel might not sound vastly important to an international fighting force.

But for WO1 Brian Pratt (Para, pictured below) building strong relationships with the landowners of mid-Wales has been a key element in developing one of the most highly regarded patrolling events in Nato.

The veteran of eight tours of Northern Ireland has organised the gruelling Cambrian Patrol for the last 12 years while working on full-time Reserve service but is now set to hand over the reins.

Talking *Soldier* through the nooks and crannies of an 80-mile training area on the Brecon Beacons, the former member of 1st and 3rd Battalions, The Parachute Regiment explained the logistics behind the annual two-day serial.

"As the organiser you need to do about 140 farm visits and it can be like working as a salesman and pitching for business because you are essentially asking for permission to use their land," he said.

"But as long as the farmers are on-side and you've built a relationship to make them

feel part of it, things work out.

"By doing this for 12 years I've got to know the locals really well and that has been very important."

The event, organised by 160 (Wales) Brigade, has been running since 1959 and has grown into a mission-orientated patrolling exercise renowned across the world for its demand on a soldier's body and mind.

"Personnel are put into different scenarios as they are sent into foreign territory, meeting local partisan troops

along the way," said WO1 Pratt.

"It's a chance for young leaders to issue a full set of orders and conduct reconnaissance missions."

Since 2000 the training officer has watched over Cambrian Patrol every year as more than 100 teams of eight are sent out for 48-hour stints in the austere training environment.

"Essentially the lads live under a poncho in the rain," he explained.

"Troops march along mountains in full kit; navigating in the light and dark and conducting river crossings in icy water.

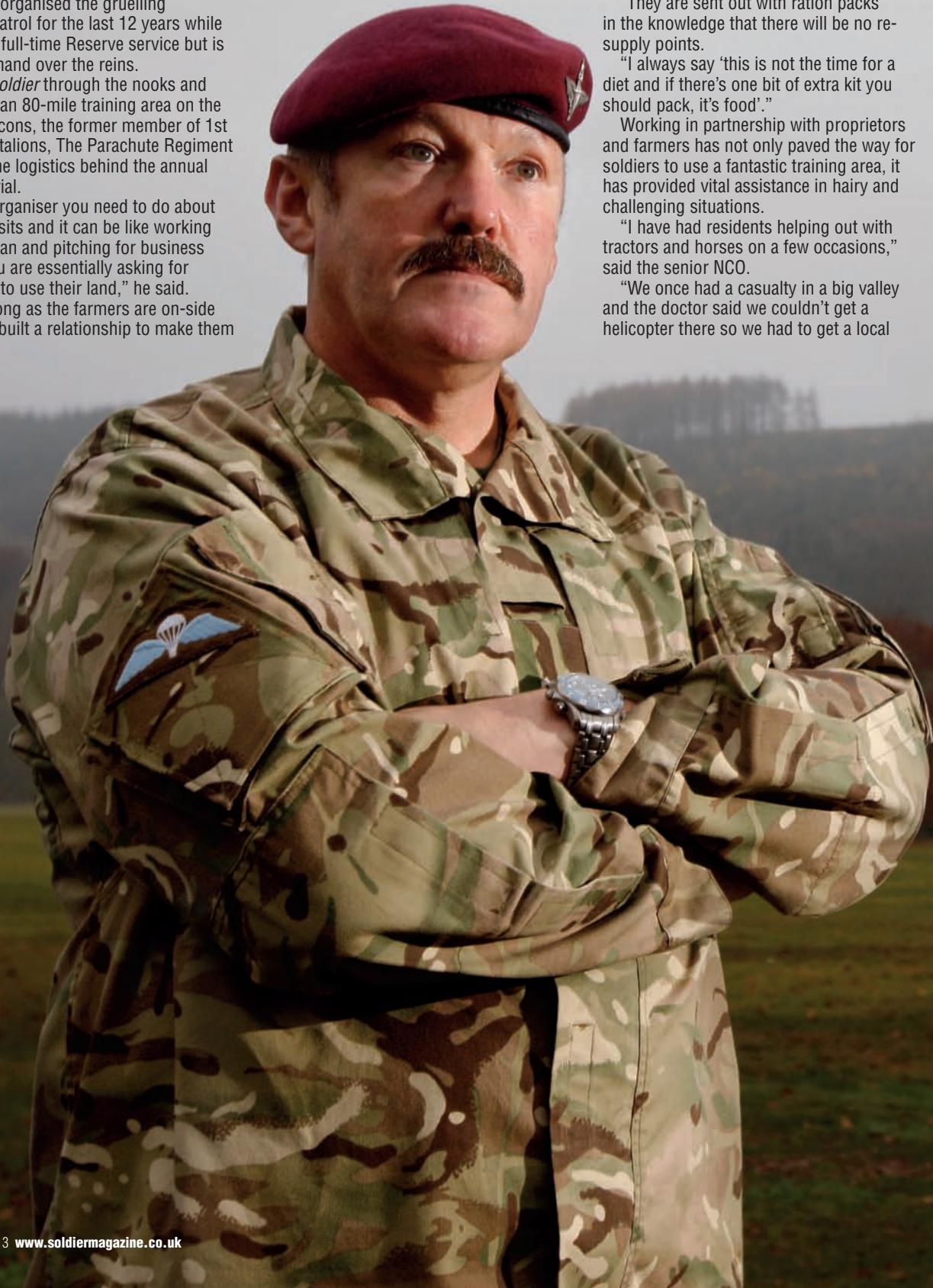
"They are sent out with ration packs in the knowledge that there will be no re-supply points.

"I always say 'this is not the time for a diet and if there's one bit of extra kit you should pack, it's food'."

Working in partnership with proprietors and farmers has not only paved the way for soldiers to use a fantastic training area, it has provided vital assistance in hairy and challenging situations.

"I have had residents helping out with tractors and horses on a few occasions," said the senior NCO.

"We once had a casualty in a big valley and the doctor said we couldn't get a helicopter there so we had to get a local



farmer to carry out the casevac on a horse."

The man with 24 years of Regular service under his belt added that being able to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances had been a major job requirement.

"There's always something to contend with," he admitted.

"Among other things we've had to deal with movement restrictions following foot and mouth disease, the fox-hunting ban and a fire service strike.

"Weather is a very big factor that gets in the way and once I had an inflatable tank worth £8,000 blow away in the wind. Storms came in and the mock T-72 went flying across the countryside."

The harsh conditions and unforgiving terrain require excellent infantry skills and it is for that reason that armies from all corners of the globe queue up to get involved in the autumn event.

However, the difficult nature of the beast means many units do not even finish the exhausting package.

"We've had mutinies against team commanders," admitted WO1 Pratt.

"But if people are talking about throwing

in the towel due to freezing weather that's when strong leadership is required.

"There have also been times when communications have gone down but the lads gain a lot from these situations because it replicates what could happen on real operations."

As a result of reductions to manning levels in the Service, WO1 Pratt is set to become a civilian this year while Cambrian Patrol remains as popular as ever.

"As a patrolling exercise it's probably the premier event in the world and those who gain the most from it are the ones who struggle but still come through it," said the paratrooper.

"It's not about winning a medal, it's about reacting to pressure and difficult challenges."

When the outgoing Serviceman took over as organiser he set himself a key goal, "to make this the best exercise of its kind in the world and to make it relevant to training".

Judging by Cambrian's reputation, it seems he will end his military career on the back of a successful mission. ■

TOUGH TASK THE MISSION:

THE British Army's premier patrolling event is held every year in mid-Wales and draws on participants from across the world.

It is designed to be within the capability of any well-trained patrol from any formation and features the same tasks for both Regular and Reservist teams.

Elements of the exercise can include:

- Navigating by day and night
- Observation and reconnaissance of enemy forces
- Cold river crossings in full kit without access to boats
- First-aid and defensive shooting under attack



Picture: Steve Duck

FARMER'S FRIEND

Man behind Cambrian Patrol reflects on a decade of rural relations

For more information on how to get involved in the exercise search for "Cambrian Patrol" on www.army.mod.uk

GIRL POWER

Soap star gets to grips with Army life



A NEW BBC One drama lifting the lid on basic training will hit screens later this month.

Our Girl tells the story of Molly, an 18-year-old from London who joins the Army to escape her useless boyfriend and dysfunctional family.

Filmed at Army Training Regiment Pirbright, the one-off production sees former *EastEnders* Lacey Turner heading the cast alongside real recruits as extras.

Soldier spoke to the 24-year-old star about making the grade as a Servicewoman.

YOUR character in *Our Girl* goes from raw recruit to combat medic. How did you prepare for that role?

I WAS lucky because I knew about it a long time before filming started and I had an idea that I might not be fit enough.

The Army let me go up to Pirbright and get a feel for it and also talk to some girls who were going through basic training.

I got to ask them a lot of questions and that really helped me to prepare mentally.

It was great to speak to them because it helped make everything as real as possible.

On the physical side, I spent hours walking and marching so that by the end of filming I felt like I had the body of an 11-year-old boy.

WHAT was the most challenging part of the training for you?

WHENEVER we had the chance, the instructors would encourage us to practise our saluting and drill.

I can learn my lines in one night but the drill was so difficult. You're thinking about so much – keeping your thumb in line, counting, how to hold the weapon.

The instructors would say "that was terrible, do it again, again, again" but then at one point the real soldiers got yelled at because I was doing it better than them.

WE see Molly taking part in a passing out parade. What was that like?

IT was pretty much the scariest thing I've ever done; I was actually crying before we marched on.

They put us amongst real soldiers during the dress rehearsal for the parade and the corporals in charge hadn't been told that I was an actress.

I was terrified; you can't afford to get anything wrong in front of so many people.

THINK you could do it for real then?

I DON'T know. I loved it and it was a real eye-opener but I was glad it wasn't real life and that I didn't actually have to go to Afghanistan.

Watching the training, I couldn't believe at some points that girls with a small build like me could do the things they do and find that amount of strength.

I asked them "doesn't it make you want to go home?" and they said that at times it did but they still got through it.

WAS Army life what you expected it to be?

I WAS surprised. Everyone has this perception that you get shouted at and it's brutal.

In the first seven weeks you do get yelled at and it is tough. You have to keep your locker immaculate and you wonder why.

But actually, if you can't even organise your locker then how can you organise yourself?

I found the whole thing amazing – especially the discipline it takes and the sense of teamwork that it creates.



‘I found the whole thing amazing – especially the discipline it takes and the sense of teamwork it creates’

Pictures: BBC/Des Willie



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BRITAIN'S 20 GREATEST BATTLES?

FROM some of the most famous military exchanges of all time to lesser-known sieges, the National Army Museum has named the UK's most momentous battlefield encounters.

Here we reveal the conflicts that made the cut, from the English Civil War to modern-day Afghanistan

1. BATTLE OF NASEBY

WHERE: Naseby, Northamptonshire, England

WHEN: June 14, 1645

THE CONFLICT: First English Civil War

THIS was the decisive battle of the First English Civil War where Royalists, under King Charles I, clashed with Parliamentarians led by Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell. The Royalists were thoroughly defeated; more than 1,000 were killed and around 6,000 captured.

COMBAT FACT: This was one of the first battles fought by the new model Army, the immediate predecessor of today's British Army structure.



2. BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

WHERE: Blenheim, Bavaria (in modern-day Germany)

WHEN: August 13, 1704

THE CONFLICT: War of the Spanish Succession

FOUGHT between a grand alliance and the French-Bavarian army, Blenheim has gone down in history as one of the turning points of the War of the Spanish Succession. Allied casualties comprised 4,500 deaths and 7,500 injuries, whereas the enemy had 38,600 killed, wounded or taken prisoner. This conflict destroyed the myth of French invincibility.



3. BATTLE OF CULLODEN

WHERE: Drumossie Moor (north-east of Inverness), Scotland

WHEN: April 16, 1746

THE CONFLICT: Jacobite Rebellion of 1745

THE last pitched battle fought on British soil. This dispute ended any hope of the Stuarts regaining the throne, safeguarding the succession of the Protestant House of Hanover – ancestors of our present Queen.

COMBAT FACT: Following this battle everyone in Scotland was banned from wearing tartan unless it was part of Army uniform.

VOTE

Which of these engagements
is worthy of the title 'Britain's greatest battle'?
Have your say in an online poll before March 20
at www.nam.ac.uk/battles

4. BATTLE OF PLASSEY

WHERE: Plassey (in present-day West Bengal, India)

WHEN: June 23, 1757

THE CONFLICT: Seven Years' War

AN encounter which ultimately led to the establishment of British rule in India. This battle took place between the forces of Siraj Ud Daulah, the last Nawab of Bengal (and his French support troops) and soldiers of the British East India Company.



5. BATTLE OF QUEBEC

WHERE: Plains of Abraham, near Quebec City (in present-day Canada)

WHEN: September 13, 1759

THE CONFLICT: Seven Years' War

GEN Wolfe's army won a stunning victory over the French in this clash. It is one of the greatest victories of the Seven Years' War and marked the beginning of the end of French power in North America.

COMBAT FACT: Unusually, both commanders – Wolfe and Montcalm – were killed on the battlefield during this encounter.



6. BATTLE OF LEXINGTON

WHERE: Lexington, Massachusetts (in present-day USA)

WHEN: April 19, 1775

THE CONFLICT: American War of Independence

THE famous "shot heard round the world" marked the start of the American War of Independence. This momentous event has taken on an almost mythical quality in the country's consciousness. The episode was not a large affair but was politically disastrous for the British. It turned a colonial revolt against their economic policy into a fight for political independence.

COMBAT FACT: No one actually knows which side fired the shot that ultimately led to American independence.





7. BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

WHERE: Arapiles, Salamanca, Spain

WHEN: July 22, 1812

THE CONFLICT: Peninsular War

ANGLO-Portuguese and Spanish armies under the Duke of Wellington defeated Marshal Auguste Marmont's French forces. The victory was one of Wellington's finest and proved that he was more than just a good defensive general after he had quickly seized an opportunity to attack enemy divisions when they became too extended while marching across his front.



8. BATTLE OF WATERLOO

WHERE: Waterloo (in present-day Belgium)

WHEN: June 18, 1815

THE CONFLICT: Napoleonic Wars

THE last great battle of the Napoleonic Wars, this marked the end of France's attempt to dominate Europe.

COMBAT FACT: Lord Uxbridge, second-in-command to the Duke of Wellington, had his leg blown off by one of the last cannon fired. He is said to have exclaimed to the famed military leader "by God, sir, I've lost my leg", to which Wellington replied "by God, sir, so you have".

9. BATTLE OF ALIWAL

WHERE: Aliwal (in present-day Punjab, India)

WHEN: January 28, 1846

THE CONFLICT: First Sikh War

LED by Sir Harry Smith, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, the British won a victory which is sometimes regarded as the turning point of the First Anglo-Sikh War.

COMBAT FACT: In the years that followed their defeat, the Sikhs played a vital role in safeguarding British rule in India. During the First World War more than 100,000 served under British command in the Asian country's army.

10. BATTLE OF BALAKLAVA

WHERE: Balaklava, Crimean Peninsula (in present-day Ukraine)

WHEN: October 25, 1854

THE CONFLICT: Crimean War

THIS encounter is famed for two British cavalry charges and the 93rd Highlanders' "thin red streak tipped with a line of steel", which repulsed a Russian attack. The Charge of the Light Brigade led by Lord Cardigan was the result of a miscommunication which saw forces move forward unsupported by infantry into the mouths of massed Russian cannon. It is commemorated in Lord Tennyson's poem.

COMBAT FACT: The Crimean War triggered the invention of the balaclava and the cardigan, which remain staples of our wardrobe to this day.



11. DEFENCE OF RORKE'S DRIFT

WHERE: Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo River between Natal and the Zulu kingdom (in present-day South Africa)

WHEN: January 22-23, 1879

THE CONFLICT: Zulu War

FOLLOWING the defeat of the British at Isandlwana, 150 British and colonial troops successfully defended the garrison against an intense assault by 3,000 to 4,000 Zulu warriors.

COMBAT FACT: Members of 2nd Battalion, 24th Foot were awarded seven Victoria Crosses for their actions during this encounter – the most awarded to a regiment for a single battle.



12. BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI

WHERE: Gallipoli Peninsula (in present-day Turkey)

WHEN: April 25, 1915 - January 9, 1916

THE CONFLICT: First World War

A JOINT British and French operation mounted to capture Istanbul and secure a sea route to Russia. The attempt failed, with heavy casualties on both sides. The campaign was considered one of the greatest victories of the Turks and was reflected on as a major failure by the Allies.

13. BATTLE OF THE SOMME

(Main picture, pages 50-51)

WHERE: Somme and Pas-de-Calais, France

WHEN: July 1 - November 18, 1916

THE CONFLICT: First World War

THIS British and French offensive against the Germans was one of the largest battles of the war and one of the bloodiest military operations ever recorded with more than one million casualties.

COMBAT FACT: JRR Tolkien fought during this encounter, at the battle for Thiepval Ridge and the capture of Regina Trench. He was ultimately invalided out of the Army with trench fever.

DISAGREE?

IF YOU HAVE ANOTHER CONFLICT IN MIND THAT HASN'T MADE THE SHORTLIST, DROP THE SOLDIER TEAM A LINE



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14. BATTLE OF MEGIDDO

WHERE: Present-day Israel, Jordan and Syria

WHEN: September 19 - October 31, 1918

THE CONFLICT: First World War

ALLIES quickly advanced during this encounter, taking Damascus and Aleppo before the Turks sued for peace in October 1918. The battle involved a skilful series of manoeuvres and use of aeroplanes, artillery, infantry and cavalry. In many ways it can be considered a forerunner of the German "blitzkrieg" tactics employed during the Second World War.



15. SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

WHERE: El Alamein, Egypt

WHEN: October 23 - November 4, 1942

THE CONFLICT: Second World War

LED by Montgomery, this Allied victory turned the tide in the North African campaign and ended Axis hopes of occupying Egypt, taking control of the Suez Canal and gaining access to the Middle Eastern and Persian oilfields.

COMBAT FACT: This was the first decisive British victory of the Second World War. Commenting afterwards, Winston Churchill famously said: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

16. D -DAY AND THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY

WHERE: Normandy, France

WHEN: June 6 - August 25, 1944

THE CONFLICT: Second World War

THE greatest amphibious invasion in history, this encounter marked the start of the Allied assault on Hitler's fortress Europe.

COMBAT FACT: The D-Day landings were nearly postponed for a whole year because of the bad weather conditions.



17. BATTLES OF IMPHAL AND KOHIMA

WHERE: Imphal (in present-day Manipur, India) and Kohima (in present-day Nagaland, India).

WHEN: March 8 - July 3, 1944

THE CONFLICT: Second World War

JAPANESE armies attempted to destroy the Allied forces at Imphal and invade India but were driven back into Burma with heavy losses. The battle marked a turning point in the Burma campaign.

COMBAT FACT: Part of the Battle of Kohima was fought on a tennis court.



19. BATTLE OF GOOSE GREEN

WHERE: Goose Green and Darwin, Falkland Islands

WHEN: May 28-29, 1982

THE CONFLICT: Falklands War

A HARD-FOUGHT battle involving 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and Argentinian forces, this was the first major land engagement of the Falklands campaign. It gave the British government a much-needed victory after its task force suffered a number of setbacks.



20. BATTLE OF MUSA QALA

WHERE: Helmand province, Afghanistan

WHEN: July 17 - September 12, 2006

THE CONFLICT: War in Afghanistan

A SMALL garrison of British pathfinders and Danish troops withstood a Taliban siege for more than 50 days in this remote district centre. Reinforcements, including men of the Royal Irish Regiment and 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, endured further weeks of intense combat at the remote outpost.

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TALKBACK

TEST OF PATIENCE

■ WHY is it that with military annual training test (MATT) two (fitness training), people do things by the book and put so much emphasis on it yet with things like the yearly combat marksmanship test, site commands can attend, not shoot and get a paper pass?

Furthermore, for test six (values and standards) it declares within the policy statement that this training "is not to be delegated below sub-unit command".

However, myself and other junior non-commissioned officers and privates have been told to deliver the package for our section on a training day. — *Name and address supplied*.

Maj Ian Jack, SO2 Soldier Training Policy, responds: The tone of this letter suggests there is an unwritten understanding that condones the behaviour highlighted.

There is not, and let me make it absolutely clear that the instances mentioned are breaches of Army policy and should not happen.

To award a pass for a test that was not undertaken is a case of falsifying a record, which is a serious offence and could have far-reaching consequences should the individual concerned be involved in some sort of incident.

The second scenario appears to be less serious, but ironically the subject matter covered by military annual training test six actually gives the letter writer the moral authority to decline to deliver the training as quite obviously to do so would be to breach policy.

This letter highlights failures in command and leadership when measured against Army values and standards.

MATTS and the command, leadership and management programme of training and education make it clear that instances of this sort are unacceptable.

If they do occur, they must be reported through the chain of command, which is duty bound to take appropriate action.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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

Pushing parameters of decency

MAJ Henderson's attitude toward the Military Provost Guard Service is clear for all to see ("Let down by airborne analysis", February).

Indeed, I wouldn't have been surprised if the word "pleb" had featured in his cheap put-down.

Unfortunately his attitude is not uncommon and is due mostly to ignorance.

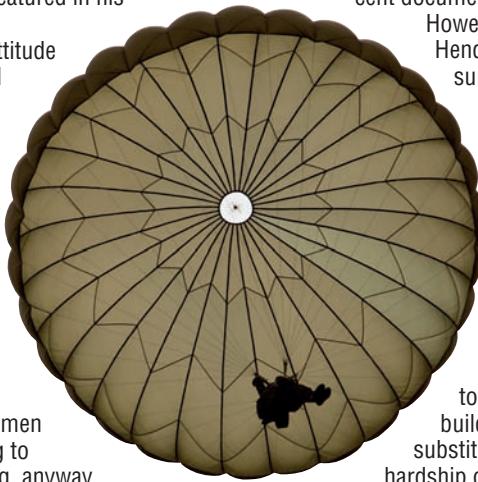
Firstly, a large percentage of the MPGS are 22-year time served former NCOs, many of them senior with multiple operational tours behind them.

Manning gates is only one of the tasks that Maj Henderson's men are saved from having to do – for the time being, anyway.

Other jobs such as manning the guardroom, providing an armed quick reaction force and security patrols as required by the alert state cannot be carried out by civilians on the minimum wage fresh from stacking the shelves in Tesco.

The MPGS's task is to ensure the safety and security of all sites and personnel by only allowing authorised people and vehicles to gain entry to camp.

At busy times this means using their judgement and experience to



keep traffic flowing and not backed up dangerously onto civilian main roads.

As they see the same faces and vehicles day in, day out it may not always be necessary to carry out a 100 per cent document check.

However, in Maj Henderson's case I feel sure they will make an exception – after all, it's not the good major's responsibility to ensure his car pass and ID are in-date is it.

While I agree with Pte Corfield that regimental history is a useful tool for "team building", it is no substitute for the shared hardship of demanding training as a motivating factor and para drills must rank as probably the most motivating of all.

Yes, this training is an added cost to the defence budget but let's hope that the bean counters at the Ministry of Defence who know the expense of everything do not lose sight of the value of things as well. — *Name and address supplied*.

● **Wings wrangle ruffles more feathers**
— *page 61*

'Soldier shouldn't be substitute'

I READ the letter from Lt Col Richard Burnet ("Responses require personal touch", February) with two sets of emotions at different ends of a scale.

One was true amazement at an officer calling on his superiors for honesty and clarity in their replies to letters.

It was heartening to see such support from someone who, I am sure, has seen enough Service complaints and the like crossing his busy desk from week to week.

The second was of being totally appalled that we have reverted to this style of addressing ambiguities of policy.

I am often dismayed by some of the replies to letters in *Talkback*.

Having spent almost 40 years in the Army, combining Regular and non-Regular permanent service, I am most concerned by the switch to expecting *Soldier* to be the medium for raising queries on pay, allowances and terms and conditions of service as opposed to submitting these

cases through the chain of command.

Not that I am wanting to belittle the publication in any way, you understand; I just believe it is a command and control responsibility to formalise any directions on policy through different means.

If this magazine continues to be the forum for such cases then I must congratulate Lt Col Burnet for bringing to note the fact that the personnel writing such letters are our most prized asset and we should at least treat them with the decency and honesty they deserve. — *WO2 Bob Vickers, 204 Field Hospital (Volunteers)*.

The editor responds: Thank you for taking the time to write.

At the top of this page, we do remind readers that they must first have tried getting an answer via their own chain of command before contacting *Talkback*.

The exception to this, of course, is general discussion and debate.

Irate over Irish shirt issue

I AM on a full-time Reserve service contract doing guard work in Belfast for 32 Signal Regiment (Volunteers).

We have recently been issued with our multi-terrain pattern kit and with it the under body armour combat shirts (UBACS, pictured right).

However, we still have the old style combat body armour with woodland-style covers which makes the new shirts useless.

We have been told that we won't be getting the new Osprey variant as there aren't enough of them.

Aside from the pointlessness of this, considering the threat in Northern Ireland I am surprised that my colleagues and I are not a priority for this kit. — *Name and address supplied.*

Lt Col James Hoare, Equipment Directorate, Army Headquarters, responds: It is good to hear that our plans to speed up the issue of multi-terrain

pattern (MTP) combat uniform to the Army Reserve are working well and that you are already wearing yours.

Enhanced combat body armour (ECBA) is the most appropriate body armour available to match the threat presented in Northern Ireland.

Osprey Mk 4 was procured to meet a specific threat to our soldiers serving in southern Afghanistan.

There, the less attractive features of Osprey — such as weight, bulk and reduced mobility — are deemed acceptable given the level of protection required.

You should note that ECBA covers were not part of the MTP issue, so it remains Service policy to wear this body armour with woodland disruptive pattern material covers in all temperate environments.

There are plans to procure ECBA covers in MTP in due course.

When available, they will be issued as per the normal procedures.



'CREDITS SEEM CRAZY'

I AM at a loss as to the hows and whys when it comes to Armed Forces spending.

We have all been told that Service redundancies are happening because money needs to be saved.

I understand that, but how can this be justified when schemes such as enhanced learning credits can afford to give soldiers money for further education up to ten years after they have left?

Military personnel have been forced out of a career they would wish to stay in but we are giving cash to other causes which could instead be used to retrain those people for civilian life.

Within the Armed Forces we have many units that could incorporate resettlement courses into their training programmes.

There are also several agencies outside of the military whose sole purpose is to help ex-Forces personnel should the need arise.

Some people will not agree with me. However, I will forever be troubled at seeing fellow soldiers losing their careers when it seems clear there is money to be spared.

I will never claim my entitlement to enhanced learning credits whilst job cuts are happening. — *Name and address supplied.*

Col Andy King, AD Ops, replies:

Whilst I recognise the concern about redundancy, it is important to understand that this makes no difference to the Army's responsibility to promote personal development among soldiers and to fully embrace the government's lifelong learning initiative. The fact we extend this support to troops up to ten years after they leave is something of which we should be proud, not defensive. Read JSP 898 for more on the scheme.

Housing ladder headache

I RECENTLY found a property I wanted to purchase but as a first time buyer was struggling to raise the money for a deposit.

I was planning on using the long service advance of pay (LSAP) scheme in order to help fund the transaction.

However, upon reading JSP 752 I discovered that members of the Army have to serve a minimum of four years before applying for the loan, while Royal Navy personnel can apply upon completion of phase one training.

As soldiers are employed on a four-year contract to begin with, this to me does not make sense.

Surely this rule is increasing the amount that personnel must pay back as it is suggested the loans will be repaid over a ten-year period.

Why does another Service appear to get preferential treatment?

It is a brilliant scheme but the decision to set such parameters doesn't make sense. — *Name and address supplied.*

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:

As you have correctly identified, the regulations for LSAP state that members of the Army (and Royal Air Force) have to undertake four years' service from the completion of phase one training before

being eligible to apply, whilst those serving in the Royal Navy are entitled to apply as soon as they have finished their basic training.

The single Services each have different and long-standing approaches to the mobility and stability of their personnel.

The more static nature of the Royal Navy, where service is based around a very limited number of locations and time away at sea, means that they actively encourage their personnel to set up home as a family base early in their careers.

This is reflected in the fact that LSAP was originally a Royal Navy-only allowance when introduced in 1965.

When the scheme was adopted by the other two Services in 1992 the minimum eligibility age was initially 37. Over time this has been adjusted to meet the Army's particular retention needs.

The current requirement for a minimum of four years' service was adopted in 2005 and there are no plans to review or amend this in the short term.

You should note that the loan is interest-free so regardless of the period you pay it back over, you will still only repay the amount borrowed unless you decide to let the property in which case you will be liable for interest charges.

AS a diligent serving member of the Army, I am always keen to read what the leadership views as important for us to know.

Just as always, the assistant chief of the general staff's October sitrep was trumpeting the brightest, most up-tempo view of the current situation that faces the Service.

This included a section titled "attracting and developing people to fulfil their potential" followed by the subheadings "military redundancy", "civilian redundancy" and "pensions". It's great to see that the spirit of Thomas Atkins lives on, even at those lofty heights. — *Maj Mike James, RGR.*

Peeved at pension calculator

I HAVE been told by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) that my time served prior to rejoining (16 years) does not count towards any early departure payment (EDP) or annual income.

I submitted my notice to terminate during September last year after checking with SPVA and the pension calculator what my entitlement would be.

I will have served 21 years and 216 days this September but due to a change in policy at the latter part of 2012, I will now not qualify for any EDP or annual income.

The calculator shows this now but it didn't before.

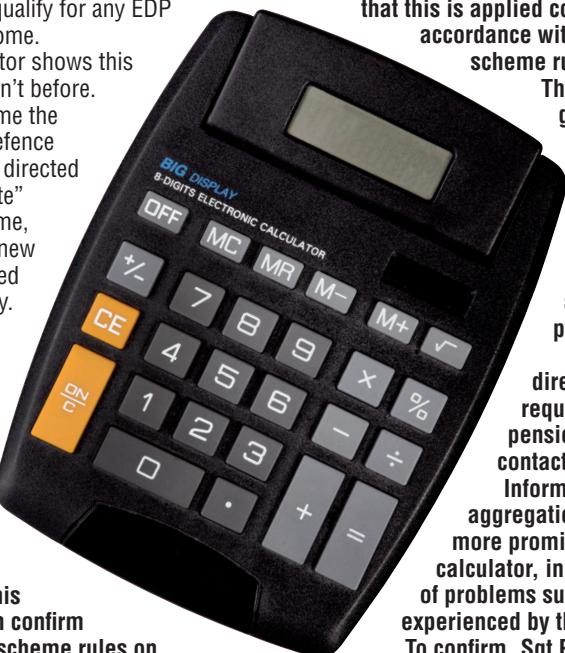
SPVA told me the Ministry of Defence policy branch directed them to "delete" aggregated time, therefore the new rules are placed retrospectively.

Surely this is illegal? –
Sgt Kathryn Pearce.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:

We have looked into this issue and can confirm that the EDP scheme rules on whether previous service can count as "relevant" have not changed.

Only time served after April 6, 2005 –



or qualifying service transferred under the 2006 offer to transfer – can count towards the EDP lump sum and income.

In addition, an individual is entitled to aggregate their preserved Armed Forces pension scheme (AFPS) 75 with current AFPS 05 pensionable service.

However this will count towards pension only and not EDP.

For a period of time the pension calculator aggregated service incorrectly but it has since been adjusted to ensure that this is applied correctly in accordance with pension scheme rules.

The tool is for guidance purposes only – the introductory screen states this – and users must acknowledge that prior to use.

The calculator directs personnel requiring an official pension forecast to contact SPVA in writing. Information on aggregation is now far more prominent within the calculator, in part as a result of problems such as those experienced by the reader.

To confirm, Sgt Pearce will receive the correct pension benefits to which she is entitled in accordance with the extant AFPS 05 rules.

Insistent over Isaf medal

ARE British troops who have served on the front line in Afghanistan allowed to wear the Nato-issued Isaf medal? If not, why not?

I feel every soldier who has served and is out there has earned the right to do so.

After all, we are part of Nato. –
Name and address supplied.

Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops, responds: You are not allowed to wear the Nato decorations with Isaf clasp because since 1919 there has been a ruling that British troops cannot wear two for the same campaign or operation – a principle known as "double medalling".

This decision has been recently revisited and upheld to ensure that British honours are respected and not devalued.

It was agreed operations in Afghanistan warranted the award of a UK campaign



medal and the Operational Service Medal Afghanistan was introduced in 2001.

Repeat service in Afghanistan counts towards the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM). In the past, if the MoD has not considered that an operation had sufficient risk and rigour to warrant the award of a British medal and where there was a Nato or UN decoration issued, these have been considered for wear.

The conclusion may have been that it could be worn (such as the Nato medal for service in Kosovo), or accepted as a keepsake but not worn.

However, operational service for which a Nato or UN medal has been authorised for wear cannot count towards the ACSM.

The complete list of issued Nato and UN medals together with their status is listed in annex A to chapter eight of JSP 761 – Honours and Awards in the Armed Forces.

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#BLACK HORNET (P 17)

@mggbuk1

@BritishArmy at 20 million for 160 units? Model Zone hell of a lot cheaper...

@Aussie_Kozy

Regardless of how you feel about drones, you've got to admit that this teeny tiny Black Hornet UAV is pretty awesome

#TA LIVE (P 19)

@MajorPaulSmyth

What a weekend for the launch of #TALIVE Well done to the team in Afghan. Stirling effort.

@EmmaAVF

Just seen a friend on the #TAlive advert... better than the usual Go Compare and phone advertisements!

@mathewbutler81

These #TALIVE adverts are really quite good and have been produced very well. I wonder what effect this will have on recruitment?

@andymason87

Only downside is you have to watch *Dancing on Ice* #TALIVE

@soldiermagazine



BIT OF A GLOCK-UP?

I AM sure I am but one of a torrent of pedantic spotters who have deluged you with comments about the Glock pistol articles (*Soldier*, February) – namely the photographic content.

Sadly, you managed to attach a picture (shown above) of two Sig Sauer 228 pistols in the hands of Jeremy Renner in *The Bourne Legacy* when there are images available with the Glock.

Surely for such a high quality magazine it was not that difficult to find the right picture!

After 24 years' service in the Royal Engineers and now a second career in the defence industry, I am sure my Forces friends will be happy to see that this leopard has not changed his pedantic spots. – Rob Allen.

The editor replies: Our colleagues at the National Firearms Centre have informed us that the image actually shows one Glock and one Sig Sauer P229. Pedantry, it seems, does not always pay...



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Outgoing Regulars require 'golden hello'

If the new Army Reserve is to have its ranks sufficiently swelled in time for 2020, then surely horizontal recruiting from the gold mine of departing Regulars has to be a critical part of the answer?

Why then, is the Service risking this vital solution by being so frugal with its incentives for these people to transfer?

Millions of pounds of investment and an inestimable amount of operational experience could be lost.

A relaxed deployment and training liability for a few years and a cavedated bounty of about £1,500 are hardly motivation enough to join when lots of individuals, some embittered after being given the boot, are faced with finding a new career.

A real incentive, such as a respectable "golden hello", has to be a much quicker and significantly cheaper option than growing

this capability again from the bottom up.

Besides, the new Army Reserve needs a hierarchy, not 15,000 second lieutenants and privates. – Maj Jim Hawkins, R Signals.

Col Lyanne Maclean, AD Reserves, responds: You make a valid point.

Improving the flow of Regular to Reserve transfer is one of commander Land Force's priorities (page 27-28) and orders to galvanise our efforts and direct the chain of command have been issued.

As part of this we are exploring financial incentives with the MoD and Armed Forces pay review body, conducting an internal marketing campaign and plan to brief outgoing troops on the opportunities presented by Reserve service.

Furthermore, the *Transition DVD* details what is available to Service leavers in the

Territorial Army.

Those who move from Regular service to join the Reserves – whether on redundancy or not – are offered a reduced annual training requirement, the relaxation of call-out liability, a bounty entitlement aligned with the number of years of full-time service and the ability to retain their Regular substantive rank seniority.

In addition, individuals may be interested to note that service in the Territorial Army on man training days incurs no loss of pension rights.

The redundancy special capital payment and compensation lump sum are also unaffected by joining.

Service leavers and ex-Regulars who wish to transfer can get more information from their chain of command or local Reserves unit.

Singletons suffer in Sennelager

AS with most places in Germany, all of the single living accommodation (SLA) in Sennelager is being renovated ahead of the big move out of the country.

This is the second time I've had to relocate for this reason in two years.

My colleagues and I were required to go from our unit location at Dempsey Barracks to the Queen's Royal Hussars camp at Athlone Barracks.

Our formation has tried its best with the limited transport options available and provided buses for transit between the two sites but this is not always convenient due to everyone's different routines.

As a result, many of us are driving to and from work at our own expense as we cannot claim home to duty travel allowance.

Furthermore, the accommodation we are staying in is run-down.

I am currently sleeping on an old guardroom-type bed with my mattress from Dempsey Barracks.

The area I am in has no mobile phone signal which also means no internet or Wi-Fi access either.

I appreciate the signal cannot be helped but there are also no amenities such as satellite dishes, which means no television or radio.

We have kit separated across several places; work, attics and our temporary accommodation as well.

This is not ideal with deployments such as Kenya and the Falklands quickly approaching. It also puts our own property at risk of theft and damage.

Bearing in mind the downgraded nature of this accommodation, why am I still having to pay £29 for my SLA when I don't have the amenities I used to?

And why are we penalised as single soldiers? I am not entitled to claim disturbance allowance due to it being an in-

unit move, despite the fact this was between two different camps.

If I was a married soldier living in Service families accommodation and had to relocate 100 metres down the road – or even next door – due to renovations or suchlike I would be fully entitled to claim disturbance allowance not only for myself but for the whole family.

Single personnel are being punished and are having to spend our own money to go about our business, despite the ever-falling rate of local overseas allowance. – LCpl Andrew Androsiuk, QDG

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds: There may be grounds for a reduction in charges or even a waiver if there is a significant deficiency in the amenities available to you and your colleagues.

Speak to your unit admin officer in order for the necessary investigative action to be taken. If the criteria for a reduction in charges are met, your unit can apply for

authority for the temporary downgrading of the single living accommodation.

This can be granted by your brigade headquarters for periods of up to three months and longer by the housing colonel at PS4, DPS(A).

If approved, the reduction can be backdated to the start of the deficiency.

The payment of disturbance allowance for intra-unit SLA moves was withdrawn as it was felt that the costs incurred did not justify the allowance.

As you correctly point out, you would have been entitled to this if you had been part of a unit move.

Personnel living in Service families accommodation are entitled to the payment for an authorised mid-assignment move as they do incur significant expense.

You mention a concern about security of your possessions; your squadron or company quartermaster sergeant is able to secure all your things during such deployments and I would urge you to make this arrangement.

On the "falling" local overseas allowance rate, this contributes to the additional cost of day-to-day living compared with that in the UK.

The last annual update for Germany (effective October 1, 2012) resulted in a two per cent increase for single or unaccompanied personnel.

Changes can also be brought about by fluctuations in the exchange rate.

The allowance is linked to the Forces fixed rate of exchange, which in turn reflects movements in the commercial exchange markets.

If the Forces fixed rate goes up, the payment is adjusted downwards to offset the fact that you are getting more euros per pound in your bank allotment. But there is no change in your spending power.



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Wings wrangle ruffles more feathers

PTE Corfield raises an important point (*Talkback*, January) but one that will surely ruffle a few feathers, and wings, when he suggests that The Parachute Regiment should be axed instead of old county regiments.

However, I am realistic enough to understand that many of the Army high command may have come through this unit or at least gained the maroon beret.

I am in full agreement that the days of massed drops are obsolete and the only use of parachute-delivered troops will be for clandestine operations.

With that in mind, I fail to see how doing six parachute drops to win wings is an effective use of resources and funding which ultimately comes from the taxpayer.

There could be a perfectly practical compromise between the old sweats who want to see one of our youngest units stay and those seeking maximum financial efficiency in the changing face of conflict.

The Parachute Regiment could remain as an elite air assault regiment with P Company as the testing phase for those that want to wear the coveted maroon beret.

In effect there would be no change in the para's current role except that on passing P Company he would not do a jump; paras without the parachuting. — **LCpl Adam Pamment, Int Corps.**

■ I WAS disappointed by certain comments in the last issue of *Soldier* regarding The Parachute Regiment.

The words of Maj Henderson were poorly judged and not what should be expected of an officer in Her Majesty's Forces; his initial comments were nothing more than a childish attack on a junior colleague expressing an opinion.

Just to clarify my position, I am of the club that agrees that the disbandment of The Parachute Regiment would be detrimental to UK defence, regardless of whether we foresee any future airborne insertions, and that they should be safeguarded as an elite regiment.

However, we should always be listening to the views of our lower ranks, whether we agree or not.

The day this stops will be the day we lose sight of what is happening at the coalface.

To respond as Maj Henderson has done will undoubtedly create a situation where juniors are far less likely to air their views for fear of chastisement.

Pte Corfield should be congratulated for taking the time to raise a suggestion rather than hiding his thoughts.

Perhaps a visit to The Parachute Regiment would educate him on the need for such a force and change his opinion. — **Flt Lt Donald Earl, RAF Wittering.**

■ ALTHOUGH I believe that Pte Corfield is entitled to his view, it does not reflect that of the Military Provost Guard Service



Picture: Steve Dack

Rumbling on: Stormy debate continues over a claim that The Parachute Regiment should be dropped

as a whole. This Serviceman is only one individual within the unit.

I am now in my twelfth year as an MPGS soldier and have met many different characters and been amazed at the experience within the corps.

I was deeply shocked at Maj Henderson's comment that we are only here to check vehicle passes.

Maybe the officer should visit the guardroom more often and see exactly what we do as he obviously has no idea.

It is this type of ignorant and small-minded attitude that the unit has been fighting since starting up in the mid 1990s.

As an officer I would have thought he would have been a bit more tactful — or is it that he has been stopped for not having ID or a vehicle pass?

Someone of his rank should know to have such documents on him or in the car at all times but clearly he holds a grudge. — **Name and address supplied.**

■ I HAVE read with dismay the debate in this publication regarding airborne forces.

The fact that our troops have strong



opinions about the structure of the Army, feel confident enough to write to our official magazine and that the same publication would publish an inevitably controversial article is a source of pride to me. The rather crass "hat" comments from an anonymous contributor are not.

Pte Corfield could perhaps be forgiven for not predicting the use of airborne troops in Mali, but he might want to read up on the brigade-strength operation conducted by 73rd Airborne Brigade in Northern Iraq during 2003.

The respondent's argument is no better.

As a lieutenant I commanded a platoon which included Johnson Beharry, Chris Broome and Troy Samuels who won the Victoria Cross, Conspicuous Gallantry Cross and Military Cross respectively.

If the paras want to claim a monopoly on good soldiers I just don't see it.

Any well applied, relevant additional selection will raise the bar. That doesn't mean the best para sergeant is better than the best Loamshires sergeant. And let's not be disingenuous, I have met some right lizards wearing maroon berets.

I could say a lot more on the issue of airborne troops because three years ago I was attached to 11th Air Mobile Brigade of the Netherlands Army where I planned airborne, air assault, air landing, air mobile and air mechanised operations.

I doubted the utility of air manoeuvre before my arrival, having been fed the tedious line about the aim to create Van Damme-esque "Universal Soldiers".

Once I understood what it was, I became and remain a convert.

Airborne forces are a real asset for a modern military. I just wish their proponents in the British Army would focus on their actual strengths instead of calling people "hats". — **Maj James Rands, HQ ARRC.**



APPOINTMENTS

Lt Gen Richard Barrons to be promoted to general and appointed Commander Joint Forces Command in April.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Tracey Gellatly, Blairgowrie, Perthshire; Mrs J Avis, 100 Regt RA (V), Luton, Bedfordshire; Mr J Mill, City Quay, Dundee; Jayne Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison, Hereford; Mr M Richardson, Earswick, York; Mr P Raven, Colchester, Essex; Sqn Ldr C Green, RAF Halton, Buckinghamshire; Mr G Drew, DEMSS Kineton, Warwickshire; LCpl S Wood, Gundolph Bks, Hameln; Mr M Sullivan, York.

Universal Soldier DVD: Leanne Court, Leeds, Yorkshire; Mr P Whitley, Taunton, Somerset; Rebecca John, Burry Port, Carmarthenshire; Joanna Sawka, London; Belynda Dunsmore, London.



DIARY

Until April 13: The Royal Artillery Museum presents **A Woman's Place**, a free exhibition exploring the role of females serving in the British Army during the Second World War and in today's Afghanistan. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 1000-1700 at the Berkeley Gallery, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich.

Until July: The Imperial War Museum, London, will be closed for redevelopment in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 2014. Visit www.iwm.org.uk for more.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

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

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

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

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

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

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

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's

Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

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

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

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INTELLIGENCE

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

ABN 02-13: Overseas travel flexibility

ABN 01-13: ELC late registration

DIN 2013DIN01-016: Voluntary transfer of Army personnel

DIN 2013DIN01-014: Information Excellence Awards 2013

DIN 2013DIN01-012: Armed Forces Buddhist (Spiritual and Moral Leadership) Conference, June 5-7, 2013

DIN 2013DIN01-010: Academic qualifications for officer direct entry (Regular and TA) – implementation plan

DIN 2013DIN01-009: Government reform to the state pension

DIN 2013DIN01-008: Recruitment of volunteers for training as an Army welfare worker

DIN 2013DIN01-007: Insurance for adventurous training activities

DIN 2013DIN01-006: MILLIE number assigned to education information booklet for Service parents

DIN 2013DIN01-005: All England Lawn Tennis Championships – Wimbledon 2013

DIN 2013DIN01-004: Army compulsory redundancy tranche 3

DIN 2013DIN01-003: Promotion to the senior civil service

DIN 2013DIN01-002: Changes to the Service complaints process

DIN 2013DIN01-001: Cultivating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender talent: the 2013 conference of the Army LGBT forum

DIN 2013DIN03-002: Military danger area airspace management policy

DIN 2013DIN03-001: Explosive ordnance disposal and search assurance

DIN 2013DIN04-008: Confirmed out of service date Bedford 4T

DIN 2013DIN04-007: Tactical fuel handling equipment declaration ordered by deployable infrastructure project team

DIN 2013DIN04-006: Closed loop secure document destruction, waste paper management and recycling

DIN 2013DIN04-005: MoD policy for the provision and use of DFTS services

DIN 2013DIN04-004: Declaration of obsolete – less than lethal effect

DIN 2013DIN04-003: Declaration of obsolete – STLS SAR/5855-99-553-2991

DIN 2013DIN04-001: Publication of JSP 509 – *The Management of Test Equipment*

DIN 2013DIN05-002: Records management – reduction in the 30 year rule

DIN 2013DIN05-001: JSP 950 – *Defence Health Record Policy Leaflet - interim direction*

DIN 2013DIN06-001: Revisions to UK rabies vaccination guidance

BULLET POINTS

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

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

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

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

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

Poppy Scotland: 0131 557 2782; www.poppyscotland.org.uk

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

uk4u Thanks: 01798 812081; www.uk4u.org

DIN 2013DIN07-008: Unit welfare personnel training courses 2013-2014

DIN 2013DIN07-007: Joint and single Service security, intelligence, photographic and geo-spatial training courses for training year

DIN 2013DIN07-005: Nitrox compatible equipment for use in Service sub aqua diving

DIN 2013DIN07-004: Military Aviation Authority Centre of Air Safety training courses FY 13/14

DIN 2013DIN07-003: Cyber awareness course dates and application process for 2013

DIN 2013DIN07-002: Education for promotion

DIN 2013DIN07-001: JMC battlefield advanced trauma life support course loading policy 2012 document overview

DIN 2013DIN09-001: New Year Honours list 2013 – MoD civilian recipients

DIN 2013DIN10-006: Kneller Hall vehicle parking: Twickenham Rugby Stadium events and concerts

DIN 2013DIN10-005: The Combined Services Chess Championships 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-003: Army Sports Lottery

DIN 2013DIN10-002: Headquarters Operational Shooting Training Team – shooting courses 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-001: Basic gliding courses 2013 at the Wyvern (Army) Gliding Club, Upavon

DIB 08/13: The defence budget

DIB 07/13: MoD publishes summary of the equipment plan

DIB 06/13: Launch of the new defence intranet on DII/F

DIB 05/13: New senior military appointments

DIB 04/13: Army publishes details for tranche three of the Armed Forces redundancy programme

DIB 03/13: Armed Forces redundancy programme – forthcoming tranche three announcement

DIB 02/13: The new operating model

DIB 01/13: Sir Bob Kerslake writes to all civil servants concerning reform of civil service pension schemes



REUNION

Queen's Royal Lancers north west branch annual dinner on April 6, 2013 at Blackpool. All ex-16/5 QRL, 17/21 L, QRL and attached personnel welcome. Further details from Ned Kelly via 01772 324795 or mike.kelly@talktalk.net



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btconnect.com with the event you are interested in attending.

March: No events. **April:** Merton, Southwark, Kingston-upon-Thames.



SEARCHLINE

Author **Lee Tweedy** is writing a book about the experiences of Servicemen and women after their return from current operations and is looking for personal accounts. All tales are welcome. Stories will be treated with respect and only published with the subject's permission. Please email tellmeyourside1@gmail.com with your account.

The Buchanan Trust, is looking for views on its modernisation plans and is keen to hear from current and ex-Forces personnel. The proposals can be viewed at www.buchanan-trust.co.uk and comments should be submitted via george@herefordshire.gov.uk or by calling 01432 260000.

Former soldier Ben Mead has set up **Military Roots**, a social group for ex-Servicemen and women in Eastbourne and surrounding areas. Open to those who have served in any branch of the Armed Forces, the organisation aims to bring together people who may be missing the camaraderie of military life. For further information contact info@militaryroots.co.uk

Mr C Todd would like to find a friend called **David Hadden**, born January 26, 1947, in Rushden, Northants. He was serving in Detmold Germany with the 9th/12th Royal Lancers from 1974 to 1977. If anyone has information please contact Mr Todd on 07531 781455.

The Rotary Club of Upper Eden is inviting Service personnel to take part in the **Yomp Mountain Challenge** on June 2, 2013. The charity fund-raising event features a choice of three courses (6.5 miles, 11.5 miles or 23 miles) across the fells of Kirkby Stephen in Cumbria. Visit www.yomp.org for more information.

NO. 856

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



TEN details have been changed on this photograph by Sgt Adrian Harlen (RLC) of The Life Guards from The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment riding down the Mall from their barracks in Knightsbridge.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 856, Soldier**,

Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by March 27. 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 May issue. Usual rules apply. **January's winners:**

First correct entry drawn at random was Mrs J German, Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Wiltshire. Runners up: Mr D Mitchell, Pontefract, West Yorkshire and Helen Holford, Bovington Camp, Dorset.



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Law students save families a fortune

AN unfortunate set of circumstances (think irritating boundary dispute) led me to contact Queen Mary, University of London to take advantage of the institution's offer of a free initial consultation for Forces families through their Legal Advice Centre.

Final year law students hone their skills by researching your real-life issues and, under the supervision of a fully trained lawyer, provide advice at no cost.

They can't take you on as a client but can give impartial, knowledgeable guidance in what are often very difficult circumstances.

The students provided me with an excellent written brief detailing my options as well as a letter for the respondent concerned.

As more of us will live in the local community



under the Army's new employment model, it will sadly no longer be possible for a unit welfare officer to simply arbitrate between neighbours.

In addition, expensive legal services will be in ever-increasing demand.

Thank goodness, then, for brilliant and generous initiatives such as this one.

For more information visit the centre's website at www.advicecentre.law.qmul.ac.uk/stws/index.html

Kenya brings home harsh realities

I RECENTLY visited the families who make up one of the Service's most remote communities, the hardy souls of the British Army Training Unit Kenya (Batuk).

Having moved three hours up country to be closer to the proving grounds where military personnel oversee exercising troops, families are experiencing the reality of expeditionary living in rural East Africa.

Both married and single soldiers should be applauded for forging a community among the limited amenities and in a situation that is made all the more difficult by the constraints of the age of austerity.

I take my hat off to them and reflect that the days of "cocktails at the club" are truly over, whilst all the time wondering whether the new employment model can foster the adventurous spirit our families need simply to consider an assignment such as this.



Picture: Steve Dook

Rebasing reconsidered

MY suburban boundary dispute and the realities of East Africa brought into focus many issues surrounding Service housing, namely where and how we want our families to live in future.

Whilst many of the arguments have been aired through the chain of command, in all the discussions about austerity, rebasing and redundancy I am not sure we can fully remember the principles which underpin the new employment model – conceivably the biggest upheaval of all for British Army families.

The old phrase of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" no longer holds water; it is right to investigate if something is simply too expensive to keep but in doing so we must look at all the facts surrounding the issue, not just the voice of the Treasury which invariably shouts the loudest.

Why did the Army decide as long ago as the 1950s that it wanted its soldiers to live together? The commitment to accompanied service has been reiterated many times since – most recently in the white paper of 2011.

Was it because living and working as one helped deliver a sense of cohesion and uniformity that the military was keen to instil?

Or was the reason that it was simply easier to muster the troops if they were in one place?

Perhaps it was because it appeared to work so well in the British Army of the Rhine, and therefore seemed illogical to change such a successful model.

Whatever the reason, that community or patch life has been the backbone of Service families' experiences for over half a century and whilst many have chosen to opt out, a far greater number have elected to stay in.

When the basing study is announced in the very near future and we know where we might expect to spend the rest of our military days, the next challenge will be to understand the terms of our future employment.

I'm hoping that the choice to remain part of a fully integrated community, like that nurtured by the frontier families of Batuk where shared experiences lead to empathy and combined strength to overcome problems, remains a viable one for those who want it.

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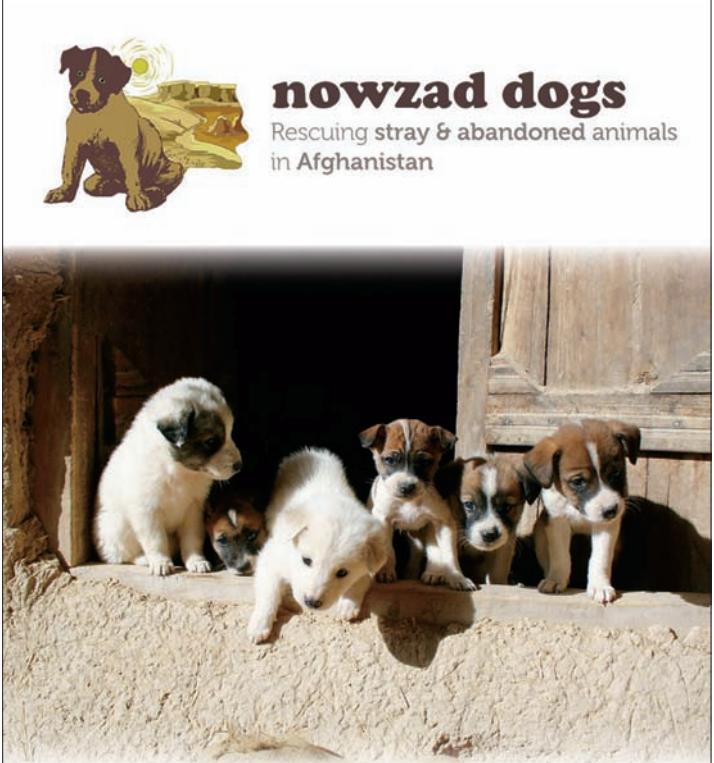
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reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

VIVACIOUS VIEWING



HOLY MOTORS out now

MONSIEUR Oscar (**Denis Lavant**) is driven around Paris in a limousine, transforming into a new character at each stop. He plays various roles, male and female, and confronts a range of situations and stories that are familiar to the cinema. He even talks about the fact he is acting for cameras he can no longer see. This title is very self-referential; aware of its own pedigree and playing with those conventions. At times shocking and at others funny, the film is very well crafted and visually striking. But be warned: this impressive offering is not a standard Friday night popcorn experience.

Capt Alex Janaway, RAMC



AMERICAN MARY out now

FANS of horror movies that have a semblance of truth will probably adore this picture. *American Mary* is a doctor who is pulled into practising on the side to conduct operations at the seedier end of surgery. Such extreme body modification would not be offered in mainstream hospitals. While being a horror of graphic proportions, a dark humour runs through this title as it continually has a subtle dig at men. Co-written and co-directed by **Jen and Sylvia Soska**, this is highly recommended but not one to watch alone.

Rick Wilson, civvy



THAT'S MY BOY out now

ALTHOUGH his role as Donny is far from **Adam Sandler's** best work, this is a step in the right direction following some real lowbrow shockers of recent times. After years of estrangement following a supremely inappropriate pupil-teacher relationship, the immature single parent reunites with his son Todd (**Andy Samberg**) ahead of his wedding. There are infantile gags here as in *Grown Ups* and *Jack and Jill* but also some genuinely funny moments from the man-on-heat father figure which serve to remind us that Sandler does have talent.

Joe Clapson, Soldier



RUST AND BONE out now

IN French with English subtitles, this film centres on Ali (**Matthias Schoenaerts**), a homeless single father who has aspirations of being a professional boxer. Ultimately, though, it is a touching love story set in the back streets of southern France involving the emotionally detached Ali and Steph (**Marion Cotillard**), a killer whale trainer who lost her legs when one of her subjects turned on her. Under **Jacques Audiard's** direction this is a complicated title that requires a lot of concentration but it handles difficult issues well without being pretentious.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

THIS film is centred around Hushpuppy (**Quvenzhane Wallis**), a six-year-old who lives in the Louisiana Bayou with her alcoholic father among a community of people who refuse to leave their flooded homes. Set in the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, there is a focus on emotional and physical relationships seen from the perspective of the child. Things get confusing towards the end, especially when a prehistoric form of wild boar is awakened as glaciers melt, but it's a thought-provoking movie.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



WIN... THE BAY

FROM the director of *Rain Man*, this is a stark and disturbing tale of an ecological nightmare on the US coastline. In what is a shockingly believable concept, the residents of a quaint town are infected by a gruesome water-based plague which turns them against each other with harrowing consequences. *Soldier* has teamed up with Entertainment One to offer a copy of *The Bay* to five lucky readers. To have a chance of winning, tell us who directed this film. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: March 27

Interview: Joe Clapson

THIS month will see a talented cast brought to cinema screens by a director on a mission to revamp the way Britain makes action films.

After receiving critical acclaim with *Shifty* on his writer-director debut, Eran Creevy has stepped away from the urban thriller genre to create a slick, high-energy movie that will force Hollywood to sit up and take notice.

"After I made *Shifty* I was a bit nervous about what to do next," said the former music video guru.

"I didn't want to do another socio-realistic drama because you can get caught up in that template."

Unlike his first title, made on a shoestring budget of £100,000 courtesy of Film London's Microwave moviemaking scheme, Creevy has splashed £5.2 million on an expensive set and cast that includes James McAvoy and Mark Strong.

"I grew up watching the likes of *Die Hard*, *Lethal Weapon* and *Star Wars* and my aspiration has always been to make Hollywood movies," he said. "I also always wanted to make a cops and robbers film set in London so that's what I've done."

Welcome To The Punch finds ex-criminal Jacob Sternwood (Strong) forced to return to London when his son is involved in a botched heist, giving detective Max Lewinsky (McAvoy) a chance to catch his long-time target.

Through impressive visuals the audience is taken towards an inevitable "police versus bad guy" showdown with further conspiracies uncovered along the way.

For the 36-year-old Harlow boy, it was essential that his project was set in the capital and captured it as a vibrant hub with cutting-edge architecture.

"I wanted to show off the newer, shiny side of my home town," he explained.

"We filmed all around Canary Wharf and it was tricky to gain access but luckily I was living there and able to organise a few things."

Although the movie is largely about the boys in blue, Creevy emphasised that his script is not meant to portray British officers in a particular light.

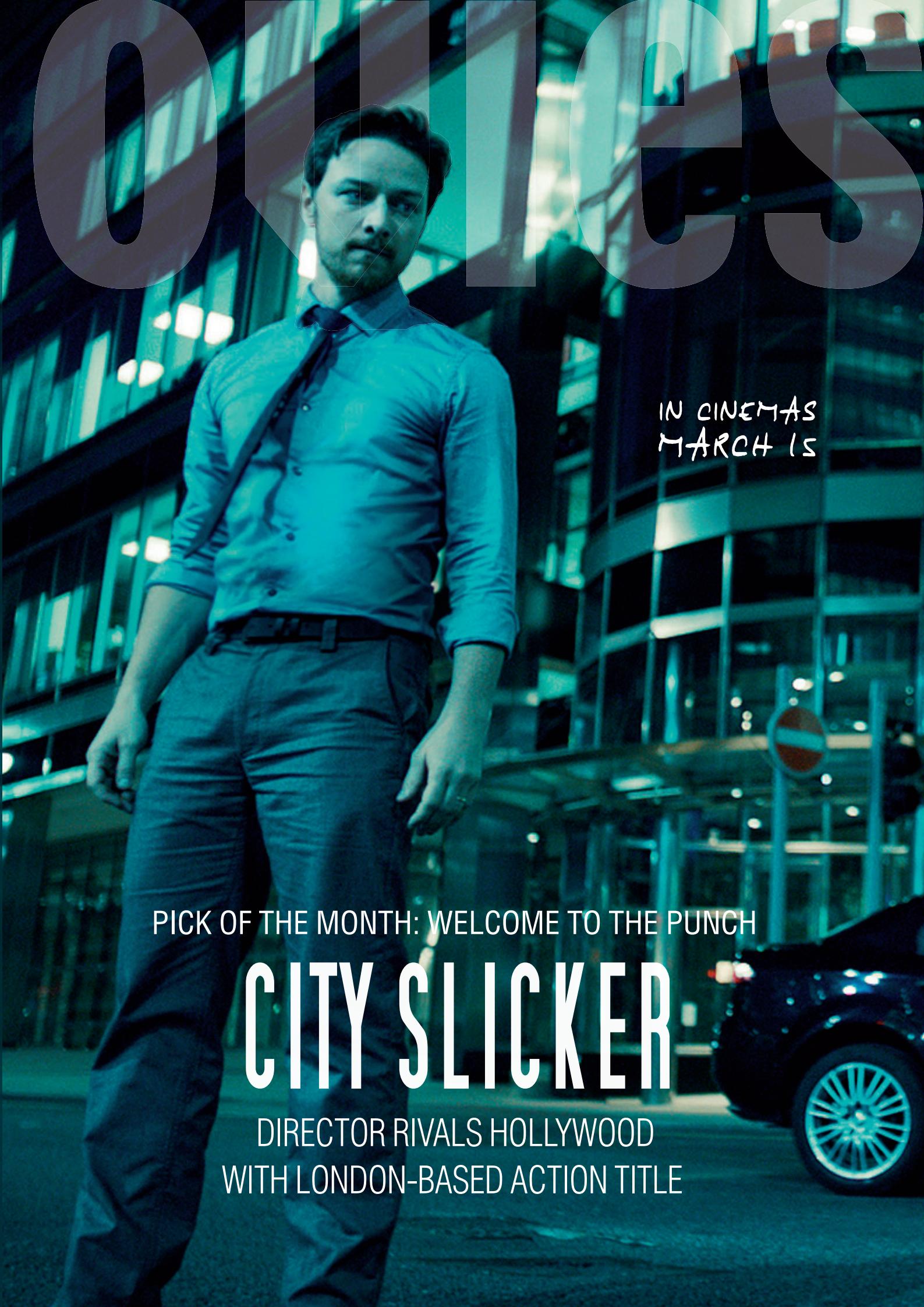
"There has been corruption and police shootings in the news and I have just reflected that," he said. "But the action is heightened and it's not trying to be a detailed look at how UK police are."

The director now hopes that a successful run for the feature will spur other filmmakers to follow his lead with big British productions.

"I'm sick of commercial action movies not being made in the UK," said the former *Layer Cake* runner.

"They've got them in France, Hong Kong and Hollywood but we won't do it here."

"We have the best technical and acting talent in the world as well as the city to tell the story, so I hope the audience go away from this feeling we can do this type of thing." ■



IN CINEMAS
MARCH 15

PICK OF THE MONTH: WELCOME TO THE PUNCH

CITY SLICKER

DIRECTOR RIVALS HOLLYWOOD
WITH LONDON-BASED ACTION TITLE

games

MARCH'S
CONSOLE KINGS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

ALIEN ASSAULT

INTERGALACTIC CAMPAIGN GATHERS PACE IN LATEST
MOVIE FRANCHISE SPIN-OFF

Review: David McDougall

VIDEO games featuring the deadly, acid carrying, Swiss Army Knife-for-a-mouth Xenomorph have never been in short supply in the console world.

But none of *Aliens: Colonial Marines*' predecessors have been considered official canon when paired with the feature films. Until now, that is.

Set 17 weeks after the events of *Aliens*, a search and rescue team locates and boards the USS *Sulaco* – the feared warship that ferried Ripley and co. to the ill-fated colony of LV-426.

Predictably they discover an alien infestation coupled with some unsavoury corporate mercenaries – all of whom require an introduction to the marines' way of getting things done.

This is a first-person shooter. You run and gun, take in the cut scenes and then do some more running and gunning.

With that in mind you would think this franchise would be ideal for such a platform. And it is, sort of.

On paper this is the perfect scenario. You have the eerie setting and deadly enemies who like to leap from the shadows and into your worst nightmares, which should make this title a dream to play.

But unfortunately it doesn't quite work out that way. Don't get me wrong, the game looks great on the surface and there's plenty of homage at work here. The weapons, for instance, sound fantastic but there's little in the way of tactics.

The enemy AI is somewhat direct as well. Xenomorphs charge at you, instead of mimicking their more surreptitious movie brethren, who sneaked around, looking for a creative and frankly terrifying way of surprising you.

Here they bolt towards you in numbers, offering themselves up as nothing more than acid-filled target practice.

In contrast, the multiplayer is much better than its campaign counterpart. Where the AI failed to take advantage of cramped spaces with various avenues of approach, a human player can do exactly that.

You can easily lure marine opponents into a maelstrom of teeth and claws by using fellow Xenomorphs as bait, allowing you to sneak around and drop in behind.

But don't think that playing as a soldier is any less enjoyable. With the added tension of knowing that a human will be infinitely more devious than the campaign AI, you quickly find yourself siding up to the rest of your team in a desperate attempt to avoid being ruthlessly ripped apart.

The multiplayer features several modes: Team Deathmatch is a straightforward aliens-against-marines romp but Escape, on the other hand, is far more entertaining as the good guys have to reach an evacuation point while being chased, harassed and hunted by their rivals.

Aliens: Colonial Marines isn't perfect. But it does supply copious amounts of homage to the original films, all of which I'm sure will be happily lapped up by every fan out there, myself included. ■

VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND

NIKE+ KINECT TRAINING

for Xbox Kinect

AS of late, Xbox Kinect has been in danger of falling by the wayside as decent purpose-made games have been few and far between. *Nike+*, however, is the exception. With variable training programmes and a choice of instructors you'll have your work cut out in an effort to fight the flab. But that's not all. You can aim for specific regimes to tone muscles or reduce weight. After that you can save your progress and compare with friends. A word of caution, though. Ensure you have plenty of room or you may end up losing more than just a few pounds.



David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen

WORLD OF TANKS

for PC

THIS free-to-play title sees gamers jumping into battle and taking part in short decisive missions designed to ensure fast and action-oriented warfare. Dive into intense tank-on-tank combat and enjoy an amazing new battlefield experience. Supported by top-notch graphics and stunning audiovisual effects, this offering provides an endless challenge with a new steer on the average shoot 'em up. This is an outstanding game and with it not costing a penny is definitely worth a try. Get online now, you have nothing to lose.



Sgt Lee Gibbs, REME

DEAD SPACE 3

for Xbox/PS3/PC

IN the third instalment of the *Dead Space* saga the adventure switches from deepest darkest space to a chilling ice world. On the whole, the change works well and having horrifying Necromorphs leaping out from swirling blizzards is as terrifying as seeing them falling from ventilation ducts on spacecraft. However, the co-op mode falls rather flat as any sense of tension is replaced by a quest to blast anything that moves as strategies fall by the wayside. While this is a welcome addition to the fold it is hard to escape the feeling that it is only good, rather than great.



Richard Long, Soldier

METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

THE latest incarnation in the long-running *Metal Gear* series blends stealth with all-out action as protagonist Raiden wreaks havoc against Desperado Enterprises. The plot is set four years after the events of the franchise's fourth instalment and while the scenario offers great promise, the game suffers from style over substance. The combat sequences are over reliant on button bashing while the pace and flow is hindered by enemies that take too long to shake off. The vast open levels show this release in its best light but these are few and far between.



Richard Long, Soldier

DEVIL MAY CRY

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

CENTRED on demon hunter and **Justin Bieber** lookalike Dante, *Devil May Cry* is an action-packed extravaganza. However, it relies heavily upon in-play movies and concentrates less on what you would want to do in a game, where pausing can mean life or death and survival is the key. Like *Resident Evil*, Capcom have gone with the same annoying limited saves and incredibly hard-to-slay enemies. This takes time and effort to master. If, unlike me, you are willing to lock yourself in a room away from civilisation then this is the release for you.



Sgt Mike Owens, RE

KEN'S RAGE 2

for Xbox 360/PS3/Wii

THIS is a fighting game based around the *Manga* comics. Each two-minute section takes around 60 seconds to load so you spend a third of your time just waiting to play. Then the real fun starts – the action is slow, repetitive and far too channelled to provide any appeal. The graphics are at least 30 years out of date and I have seen more impressive detailing on my Super Nintendo. In summary, if you are a *Manga* fan go and get a comic and appreciate a proper storyline in this genre. Give me *Streets of Rage* on the Master System any day over this title.



Sgt Lee Gibbs, REME

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

Filthy Empire by Heaven's Basement

EVERY so often a band breathes new life into a genre. This time it is the turn of **Heaven's Basement** and their debut album *Filthy Empire*.

The group submits a pure and honest concoction of good old rock and roll with a smattering of stiff upper lip and youthful swagger. Opening track *Welcome Home* embraces life's vices, while *Fire Fire* allows **Aaron Buchanan's** vocals to soar. The ballad *Price We Pay* lacks power but everything else sticks it to the man with attitude and sensitivity. One of the best things to happen to British rock since Robert and Jimmy got the Led out!

Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR



Bush Live! by Bush

THIS DVD stunningly captures **Bush's** 2011 show at the Roseland Theatre in Portland, Oregon. It features a selection of the band's biggest



hits and its immersive quality pulls you in and makes you feel a part of the audience. Tracks such as *Glycerine*, *The Sea of Memories* and *The Chemicals Between Us* all stand the test of time while the inclusion of five bonus acoustic songs shows their versatility. Overall, this is a fantastic performance from the group and I expect to see lot more from them in the future. A worthwhile purchase for any fan of alternative music.

Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds

Live at The Royal Albert Hall by Emeli Sandé



HAVING been virtually ever-present in 2012 – including performances at the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies – the time may have come for **Emeli Sandé** to head into musical hibernation. But instead of taking a step back the Scottish singer has continued to milk the cash cow with the release of a live album. All the hits are present here as the star takes to the stage accompanied by an eight-piece string section. But the grand setting and spectacular support fail to mask the fact that this is a bland offering from a massively over-hyped artist. This is middle-of-the-road stuff so don't expect any edge or backbone to the tunes.

Joe Clapson, Soldier

A Moving Picture by Devlin

WITH the UK's urban scene enjoying ever-increasing popularity the charts have become awash with half-hearted attempts at rap and hip-hop aimed at making a quick buck. While it is hard to place **Devlin** fully in this bracket, his latest offering *A Moving Picture* falls uncomfortably between the boundaries of credibility and pop's mainstream. His cause isn't helped by a woeful cover of (*All Along the*) *Watchtower* but harder tracks such as *Really Cold* and *Off With Their Heads* point to his true talent. However, this is a confused effort from an artist who seems unsure over which direction to take in his career.

Richard Long, Soldier



Arc by Everything Everything

THE trouble with having such a leftfield hit with your debut album is following it up without the element of surprise. The success of the Mercury-nominated *Man Alive* has left intrigue as to whether **Everything Everything** could reproduce such eccentric excellence. With *Arc*, it soon becomes clear that they definitely can. The first three tracks are full of sharp turns and obtuse references while the fluidity of lyrical delivery and some improbable rhyming couplets provide a hip-hop quality to other offerings. This is a band with an arc that is heading inexorably upwards.

James Morton, civvy



Opposites by Biffy Clyro



SCOTTISH alternative rockers **Biffy Clyro** return with their sixth studio album, *Opposites*. This record boasts some exceptional tracks with excellent vocal work that anyone who is a fan of this genre will undoubtedly enjoy. Their loud, powerful style is present in the majority of tunes as the trio stay true to their chest-thumping and fast-paced roots. However, their efforts are punctuated by a handful of slower, softer songs that narrowly avoid sounding similar – a pitfall commonly associated with this type of music. All in all, this is a triumphant return to the mainstream and should be celebrated among the group's best work.

Julie Jessup, civvy

Interview: Richard Long

AFTER releasing his first single on the back of a challenging tour in Afghanistan, former Grenadier Guard Xander Rawlins vowed to pursue a full-time career in the music industry.

Having completed his commitments with the Army the ex-captain has seen his ambition become reality in the shape of debut album *Alive I Dream*.

The record boasts a collection of original songs that track Rawlins' experiences over the past decade, from the people he has met to his experiences in the Armed Forces.

To add a touch of star quality to his efforts the aspiring artist travelled to America, where he teamed up with producers Michael Patterson – who has collaborated with the likes of Beck and P Diddy – and Nic Jodoin.

"I spent four months in Los Angeles working with some awesome producers and I had a great time," Rawlins told *Soldier*.

"It was a fun experience. The recording process was quite lengthy but I had a really good group of people alongside me including some proper old-school session musicians.

"I am very pleased with the album, although as a record it ended up sounding very different to what I was expecting.

"It is influenced by the time I spent in America. When I play live it is very much as an acoustic show but on this project I was working with a full band and had different musicians adding things as we went along.

"I've had these songs for a while but it has been great to be able to spend time working on them in a studio environment."

Rawlins released debut single *1,000 Miles Apart* in 2010 while still serving in the Army and later appeared in the BBC documentary *Our War*, which featured footage he filmed during operations in Helmand province.

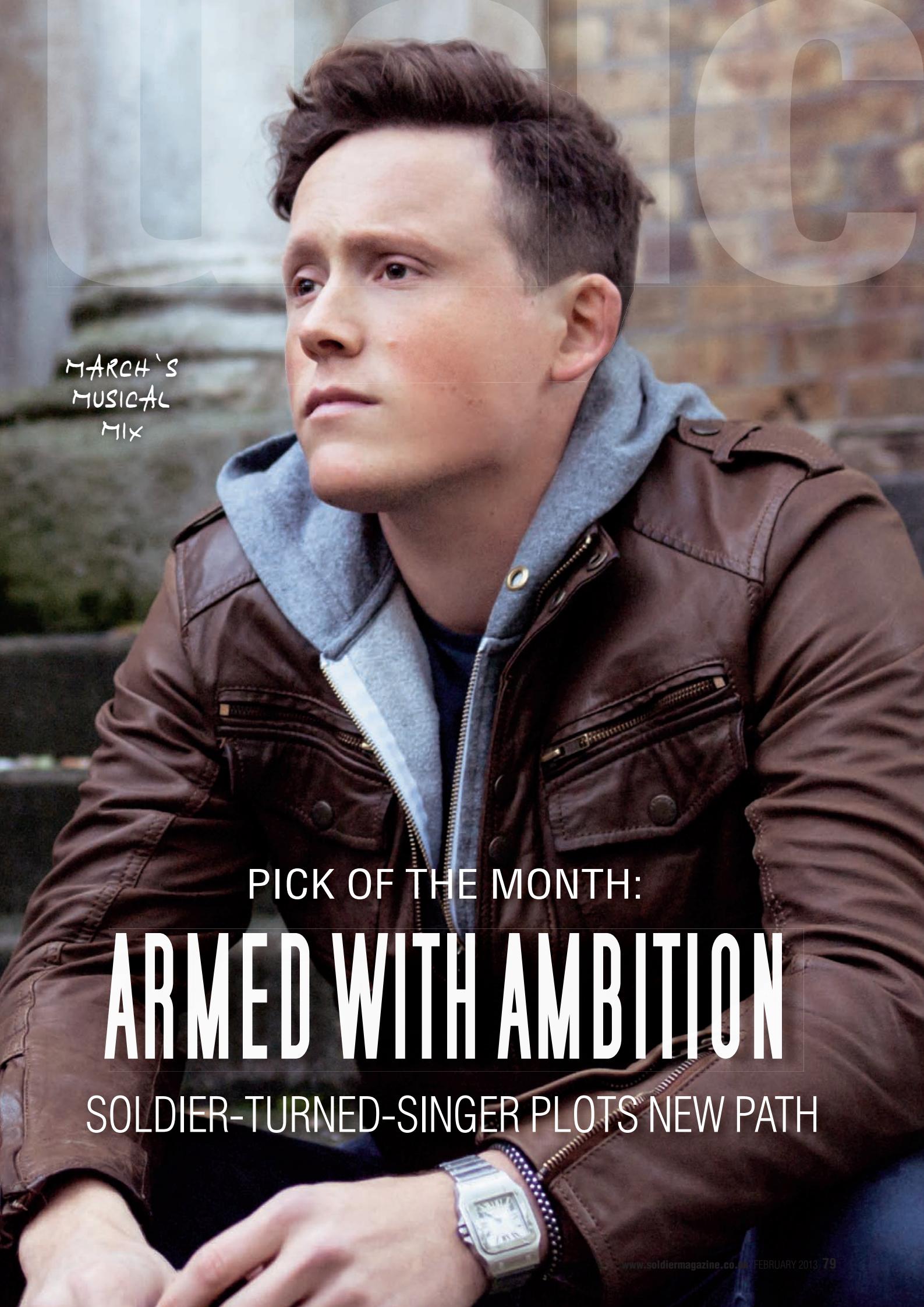
"The good thing about getting this album out is that it shows people I am a musician and songwriter, not just someone who used to be in the Army," he explained.

"I'm looking at organising a UK tour and am also lining up some festival appearances, so hopefully it will be a busy summer.

"At the moment my focus is on music and I'll see how it all turns out.

"I want as many people as possible to listen to the album and I hope to get some air time on the radio and play bigger gigs.

"A career in music is generally something ex-soldiers don't do when leaving the Army. Everyone has been very supportive and I stay in touch with lots of guys I served with."



MARCH'S
MUSICAL
MIX

PICK OF THE MONTH:

ARMED WITH AMBITION

SOLDIER-TURNED-SINGER PLOTS NEW PATH

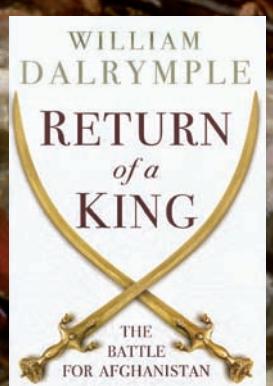
BOOKS



PICK OF THE MONTH:

PAST PRECEDENT

AUTHOR ANALYSES BRITAIN'S FIRST
BATTLE IN AFGHANISTAN



History lesson: *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* is out now priced £25

Review: Dr Rodney Atwood

READERS will be familiar with many of the books drawing parallels between Op Herrick and Britain's 19th century wars in Afghanistan.

The story of the first encounter, the Anglo-Indian campaign to depose Dost Mohammad and restore Shah Shuja to the throne, has been told over and over again.

Initial success turned to disaster culminating in the destruction of a British-Indian brigade and its unarmed followers during the retreat from Kabul in 1842.

With historians mainly relying on British letters and journals of the time, we have usually seen the country's natives only through the eyes of their enemies.

However, in his new book *Return of a King* William Dalrymple follows a more recent trend to depict events from the Afghan side.

Well known for providing a fresh outlook on India's history, the author has researched a remarkable number of sources, unearthing Afghan accounts as well as official testimony from sepoys at courts-martial at the end of the war.

He tells a fascinating story which draws readers in. But with so many books available on the topic, does this title offer any new insights into the conflict?

Up to a point we do see events differently. Using Afghan texts allows Dalrymple to describe resistance leaders in their own words or those of their followers.

Dost Mohammad's son Akbar becomes the hero of the war, depicted in an epic poem.

Shah Shuja, allegedly the British puppet, emerges with new dignity and many locals are prepared to support him after the foreign force departs.

Fresh and horrifying detail is brought to the description of the destruction wrought by Pollock and Nott's "Army of Retribution" in their bloody campaign.

The main outline of the book, however, tells a story already well documented.

It remains reliant on British sources, even when the author uses them to give an analysis at odds with original interpretations.

The title also ignores the wider strategic results; Britain did rather better than first appearances suggest.

While failing tactically, the country achieved its goal – the protection of India.

In 1855 Dost signed a treaty with British India, receiving arms and subsidies and help in defeating his enemies, the Persians.

The Anglo-Persian War of the following year saw the British prevail, enabling Dost to secure Herat.

"Afghanistan," declared Prime Minister Lord Palmerston in June 1856, "is now the true bulwark of British India".

Incredibly, he was right. The following year the British faced the most serious challenge to their rule in the country: the Sepoy Mutiny.

Afghans unsurprisingly urged Dost to raise the cry of "jihad" and invade the Punjab in order to take advantage of the Raj's hour of danger.

One British observer wrote that Dost had only to give the word and the Punjab would be lost, which may have meant British defeat and exit from India.

Dost never gave that order.

Dalrymple criticises our present campaign from the perspective of 1838-1842.

Today's Afghan veterans will be better able than I am to judge whether he is right.

But if the West were to use Britain's 19th century experience to inform modern policy, it would replace Karzai with a Taliban government, sign an agreement with them to frustrate Russian and Iranian designs in central Asia and evacuate Afghanistan.

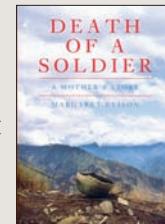
The question is: would this be the right way to apply the lessons of history? ■

RECONNOITRING READING

Death of A Soldier

by Margaret Evison

SUBTITLED *A Mother's Story*, this book demonstrates how difficult it is for a parent to reconcile epithets such as "heroic" and "gallant" with the loss of a child. Lt Mark



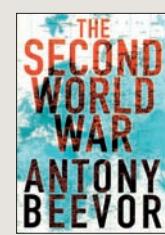
Evison (WG) died of wounds sustained in Afghanistan. Excerpts from his diary help us to see what sort of man he was – an ordinary, nice bloke in trying and difficult circumstances. Though harrowing in parts, this is an important title that should be read in order to understand the sense of tragedy that families feel when a loved one dies. Powerful and moving.

John Corr, ex-RGJ

The Second World War

by Anthony Beevor

A SWEEPING narrative of the entire Second World War, Anthony Beevor's latest offering begins with the conflict in the Far East between Japan, China and the Soviet Union and the Russian defeat of the Japanese in Manchuria in August 1939, before recounting the German invasion of Poland a month later. The major battles are covered with vitality and precision and lesser campaigns such as Finland, Egypt, Greece and Burma are deftly described. A classic military history book which conveys the utter brutality of war. Superbly written.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt

Unearthing Churchill's Secret Army

by Grehan & Mace

THIS book recounts the remarkable bravery of agents from Churchill's Special Operations Executive who were rounded up, interrogated and put to death by the Germans. The exploits of Violet Szabo are famous but who has heard of Brian Rafferty and Diana Bowden, two of many who simply disappeared into a concentration camp? The monsters in Berlin who knew the war was lost yet ordered brutalisation and execution may all be dead now but it is worthwhile nailing their names in a prominent place as "never brought to justice".



Col (Retd) Roger Thompson

617

by Tim Bouquet

I AM unsure whether Tim Bouquet intended to write a homage to the glory days of the famous Dam Busting squadron or a detailed overview of the unit's first tour in Afghanistan.

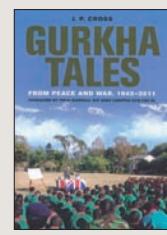
Either way it seems to fail, especially with the author reminding the reader of the "hardships" of living at Kandahar Airfield. At times it was difficult to understand who he was talking about, particularly in one person's case where three different nicknames were used. To be honest, this was a very average and forgettable book on a subject that had real potential.

LCpl Scott Roberts, Londons

Gurkha Tales

by JP Cross

THIS is an eclectic and fascinating collection of autobiographical stories by a legendary retired British officer of the Brigade of Gurkhas. Ranging from the strategic and tactical to the whimsical and occasionally spiritual, the anthology provides unique, first-hand insights into service in the formation dating from the end of the Second World War, through to Malaya, Borneo and the People's Revolution in Laos. The detail of his experiences on bygone operations is written with great clarity and contemporary relevance, and is both refreshing and candid.

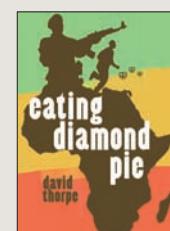


Lt Col Elton Davis, QG Signals

Eating Diamond Pie

by David Thorpe

BASED in Africa, this novel follows ex-British Army officer Tom as he protects charity workers from mercenaries fighting over the country's main export – diamonds.



Despite a slow start the story takes off in the second half, when the hero decides to go after a share of the gems himself with hilarious consequences. Smuggling the booty back to London is fraught with danger and he naively thinks he is the first to come up with the selected method. The book raises some real laughs and also provides a background to the troubles in diamond-producing regions.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

TOUGHNESS TEST:

FIVE PENS WITH BOLD CLAIMS GO HEAD-TO-HEAD

TEST 1: MUCK

A good roll in the Aldershot dirt

Out on top: CRKT's *Elishewitz Tao Ti*

Easily wiped clean.

The underdog: Boker Plus *Multi-purpose pen*

Grooves that gather mud.



TEST 2: MOISTURE

TEST 2: MOISTURE

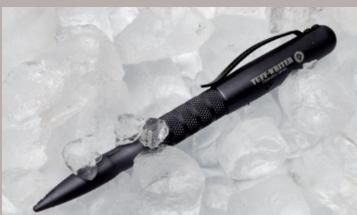
Saturated in the sink for several hours

Out on top: CRKT's *Elishewitz Tao Ti*

No sweat when wet.

The underdog: Smith & Wesson's *Firestarter*

Dodgy writing when damp.



TEST 3: ICE

Plunged to -18 degrees celsius for a day

Out on top: Tuff-Writer's *Operator*

No sign of weakness.

The underdog: Smith & Wesson's *Firestarter*

Cold hampered removal of the cap.



TEST 4: HEAT

Hauled over the coals at *Soldier HQ*

Out on top: Mil-tac *TDP Pen II*

What fire?

The underdog: CRKT's *Elishewitz Tao Ti*

Hard hands needed to unscrew when hot.



TEST 5: THE CRUNCH

Tyres take out the opposition

Out on top: CRKT's *Elishewitz Tao Ti*

Cool and calm under pressure.

The underdog: Boker Plus *Multi-purpose pen*

Undamaged but feels potentially weaker.



BADASS BIRO: TUFF-WRITER'S OPERATOR

Tuff by name, tough by nature and at an average price

SORRY SCRIBE: SMITH & WESSON'S FIRESTARTER

Stick to the firearms

WIN... A BOKER PLUS PEN



● *Soldier* has teamed up with Heinnie Haynes (www.heinnie.com) to offer two readers a Boker Plus *Multi-purpose pen*. To be in with a chance of winning, just tell us how much this piece of kit costs. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk Closing date March 27.

Heinnie Haynes is offering *Soldier* readers a ten per cent discount on all of its products until May 1, 2013. Visit the company's website and enter SOLDIERPEN into the voucher code box at the checkout in order to take advantage of the offer.

TOP 9

Review: Sarah Goldthorpe

As ridiculous as it seems to be pondering the merits of the pen before a readership that handles some of the most cutting-edge gadgets on the planet, there is no denying that mankind's most basic tool still has a place.

The old adage that this kit is "mightier than the sword" may seem laughable in an age of smartphones, laptops and tablet devices, yet here they are on the market.

Log onto the website of any outdoor supplier and alongside the latest webbing, pouches and daysacks is a selection of military markers pimped up to look like long-range sniper rifles.

Stick your head around the door of any exercise command post and there, lying in wait should the unimaginable occur, will be a pen.

These tools may seem well past their sell-by date but new versions continue to be manufactured in order to reach ever-higher specifications.

So presumably purchases are still being made.

With that in mind, *Soldier HQ* put kit supplier Heinnie Haynes' (www.heinnie.com) latest selection of Service scribblers through their paces to see if the pens lived up to the puff.

First up was the priciest pick of the range, CRKT's *Elishewitz Tao Ti*.

With all the high-spec qualities you would expect from a £150 biro, this titanium writer features a heavy cap and grooves which make it comfortable to use even in the most uncomfortable of environmental conditions.

Does that make it worth its significant cost? Probably only if you plan on using it to scribble your memoirs on the front line – an activity not particularly recommended.

Next up, at a tenth of the price but certainly not a tenth of the quality, was the Boker Plus *Multi-purpose pen* – a versatile and comfortable tool which also features a window-breaking device.

After putting the Tuff-Writer and Mil-Tac middle-of-the-range models to the test, both designed to withstand the highest and lowest of temperatures, the *Soldier* team were admittedly struggling to damage any of this kit.

And by the time we got to the Smith & Wesson offering, which doubles as a glass breaker and fire starter but is certainly the biggest faff to unscrew, we were hankering for our iPhones.

All these implements are high quality and can certainly take any abuse thrown at them.

But whether they get enough of an airing these days to justify their state-of-the-art features and hefty price tag is another matter. ■

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SOLDIER SPORT

BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU BREAKS INTO ARMY MARTIAL ARTS MAINSTREAM

PICTURE: GRAEME MAIN



PRIZE FIGHTER

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN Rfn Lewis Van Poetsch (2 Rifles) left the Army as a young soldier his failure to deploy to Afghanistan weighed heavy on his mind.

With so many of his peers facing the challenges of operations in Helmand province the 22-year-old felt honour bound to return to Service life and complete his calling on the front line.

Having rejoined the Armed Forces he served on Op Herrick 15 and with one of his key goals now successfully achieved he is free to concentrate on his other major love – boxing.

Van Poetsch will step out for his second professional bout at Swindon's Oasis Leisure Centre on March 9 and *SoldierSport* met the promising fighter at his gym in Newport to learn more about his career in uniform and aspirations in the ring.

"After leaving I started to miss Army life and the pride that comes with wearing my cap badge," he explained.

"Not going to Afghanistan was on my conscience so I was determined to come back and do a tour.

Deploying to Helmand province was a key factor for me and I think as an infantryman it is important to have that under my belt."

Van Poetsch helped perform a ground-holding role while attached to The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment in what he described as a "fairly quiet tour" in 2011.

His return from theatre allowed him to concentrate on his sporting goals and an opportunity to further his boxing ambitions soon arrived.

"When I came back my initial thought was to join the Army team and compete in the Amateur Boxing Association Championships but I got chatting to a promoter in Swindon and he suggested I turn professional," the light middleweight said.

"It was something I always wanted to do. I had two years out of the ring due to my commitments with deploying but I made my debut last November and won on points."

While Van Poetsch has stepped up his training ahead of his latest bout the Serviceman remains in the dark over the identity of his next opponent.

"At this stage in my career that is what happens," he said. "I will just have to get in the ring and adjust to him in the first round.

"There are a few people in my home town who would like to see me lose so I want to go out and make a statement, force a stoppage and silence my critics.

"I hope to keep going for as long as possible, health and fitness permitting. I've got another fight coming up in May and we'll see what happens afterwards.

"I always wanted to win a title. I'm under no illusions though and there is a long way to go before I can start thinking about that.

"I'm not the finished article; I'm not even a prospect at this stage. But I've got a British ranking and I want to start improving on that.

"I don't want to fight people who are just after a pay cheque, I want to put on

a show and entertain the crowd."

Van Poetsch is in the privileged position of training at St Joseph's Boxing Club, which has flourished in recent times under the expert guidance of coach Tony Borg.

"This is probably one of the best gyms in the country," the Serviceman said.

"Two British champions – Lee Selby and Gary Buckland – train here so it is a great place to be.

"I'm working with guys of all shapes and sizes and they provide great sparring. I also want to go to Floyd

Mayweather's gym in America this summer to get some advice and work with tough Mexican fighters. You can't get experience like that in this

country. I have put some calls in so hopefully I can get out there."

While boxing may seem like his top priority, the fighter remains committed to military life and has nothing but praise for the backing he has received from the chain of command.

He said: "The Army has been brilliant. They have given me the time off so I can do the training that is required and give 110 per cent to the sport.

"When they call me I go in to work, but they have been so supportive.

"I want to stay in the Service for a while yet. I love the pride that comes with wearing the uniform and having served in Afghanistan."

To book tickets for Van Poetsch's fight visit www.kmpromotions.co.uk ■

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Reds focus on trophy hunt

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army women launch their Inter-Services campaign this month on a mission to defend the title they won in spectacular style last season.

A hard-fought 1-1 draw with the Royal Air Force followed by a sensational 7-0 thumping of the Royal Navy saw the Reds reign supreme in 2012 and with football's top prize up for grabs again this month coach Capt Sandra Hodgson (RLC) is hoping for a repeat performance from her all-conquering squad.

Competitive games have been in short supply this year but the team returned to action last month to secure a 2-2 draw with Middlesex in a highly entertaining match at the Aldershot Military Stadium.

A defensive lapse saw the visitors take an early lead before defender

Gnr Jade Clark (RA) grabbed a deserved equaliser shortly after the 15-minute mark.

The Middlesex attack pounced on another error to restore their advantage shortly after the interval before the outstanding Pte Jen Keane (RLC) secured a point with a spectacular effort that flew into the back of the net from 25 yards.

Speaking at full-time Hodgson praised the performance and attitude of her players in what was their first match in nearly three months.

"Middlesex had a strong team out and they put us under a lot of pressure but we produced some fantastic stuff," she told *SoldierSport*.

"Our movement was superb and we kept hold of the ball really well.

"Jen's goal almost broke the back of the net and it was a good showing considering we haven't really been together since November."

Hodgson had to cope with a number

of absentees for the Middlesex clash but hopes to welcome those players back for games against the London Football Association and Kent ahead of the Forces showdown.

She said: "There are a couple of positions up for grabs.

"The girls who came in for this match did a really good job so there is everything to play for.

"I've not seen anything of the RAF or Navy this season but I will watch them in their final games before the Inter-Services.

"This competition is about heart and passion rather than football.

"The light blues are always our toughest opponents. We have got to go out and do a job and I am confident that we have what it takes to win."

The Army start their campaign against the RAF on March 20 at the home of Aldershot Town before travelling to Portsmouth to face the Navy on March 26. ■



Hot shots: Goalkeeper Sgt Rebecca Davies (10 QOGLR, left) and skipper Ssgt Krissy Wright (AGC (RMP))



full throttle

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

HAVING celebrated an eight-year reign as the Army's top enduro team, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers are determined to see their winning run continue in 2013.

With a new campaign looming the off-road racers are in an ideal position to build on their considerable success after securing a host of new backers.

Leading manufacturer KTM will supply the all-important machinery needed for races that can cover 80 to 100 miles a day, Michelin will provide tyres and Malcolm Rathwell Sports will act as helmet and boot sponsors.

And for a team that costs in the region of £60,000 a year to run, such support is crucial.

"It is really hard to get these guys onboard," manager SSgt Tommy Graham told *SoldierSport*.

"They have to get something from it in terms of publicity and us producing decent results.

"That puts a lot of pressure on me as manager. I have to make sure everyone is looking smart at the start of each race and ensure the sponsors get a write-up on everything we do.

"But it is the results that count. All the PR stuff is great but our performances are what really matter.

"We are on a par with the most professional teams in the country but we cannot pay our riders and are only able to select guys within the corps."

Enduro racers compete against the clock in off-road stages that feature an array of obstacles and challenges, similar to a rally.

The REME squad hosts a number of events throughout the season to help raise funds and also stages the annual Natterjack race, which forms part of the British Enduro Championship.

"Being part of this team is a full-time commitment – if we're not racing we are organising something," Graham explained.

"It is an onerous task, to be honest. We compete in the British championship and sprint championship and are hoping for big results in all classes this year.

"We also want to be the best Service team.

"Everyone is a soldier first and the guys here go on operational tours.

"We have to suck it up while they are away and make sure we have good riders in reserve.

"We are lucky that we have a big squad with a strong support staff so we are always able to field a team."

Graham's plans have received a significant boost this year with the return of Sgt Kev Murray, who has previously been ranked among the top ten riders in the country.

The NCO recently deployed to Afghanistan where he was responsible for the maintenance of UAVs and is now back in action after a two-year absence.

"I was with a really good bunch of lads and it was a great tour," he said.

"I managed to do a lot of training, including running a marathon, so I have kept myself fit.

"The REME team really looks after me and I couldn't do any of this without their support"

"The one thing I'm struggling with is my sharpness on the bike but that will come. I've missed competing and I'm really looking forward to riding this season.

"I hope to be in contention for the Army enduro team and I'm in the British squad for a six-day international race in Sardinia.

"There are 20 guys in the group and the top six are selected to take part.

"It all depends on how much riding I can get in. I'm in a high tempo unit but if I get the time on the bike I'm confident I can make it."

In 2004 Murray represented the senior British team in Poland and a year earlier was part of the junior set-up that competed in Brazil. He is determined to join the upper echelons of the sport and believes such opportunities play an important role in Service life.

The soldier added: "I want to get a place in the British top ten. I missed out on the Army championships last year so I will be pushing for that title as well.

"I began racing motocross bikes when I was ten years old. I joined the Armed Forces at 16 and started to get into enduro. I've been doing it ever since.

"I've completed four operational tours during my Service career so I've had to take seasons off here and there.

"The REME team really looks after me and I couldn't do any of this without them.

"This sport is something that definitely keeps me in the Army and it is great to have these opportunities available."

For more information on the outfit visit www.team-reme.com ■



SPORT SHORTS

■ SUPER-fit soldier Maj Julia Tully has celebrated a successful showing at the energy-sapping Wanaka Iron Man race in New Zealand.

The Territorial Army dentist was making her debut in the endurance discipline and came second in the 40-49 female age category in a time of 12hrs 9mins.

A field of 1,450 international and professional athletes entered the race and Tully was the 14th woman to finish the course.

"I am elated – I never thought I would complete it so fast," she said.

"The water was freezing; I was actually waiting for the first hill on the bike to warm up."

■ THE Army saw their hopes of securing another grand slam at the Inter-Services Squash Championships dashed by a determined showing from the Royal Air Force.

With the veterans and under-25s claiming well-earned victories the defending champions looked set for another tournament clean sweep.

But the women slipped to an agonising 3-2 defeat after leading 2-0 before the men relinquished their crown when Flt Lt Damien May triumphed in the competition's deciding match.

■ LIFE in the Royal Army Physical Training Corps has become a family affair for the Slade-Jones brothers.

With Gareth and Daryl already forging strong careers in the unit, youngest sibling Rhydian joined the fold after recently completing his PTI class one course and transferring from the Royal Engineers.

The family name is well known within Army rugby circles and all three soldiers have represented the Service at senior level.

Gareth was part of the victorious Defence Rugby World Cup squad in 2011 and is now the team's conditioning coach while Daryl has helped train the RAPTC and Army under-23 sides.

"We are all proud that we are now serving under the same cap badge," Gareth said. "The prestigious nature of the corps and the selection process prior to passing into the RAPTC makes it that little bit more special."

■ THE Army Mountaineering Association is looking for athletes to take part in next month's Support Command South climbing competition.

The event will be held at the Reading Climbing Centre on April 17. Call SSgt Chris Morley (REME) on military 94251 2549 for more details.



Winning start: Army forward LCpl Woody Woods (RLC) takes the attack to the Royal Air Force

Army eye cup glory

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army under-23s took a giant step towards retaining their Inter-Services football crown with a 2-0 win over the Royal Air Force in the tournament's opening fixture.

Goals from Sig Luke Noble (1 UK ADSR) and Spr Mikey Williams (39 Engr Regt) fired the Reds to victory in what was a tight encounter at RAF Cosford.

Chances were at a premium in the early exchanges as both sides made a nervous start and the lack of composure had a major impact on the quality of play.

The Army were the first to threaten when LCpl Woody Woods (17 Port and Maritime Regt, RLC) pounced on a poor clearance but fired straight at goalkeeper LAC Damien Mulhall on the half-hour mark.

Sig Sean Elkington (10 Sig Regt) had an effort well saved at the near post moments later before the soldiers took the lead from the penalty spot.

Central defender LCpl Dec Shuttleworth (HCR) saw a header crash back off the crossbar and from the resulting scramble SAC Marc Begg was penalised for a handball.

Noble emphatically despatched the spot kick to give his team a 1-0 lead at the break before the Reds surrendered a gilt-edged opportunity to their opponents within minutes of the restart.

Shuttleworth was harshly punished for a handling in the area but RAF skipper SAC Ben Fitzmartin blazed the resulting penalty over the bar.

With the light blues chasing the game, the visitors – spearheaded by the superb Woods and Noble – looked increasingly dangerous on the break.

And the mounting threat reaped dividends in the final stages as Noble used his pace and power to run clear and set up substitute Williams to score with the final kick of the match.

"It took us 25 minutes to get into the game," coach Cpl Kev Hanbury (RLC) told *SoldierSport*.

"We knew beforehand what it was going to be like but once we got the first goal we settled down.

"It wasn't the best performance but it was a great team effort with lots of hard work and energy.

"The lads knew how to approach the contest and I told them to keep going as we would get the breakthrough in the end. All we need to do now is beat the Royal Navy; that is our focus.

"In the past we've been in situations where we have needed results to go in our favour but this season we want to go out and do it ourselves.

"We have only got three players left from last year's team but the guys who have come into the squad have done a great job."

The Army were in action against the Navy as this issue went to press. ■



Down and out: LCpl Leda Jope (RE) tries to build some forward momentum during the Army's 24-13 defeat at the hands of Oxford University

Students sting misfiring Reds

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

HEAD coach SSgt Axel Rees (REME) saw his first game in charge of the Army rugby union side end in defeat as Oxford University recorded a surprise win in Aldershot.

An experimental Reds line-up struggled to match the intensity of the students, who crossed for four tries to stun the hosts and secure a 24-13 victory.

Rees decided to blood a number of new faces in the clash but the fresh injection of talent failed to inspire the Inter-Services champions as they struggled for momentum throughout.

Fly half Pte James Read (2 R Welsh) was unlucky to see an early penalty hit the post and with a second kick falling short just minutes later, the visitors seized their

chance as flanker Gus Jones crashed over for a converted try.

Read found his range with the boot to fire an immediate response but the Army suffered another blow on the stroke of half-time as wing Sean Morris rounded off a sweeping Oxford attack to score.

The problems continued after the break as visiting scrum half Sam Egerton collected a clearance and ran through a lacklustre Reds defence to touch down.

Prop LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh) stopped the rot following a powerful surge from the forwards but the momentum was soon lost as Sam Hitchens ghosted home within minutes of the restart.

LCpl Leda Jope (RE) scored a consolation at the death but the damage had already been done on what was a miserable night for the home side.

"It was disappointing as we don't like to

lose," Rees told *SoldierSport*.

"I wanted to look at some new players and I rested a few of the senior guys. Oxford are a decent side; they are no mugs and I'm not making any excuses for our performance.

"We had three days of training beforehand and everything was clicking into place. However, it all went wrong on the night.

"It is better for that to happen now rather than against the Royal Air Force or Royal Navy.

"I think a little bit of complacency may have set in and I'm hoping I can sort that out straight away."

The Army were in action against Cambridge University as this issue went to press and have away fixtures against Worcester on March 6 and Bedford on March 13. ■



Runners raise the bar for winter season

SERVICE athletes excelled in the field during a busy month of cross-country action.

Around 500 soldiers lined up for the Army championships at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where SSgt Gaz Watkins (RE) triumphed in the men's race and SSgt Sophie Morris (R Signals) won the women's event.

"Overall it was a great success with nearly 400 runners in the male contest and just under 100 in the female competition," said Maj (Retd) Jim Wood, secretary of the Army Athletics Association.

"The strength in depth within the veterans' category is particularly good at present but the most important aspect for us was the demonstration of the grass-roots popularity of the sport."

The success continued at the Inter-Services competition, where the Army won three out of four team categories and eight individual medals.



Fighting force: The Army's Brazilian jiu-jitsu set-up has enjoyed a successful start with more than 50 personnel joining the ranks since it launched

Soldiers master the art of grappling

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army Martial Arts Association has welcomed a new addition to its ever-expanding fold in the shape of Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

More than 50 soldiers have already joined the sport's ranks and monthly seminars are now being staged to ensure the growth continues.

Based on grappling and wrestling, the discipline promotes the belief that a smaller person can successfully compete with a bigger, stronger opponent by using leverage and proper technique.

"No punching or kicking is allowed and around 80 per cent of fights are decided on the ground," said Maj Don MacIntyre (Int Corps), the officer in charge of the Army set-up.

"It is a new sport for the Service and we are hoping there will be a category for us at this year's Army Martial Arts Championships. We want to get as many people involved as possible.

"A lot of guys have been training in jiu-jitsu for a long time but this is an opportunity to get everyone together and further what we do.

"In the sparring sessions you can give 100 per cent and you realise very quickly what works.

"We now have 54 soldiers in the group and it has grown really quickly.

"Our aim is to compete as an Army team and we are looking to stage a Combined Services tournament as well."

Sgt Mark Badham (AGC (MPGS)) is one of the squad's leading lights and reached the quarter-final stage at the Rio de Janeiro World Championships last year.

"Before the competition I was training with a jiu-jitsu master, running ten kilometres a day and doing a lot of sparring," he told *SoldierSport*.

"It was a surreal experience and a totally different atmosphere to what I am used to. I have also competed in the British and English Opens.

"The great thing is that this is not a barbaric or brutal sport, it is a controlled martial art.

"The Army set-up has grown from just three people to 54 in the space of five or six months.

"We now want to push the squad forward and in time we will hopefully go to America to compete against the US military team."

Anyone interested in taking part in the sport of Brazilian jiu-jitsu should email donald.macintyre924@mod.uk ■

ARMY INDOOR TENNIS

THE Service's top tennis players returned to action at the annual indoor championships in Aldershot last month.

A strong field gathered for the two-day event with 56 matches being staged due to the high turnout.

Experience triumphed over youth in the men's final as Lt Col (Retd) Nigel Watts enjoyed a 6-3 6-2 win over Fus Dan Pethig (1 R Welsh, pictured right).

Cpl Hilary Greig (AMS, pictured left) retained her women's title from last season with a 6-3 6-1 victory against Cpl Hannah Bacon (AGC (SPS)).

The full Army championships will be staged in July with the Inter-Services following in August.



Racers taste Dakar delight

Report: Richard Long

INJURED personnel from the Race2Recovery project have made history by becoming the first disabled team to complete the world's toughest race – the Dakar Rally.

The Wildcat vehicle crewed by Maj Matt O'Hare (RRF) and Cpl Phillip Gillespie (1 R Irish) crossed the finish line in Santiago, Chile to mark the end of a punishing 15-day quest in the unforgiving South American climate.

Starting in the Peruvian capital of Lima the rally featured a 9,000-kilometre route across extreme desert and mountain terrain, with drivers facing a minimum of ten hours behind the wheel each day.

The arduous conditions saw the team's three other Wildcats fall by the wayside but with the final vehicle navigating the full course the trip has

been billed as a major success.

"I'm ecstatic and am so proud and pleased for the whole Race2Recovery set-up," O'Hare said.

"Our mechanics and support crew kept us in the rally and their work and dedication was second to none.

"The drivers and co-drivers who were forced to retire became an integral part of our support network as we continued the challenge, so this is really a joint success.

"To complete the Dakar Rally is an incredible feat in itself but to become the first ever disability team to cross the finish line lifts that achievement to a whole other level."

The first car eliminated was that of Capt Tony Harris (RRF) and Cathy Derousseaux, who were disqualified in the second stage after mechanical problems forced them to miss a number of waypoints.

Justin Birchall and Cpl Tom Neathway (2 Para) retired after a punishing fourth section, while Ben Gott and US Marine SSgt Mark Zambon saw their challenge come to a sudden end when they hit a ditch at speed and rolled their vehicle.

"We have found out first-hand why they call the Dakar Rally the hardest race in the world," Gillespie said.

"It has pushed every single one of us to our limits and beyond.

"Our team motto is 'beyond injury – achieving the extraordinary' and we've done just that.

"I hope that we've been able to inspire people who may be facing difficulties and problems through injury or illness."

The challenge was also raising money for Tedworth House Personnel Recovery Centre. Donations can be made at www.race2recovery.com ■





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Reclaims UK is working closely with the Armed Forces to help give back to our British soldiers. Reclaims UK recently sponsored The Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day at Sandown Park and we are working closely with various charities to help raise awareness.



Mr & Mrs Allen (39 Regt RA) presenting the Winners Trophy at the Royal Artillery Gold Cup

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As sponsors of the Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day at Sandown Park on Friday 17th February 2012, we were able to invite the two couples as our guests on the day. It was a fantastic day where they were able to choose the best turned out horse and given the opportunity to go up into the Royal Box and watch our race. The day was a huge success and is a superb event organised by Major General Andrew Ritchie, Chairman of the Royal Artillery Steeplechase Committee, and we hope to continue our support for the event again this year.

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final word



We asked troops at the British Army Training Unit Suffield what they gain from a posting across the Atlantic

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: GRAEME MAIN



Cpl Ross Meats (REME)

Working on AS90s is a challenge but being out here is a brilliant learning experience as we're flat out all the time and improving our skills. There is also a good chance to do some skiing and other types of adventurous training at Trail's End Camp that I wouldn't get elsewhere. It's all good stuff; gaining more knowledge, doing some unique activities and seeing a different country.



Cpl Thomas Voller (REME)

The workload of a vehicle mechanic in the United Kingdom or anywhere else just does not compare to the job out in Canada. Here, we'll be doing work on platforms that is only possible in this region due to access and because of that we learn a hell of a lot. We are also given the chance to play ice hockey and go skiing, which can't be bad at all.



Cpl Josh Gore-Rowe (REME)

I volunteered to come out here because I knew I would get to strip vehicles right down and it would be a great way to gain experience on different platforms. I work on the Challenger 2 line and I'll go back more useful to the Army. In the coming weeks I will also hopefully get to do some adventurous training where I'll probably have a go at dog sledding or skiing.



Cfn Siobhan Spiers (REME)

At Batus I will spend time improving my skills while undertaking a huge amount of work. We have plans to use our weekends to travel around and we definitely want to do some dog sledding at Trail's End Camp. The things on offer here are well worth trying and it is brilliant to be able to visit places like this, see different things and use our skills on challenging tasks.



Cfn Chris Dunning (REME)

Canada is a great experience for people like me who actually get to do our job rather than just sitting on camp in the UK. It's long hours but I don't mind because I get time off. There is a real sense of satisfaction when you fix a vehicle but it does break me when we send out a shiny platform and it comes straight back in for repair after being damaged on exercise!



Gnr Michael Cosgrove (RA)

It's really good to be in Canada – especially the Batus cookhouse! It is vital that we get the AS90s ready for firing because that's the whole point of the training on Exercise Prairie Thunder. I wouldn't mind doing a bit of ice climbing while I am out here as well – on civvy street you wouldn't get to do this sort of stuff unless you were a millionaire.



LCpl Jonny Godzicz (REME)

Out here I've learnt to play ice hockey and have had lots of opportunities to do adventurous training. I've also had a chance to see places such as Calgary, Las Vegas and Vancouver as well as learning to surf at Tofino beach. In addition to my job at Batus I'm getting to all these places; it's one of those experiences you just wouldn't get outside the Army.



Cfn Ben Hollingsworth (REME)

I'm hoping to go snowboarding and am also signed up for ice climbing, which is something I wouldn't be able to do anywhere else. These activities would be expensive as paying civilians. I'm working on the Challenger armoured repair and recovery vehicle, which is giving me additional knowledge. There's much more going on out here than in other locations and it's good to be so busy.

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