

# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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# SOLDIER

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**SOLDIER** is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Wyndham (Roche) Ltd. Print contract managed by Williams Lea.

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# Keeping personnel in the know

I ever feel frustrated that soldiers often find out about the major changes affecting them via the media, that of personnel themselves must be even greater.

In an age where speculation about the future size and strength of the British Army prevails – particularly on social media – it can be difficult to decipher between fact and fiction, with MoD statements often at odds with online news stories and rumours.

*Soldier* remains here to clarify, and add meaningful detail, to all the key changes affecting UK troops.

After the chain of command, we are your primary means of asking questions and getting the information you need.

And while we might not always be first to a story – usually having to wait until something has gone public before being privy to the detail – we take pride in making sure that what we do print is as accurate and useful to our readers as possible.

If we are not mentioning something you have heard about, write to *Talkback* (see page 55 for contact details) or drop us a message on Facebook.

We can put your questions directly to the top and end the guesswork that often comes from the frantic world of online news. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

## Where to find *Soldier* magazine...

### Printed copies ...

...ARE distributed to every Army site at the start of each month.

### Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

ALONG with news and glimpses behind the scenes at *Soldier*, we publish a link to the magazine at [www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine](http://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine) and [@soldiermagazine](http://@soldiermagazine) on Twitter.

### Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at [www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk) Just click on "read it now".

### Purchase

IF you're not in the Army you can buy *Soldier* from your high street magazine retailer or directly from us at [subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk) (£23 for 12 issues in the UK).



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Picture: Rogan Thomson

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When have you ever seen such a mix of Nato forces working together in such close proximity and at such speed?



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"I have fought in every body armour version since 2003 – this is light years ahead"

Virtus improvements impress ranks p42

## The Army's National Charity

Last year, we spent some £8.4million on delivering grants to nearly 5,000 soldiers, veterans and their immediate families, and provided funding to 88 charities, which deliver specialist support on our collective behalf.



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Tel: 020 7901 8900. Email: [fundraising@soldierscharity.org](mailto:fundraising@soldierscharity.org)

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Picture: Sgt Rupert Eerie, RLC



## MoD sidesteps Larium ban

### Campaigners express disappointment at decision

**T**HE anti-malaria drug Larium will only be prescribed to troops after a face-to-face evaluation, the MoD has said.

Serving and former personnel have reported a range of side effects after taking the medication, including depression, anxiety and nightmares.

Responding to a report on the issue by the House of Commons defence committee, the department said it was in the process of revising its malaria prevention policy and that in future, no anti-malarial drugs would be supplied without a personal risk assessment performed by a healthcare professional.

One of the practices that the committee had criticised was the previous system of using patients' medical records to run assessments.

In addition the MoD said it would now audit those returning from deployments in malaria zones.

However, it said the committee's request for it to review all cases since 2013 was not practicable.

Most troops deployed to malaria zones already receive alternatives to Larium, also known as mefloquine.

"We have a duty to protect our personnel from malaria and in some cases Larium, which continues to be recommended as safe by respected bodies including Public Health

England, is the most effective way of doing that," an MoD spokesman said.

But campaigners have expressed dismay that the department has not agreed with the committee that the drug should only be a "last resort".

Mandy Bostwick, a specialist trauma psychotherapist working with ex-soldiers suffering from mental health problems, said she had seen the devastating side effects of the medication first-hand and described the outcome as "disappointing".

"I'm at the coalface talking to veterans who have PTSD and Larium adds into that mix," she commented.

"I've sat in meetings with family members in floods of tears. Many of the cases I've come across were not properly assessed and the tablets were handed out like Smarties."

"It would be good to see the MoD protect those who protect us."

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease which causes fever, headaches, vomiting and diarrhoea and can prove fatal.

● **THE MoD has set up a hotline for those worried about having been prescribed Larium.**

Contact the confidential service on 0306 7705059 or [sgdpdhc-mefloquinespoc@mod.uk](mailto:sgdpdhc-mefloquinespoc@mod.uk) if you think you have been affected.

66  
This  
threatens  
the very  
fabric of  
military life  
99  
TALKBACK  
PAGE 55

## BE A QUITTER

■ SERVICE smokers are being urged to ditch the fags and join in with the NHS's annual "Stoptober" drive.

The initiative is based on the principle that those who manage to beat their cravings for 28 days are five times more likely to quit for good.

As well as the usual app and email support, this year's campaign features a new Facebook messenger "bot" that participants can chat to when they need extra motivation.

Visit [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/stoptober](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/stoptober)

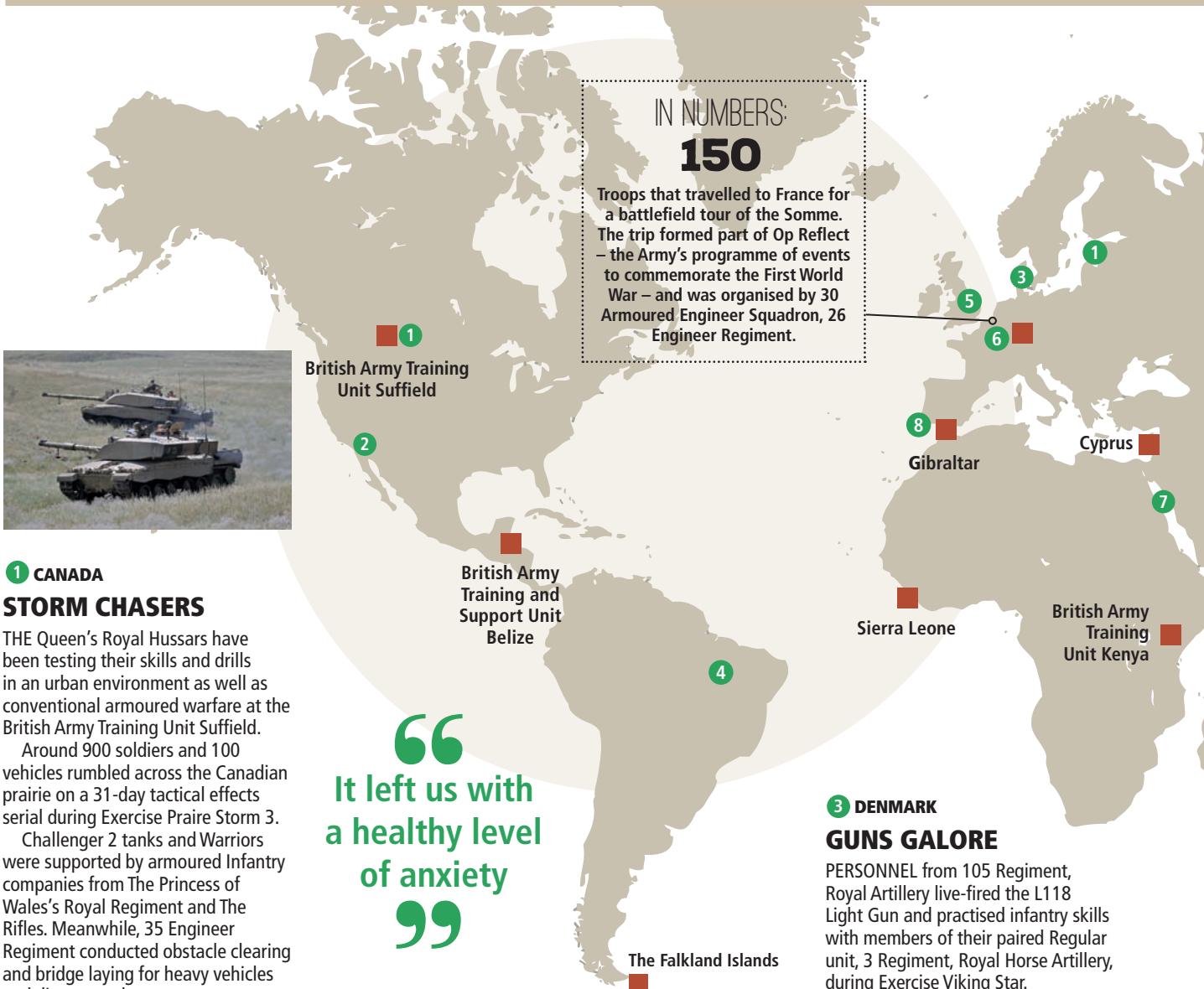


## BREW?

■ FORCES charity SSAFA is calling on troops to get behind its annual Big Brew Up this month.

The campaign takes place between October 3 and 9 and encourages the public to raise funds by getting together and putting the kettle on.







**5 UK**

**ITALIANS ENJOY PISA THE ACTION**

BRITISH and Italian soldiers have taken part in a joint exercise at the Stanford training area in Norfolk.

The test saw 36 members of the elite Savoia Cavalleria Regiment jump in from a C130 Hercules aircraft that flew directly in from Pisa airport.

Members of A Squadron, The Household Cavalry Regiment conducted drills with the Italian personnel in dismounted reconnaissance and urban warfare. Capt Fabrizio Giannuzzi said: "This is the first time we have ever jumped into England and it was really amazing."

**6 FRANCE**

**WOUNDED VETS CRACK MEGA CHALLENGE**

A TEAM of wounded, injured and sick personnel have completed one of the world's toughest downhill mountain bike events – the legendary Megavalanche Challenge.

The group, based at the Phoenix House Recovery Centre, have become the first disabled team to complete the French Alps race.

"It was an amazing experience but hard," said Simon Taylor (right), a former sergeant in the Light Dragoons who suffered multiple injuries in an IED blast. "I did wonder for a moment why, having broken everything and lost a leg, I was doing it."



**7 SAUDI ARABIA**

**PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE**

FOUR Muslim soldiers have completed the Hajj pilgrimage at the invitation of the Saudi royal family.

The troops were selected by an Armed Forces Muslim Association ballot.

"For me, this is like coming back to my roots. This is what makes me a British Muslim and there is no contradiction in that," commented attendee LCpl Musa Sanyang (Rifles).



**4 BRAZIL**

**AMAZON ADVENTURE**

A TEAM of adventurers from 1 Armoured Medical Regiment travelled to Brazil to tackle a kayak expedition in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

The 12-strong party started their journey near the Venezuelan border and travelled 189 kilometres along one of the many tributaries that feed into the mighty Amazon river.

"Knowing that we stood little chance of encountering any other humans in the forest left us with a healthy level of anxiety and excitement," said expedition leader Sgt David Cousins (PWRR).



**8 GIBRALTAR**

**SET FOR THE RIDE OF THEIR LIVES**

TROOPS from 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group, Royal Engineers have embarked on a 300-hour cycle ride from the Royal Albert Hall to Gibraltar to celebrate their corps' tercentenary.

The nine-strong team were aiming to cover 150 miles a day – 1,800 miles in total – and were due to complete the journey as this edition hit the shelves.

Visit [www.justgiving.com/teams/Ex-Sapper-Vuelta](http://www.justgiving.com/teams/Ex-Sapper-Vuelta) to help them reach their £10,000 fundraising target.

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"FROM NAVY SEAL  
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# "One soldier even had a shard of metal in his meal"

– Yet more food fury, pages 55-58



Pictures: Andy Burn



## JONES' CURTAIN CALL

■ BRITAIN'S Got Talent champion and Band of the Household Cavalry trombonist LCpl Richard Jones will make his panto debut at Swansea Grand Theatre this Christmas.

The soldier (pictured), who wowed judges with his conjuring tricks and illusions, will play Merlin the Magician in *Sleeping Beauty*.

The show is scheduled to run from December 9 to January 8, 2017 and follows his appearance in the Royal Variety Performance and in West End magic show *Impossible*.



## Sappers reflect on recovery

Army breaks new ground to make structure safe

ROYAL Engineer demolition experts have spoken out about their contribution to rescue efforts at Didcot Power Station, after the body of the final missing man was retrieved from the site last month.

A team from 101 Engineer Regiment (EOD) was called in to assist in the weeks following the structure's collapse, in which one contractor was killed and three others trapped under the rubble, sparking a six-month recovery operation.

In a demolition industry world-first, the sappers deployed with a remote control system light-wheeled tractor – a piece of kit that was originally designed for excavating mines – to clear debris and place charges under the highly unstable 40,000-tonne boiler house.

"Fortunately, just a month before the task, four of us had

completed the course on this equipment, which at the time felt a little pointless as it was due to go into storage," said section commander Cpl Terry Burke. "How wrong we were."

Throughout the seven-week mission the troops worked closely with Thames Valley Police and other civilian authorities.

But it was only after the building had been destroyed that they realised the full significance of what they had achieved.

"Not only had this task never been done before by the Army, it had never been done by anyone," continued Cpl Burke.

"The equipment had never been used in this way."

"The most important thing out of all of this, though, was the fact that with our help the demolition was sped up, enabling the recovery of the missing men and giving closure to their families."

It had never been done by anyone

“

## NEW VOW ON CLAIMS AGAINST TROOPS

■ CRIMINAL inquiries into soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan will never be repeated, the defence secretary has said.

In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, Michael Fallon announced that the government will set a "proper cut-off" after which no new cases can be brought to stop the threat of legal action hanging over troops.

"It has been a witch-hunt," the politician told the newspaper.

The comments follow growing public anger around the work of the Iraq Historical Allegations Team (IHAT) and Op Northmoor, the Royal Military Police investigation into cases of alleged unlawful killing and mistreatment in Afghanistan.

The minister added his assurance that the government would foot the legal bill of any individual who is charged.

● Tough call – page 49

## COMMONWEALTH CALL

■ COMMONWEALTH nationals without UK residency no longer need to have lived in Britain for five years before applying to join certain trades in the Army, thanks to a rule change.

Physically fit candidates who are able to communicate well in English and can self-fund travel to a development and selection centre will be considered for a number of specialist roles.

Visit the Army website for details.

● Skin deep – pages 22-25

A SERVICE snapper beat some of the best photographers in Europe to make the final of a TV talent show. Sgt Rupert Frere (RLC, pictured) was among 12 contestants to appear on Sky Arts' *Master of Photography*. The series was filmed in Rome and saw the participants complete various challenges in front of judges. London-based Sgt Frere missed out on the top prize of 150,000 euros but described the experience as "amazing."

# Want to help soldiers, veterans and their families? It's easier than you think.

**Tick one:**

- Run a marathon
- Climb Everest
- Walk to the South Pole
- Naan of the above

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**"I thought I had seen a lot in 17 years of service"**

– Army helps Homeless World Cup, page 82



## Riding to remember



**S**OLDIERS, veterans and civilians have travelled to the Somme to retrace the route of the only cavalry action of the century-old campaign.

Maj Will MacGill (RE), Maj David Puckey (RLC), LCpl Stephanie Kolvik (AGC (SPS)) and LCpl James French (QDG) were among 15 equestrians to commemorate the charge at High Wood, which saw the 7th Dragoon Guards and the

20th Deccan Horse seize and hold the position near Bazentin.

Over four days the group followed the paths the mounted troops would have taken and laid wreaths at several sites en route, including the Thiepval Memorial.

LCpl Kolvik described the journey as "a very humbling and proud experience".

● Somme 100 – page 18

## Paratroopers go All American



THE bond between 16 Air Assault Brigade and the 82nd

All American Airborne Division was further strengthened during a groundbreaking exercise in Louisiana.

Having embedded with their counterparts from 1-508 Parachute Infantry Battalion, troops from B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment conducted a night jump near Fort Polk in adverse weather conditions.

The serial saw the Service personnel land on a contested drop

zone before securing a village from a mock enemy.

They went on to complete the most integrated battalion live-firing package ever conducted between the two armies.

"It proved to be a great success," commented Maj Jon Cox, officer commanding B Coy.

"American observer mentors described the company's activity as outstanding and its influence activities as 'the best seen at Joint Readiness Training Centre'."



■ AIRBORNE engineers helped the Royal Air Force test the capabilities of the Airbus A400M Atlas by constructing a specially-softened runway. Troops from 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment built the 1.7-kilometre temporary landing zone at Rock Barracks in Suffolk ahead of a variety of trials with the platform. "The land was rough grass and scrub when we started and to build the runway from scratch took three weeks," said SSgt Nick Broom, who oversaw its design and construction. "Working out how to soften the surface to achieve the strict tolerances needed took a lot of effort." The A400M is already in service with the RAF, gradually replacing the C130 Hercules.

### IN MUSIC...



"A triumphant farewell from one of the most innovative artists of recent times"

PAGES 70-75



Picture: Cpl Georgina Coupe, RLC

## MEDICS DROP IN

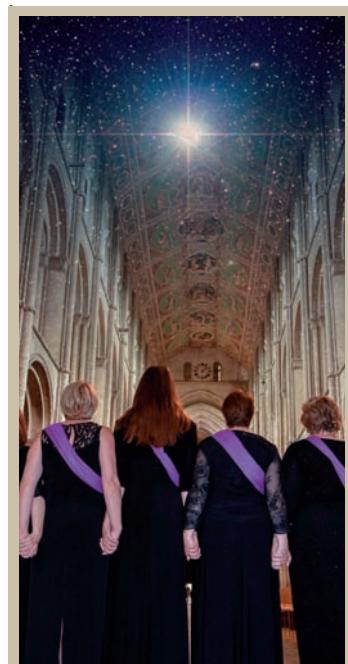
■ RESERVISTS from 144 Parachute Medical Squadron tested their ability to run a Role 1 medical facility during Exercise Serpent's Warrior at the Stanta ranges in Norfolk.

The personnel treated simulated casualties with injuries ranging from gunshot wounds to infected insect bites using the lightweight facilities the British Army would deploy in support of airborne operations.

The annual camp brought together the squadron's four detachments which are based in London, Glasgow, Cardiff and Nottingham.

Together, they form the only Army Reserve medical unit with a parachute capability.

“  
It was  
a very  
humbling  
and proud  
experience  
”



## CHRISTMAS CHOIR

■ THE Military Wives Choirs will be performing across the UK in the run-up to the festive season.

The Home For Christmas tour will visit seven cathedrals around the country at the end of November.

Tickets cost £25 and are on sale via [www.ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)



## "When I go back I'll be confident taking on any patrol actions"

– Fire team commanders course hits mark, page 90



### FRIENDLY HIRE

■ THE MoD has agreed to loan 18 heavy equipment transporters to the US Army.

An initial three-year deal has been agreed and the move will allow American personnel to move armoured assets, namely the Abrams M1 battle tank, around Europe.

The UK vehicle has a different road wheel set-up and manoeuvre configuration to the US variant that allows greater access and freedom of transport on Germany's roads.

The loan will not impact on the operational ability of the British Army and the trucks can be recalled at short notice if needed.

### BRADFORD SALUTES FALLEN SOLDIER

■ A ROAD in West Yorkshire has been named after a Serviceman who died in action in Afghanistan.

Pte Christopher Kershaw (Yorks), 19, was the youngest of six soldiers to lose their lives when their Warrior armoured vehicle was struck by an IED back in March 2012.

To honour his memory part of a new housing development near to his childhood home in Bradford was named Christopher Close in a ceremony attended by his family.



A PERSONAL VIEW FROM SARA BAADE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ARMY FAMILIES FEDERATION...

### MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

THE future accommodation model – details of which were set out in last month's issue – could bring some welcome flexibility to the current housing offer.

But it was clear from our recent survey that the proposal as it stands has little support from Army families.

Among the concerns is the idea of having to rent a property privately.

The most quoted reason for not wanting to do this is uncertainty in the market, and worries over how much we will have to dip into our own pockets to afford a suitable home.

Respondents were also doubtful whether civilian landlords would understand the needs of Service families.

AFF shares these apprehensions, particularly given recent experiences with Mears – the company currently responsible for sourcing substitute Service family accommodation (SSFA) rentals.

We know that Mears has often struggled to find suitable properties.

At the moment we only have

66  
HOW WILL IT WORK IF WE ARE ALREADY STRUGGLING?  
99

around 900 families in this sort of housing but the current plan could bring thousands more into this market.

How would that work if we are already struggling?

Our organisation has a lot of questions we are seeking answers to.

How deep will we have to dig into our own pockets to make this work? How will the market cope with the change in stamp duties? Have MoD calculations taken into account the fact many of us have several children, pets and additional needs.

Most importantly, will there be enough properties for us all?

AFF is used to providing robust responses to families' concerns, but when it comes to this rental proposal we have more unanswered questions than answers, which is unsatisfactory.

We continue to work with policy makers and the devil will undoubtedly be in the detail.

[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

## Vets in need won't lose out, says Combat Stress

MILITARY charity Combat Stress is to axe its regional welfare officers following a review of its services.

The organisation has seen demand for clinical referrals rise by 71 per cent in the last five years so has decided to end general support and instead focus on specialist mental health treatment.

Chief executive Sue Freeth said the move would prevent duplication of effort and that no ex-Service personnel would lose out as a result.

"Our decision will ensure veterans are supported by organisations that are expert in their respective areas," she commented.

"The Royal British Legion and Poppy

Scotland's pop-in centres will provide general welfare support while our 15 community teams – comprised of occupational therapists and community psychiatric nurses – will continue to provide outpatient treatment services from these locations and act as a focal point for those with complex issues."

The changes will be implemented in March 2017. They follow a drop in donations last year, but Mrs Freeth attributed this to a previous spike caused by the Tower of London poppy project in 2014/15.

The surge in demand for Combat Stress's services has been attributed to the legacy of operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

On average, veterans of the latter conflict approach the charity for help within two years of leaving the Army.

■ COMBAT Stress will be holding its second Armed Forces and families' race day at Wincanton Racecourse on October 23.

Children under 17 go free and adult tickets can be purchased in advance for £16 at [www.wincantonracecourse.co.uk](http://www.wincantonracecourse.co.uk)

In 2014 the event raised £50,000 to help the charity.



# "It's only when you do extreme things that you see a person for who he is"

– Para Reserves put to test, pages 44-46



## Dickie's light-hearted legacy

Former cartoonist passes away but humourous artwork lives on

**R**ETIRED Soldier doodler, John "Dickie" Bird, has died at the age of 88.

The ex-colonel's colourful creations peppered the pages of the official British Army magazine for more than 20 years, covering just about every topic imaginable.

From illustrating our readers' letters to providing a light-hearted take on news stories, Dickie's pictures always helped to raise a smile – and the odd eyebrow – even in the most testing of times.

Having served a full military career himself, the former Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) member certainly had enough material at his disposal.

"It's not always been easy to capture the right tone because the job of a soldier deals with quite a lot of sombre occasions," he commented when he retired from drawing duty back in 2013.

"It's the doodle that I was most interested in,



and seeing the funny or ridiculous side of life and recording it for posterity."

The balance was always brilliantly struck. And the result is a body of sketches that are likely to strike a chord for generations to come.

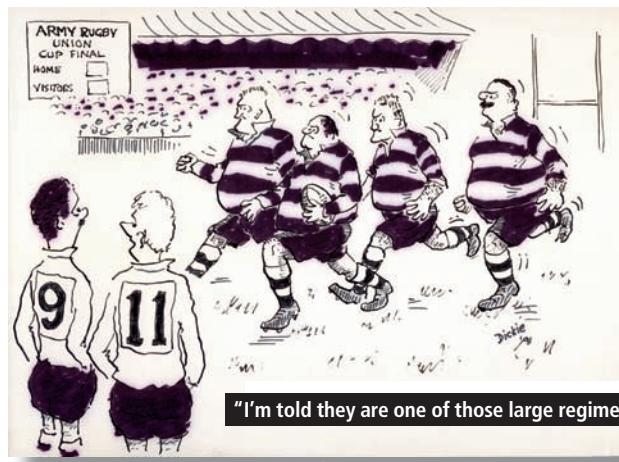
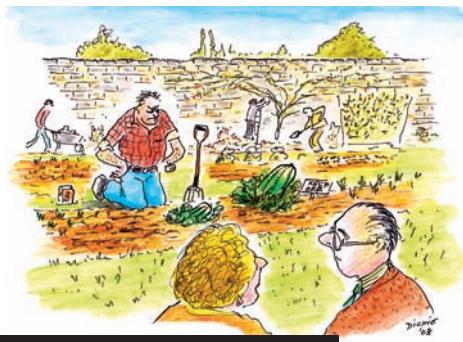
You will be missed, Dickie.

## BLACK AND WHITE ISSUES

A taste of the *Soldier* team's favourite Dickie cartoons from the archive, many of which still have resonance today...

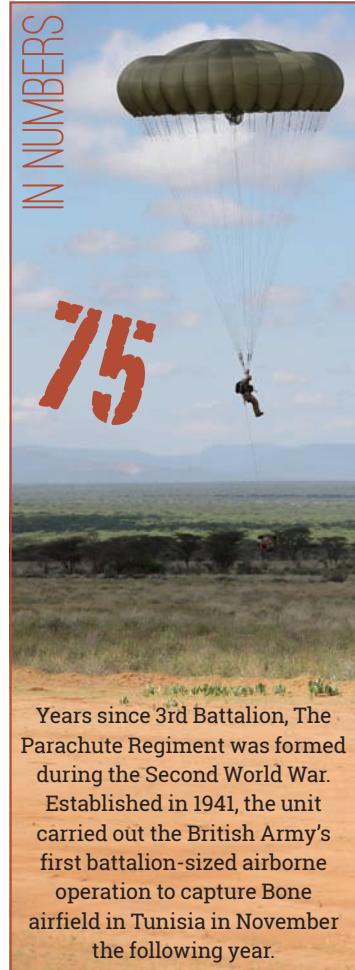


"It's not working, doctor. His marrow is so much smaller than Cpl Jones's, he's getting even more depressed."



This ends my 20 year with Soldier. Happy days! D. G. 11

Fond farewell: A note sent to *Soldier* by Dickie along with his final cartoon submission



Years since 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment was formed during the Second World War. Established in 1941, the unit carried out the British Army's first battalion-sized airborne operation to capture Bone airfield in Tunisia in November the following year.

## SOUTH-WEST SUPPORT

■ A WEBSITE featuring information on health, welfare and financial services has been launched for members of the military community in Devon.

To find out more visit the portal at [www.devonforcesfamily.org.uk](http://www.devonforcesfamily.org.uk)

## KEEGAN DIVIDES FANS

■ THE new star of BBC One drama *Our Girl* has split television audiences.

Michelle Keegan has replaced Lacey Turner as feisty medic Cpl Georgie Lane but her addition to the show has not pleased everyone, with some taking to Twitter to complain she doesn't compare to the previous star.

Shot on location in South Africa, the second series has seen the ex-*Coronation Street* actress and her comrades deploy to Kenya on a dangerous humanitarian mission.

The cast trained with medics from 22 Field Hospital, Royal Army Medical Corps to hone their military skills and drills.

Catch the last episode on October 5.



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## "When it comes to England all I can do is keep performing"

– Roko eyes international return, pages 78-79



## Communication is the key

Troops urged to update bosses on their military service

**R**ESERVE personnel are being reminded of the importance of the employer notification process in creating a trusting bond between the Army and the outside business world.

An increasing number of workplaces now have a greater understanding of how personnel operate and are acknowledging the value their training and experience brings.

More than 1,000 employers have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and with many improving HR policies and granting extra leave for military commitments, the Service is keen to see the relationship extend both ways.

The key point is to ensure bosses are informed of when the main training camps and weekends will take place.

"Letting employers know each year

when the principal training activities are given to them an opportunity to reschedule shifts, rotas or holidays to enable troops to attend," said Director Reserves, Maj Gen John Crackett.

"If an employer has not noted that an employee is a Reservist the annual letter may prompt a conversation about their service which may lead to better understanding and more support and recognition for the individual.

"But if they are not aware this could be considered to be a justifiable reason for appealing against mobilisation. If this happens that person is not really a useable Reservist at all."

There are valid arguments against notification, for example, security reasons for those personnel based in Northern Ireland.

For more guidance read **JSP 766**.

**“The letter may lead to more support”**



### ARTISTS RETURN TO SALISBURY SPOTLIGHT

THE annual Army Arts Society exhibition will be staged in the Young Galleries at Salisbury Library from October 21.

Paintings, photographs, crafts and sculptures will be on display, all of which have been produced by serving and retired soldiers, and their families.

There will also be a variety of submissions from wounded, sick and injured personnel from a number of recovery centres across the country.

Last year's show featured more than 250 pieces from around 60 artists including Capt Sophie Sarchet (RA), whose paintings are pictured here.

The exhibition runs every day (apart from Sundays) until November 5. For details email [tanaknygett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tanaknygett@hotmail.co.uk)



## FEARLESS

# FUNDRAISING



### BATTLING MONT BLANC

ADVENTURER Gnr Aron McCann (RA) completed the Tour Du Mont Blanc – a 114-mile circular hike through France, Switzerland and Italy.

The soldier completed the route, which takes in some of the high peaks and passes of Mont Blanc, in ten days.

"It was an amazing opportunity and I met some great people along the way," the gunner said.

"I've been overwhelmed by their kindness."

**Money raised: £430**  
For: Help For Heroes



### GOLFERS TAKE TO THE GREENS

PERSONNEL from the warrant officers' and sergeants' mess at the Defence Academy of the UK took to the course for a charity golf day. The academy golf club is raising money for the latter cause with events throughout the year.



## "This is the most complete picture, I think, that has ever been published"

– Ashdown's tale of spies, page 72

# WIN

## An £170 Elite Pro headset

LAST month's spine lines clues would have made familiar reading to the Army's legion of armoured aficionados.

(Clement) Arnold, (Cyril) Coles, (Sydney) Hadley and (Walter) Radcliff all crewed the first tanks to see action, during the

First World War.

This month, courtesy of Turtle Beach ([www.turtlebeach.com](http://www.turtlebeach.com)), we have an Elite Pro gaming headset worth £170 to give away.

The cutting-edge kit offers exemplary audio and is a must-have for console fans – it received a five-star review in our Top Gear section in September.

To be in with a chance of winning tell us what links the words on the spine of this magazine.

Answers to the usual postal address or by email via [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by October 31.



## SOMME | 100

Picture: Sgt. Rupert妃, RLC



## Tanks roll into London town

Military marks centenary of first ever battle in style

MEMBERS of the Royal Tank Regiment saluted the 100th anniversary of the tank during events in London and France.

The formation is the oldest tank unit in the world and can trace its roots back to the Battle of Flers-Courclette on September 15, 1916.

Some 25 soldiers conducted a battlefield tour of the Somme to study the assault, during which they also took part in a commemoration ceremony attended by Prince Charles.

Meanwhile, as part of a public display on Trafalgar Square and Horse Guards' Parade, troops crewed the British Army's current model, Challenger 2, alongside a working replica of the Mark IV tank – the same one that featured in the film *War Horse*.

Just like in the First World War,

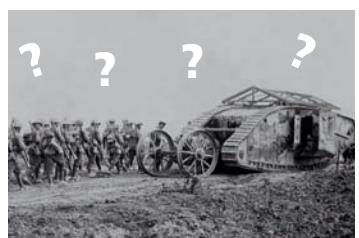
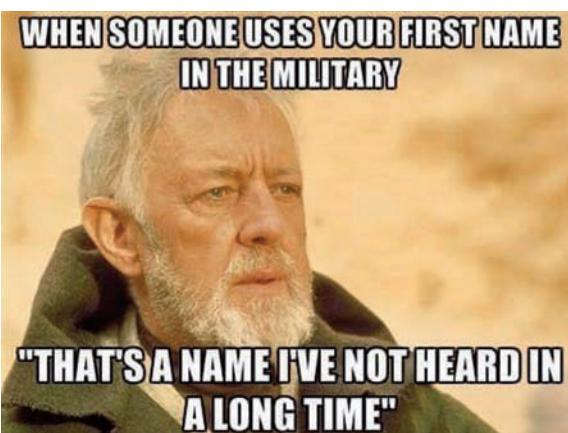
when the government sent the new machines on tour to raise money, the event attracted crowds of visitors.

"People came up to us and asked questions and we were able to tell them about the differences between the design and capabilities of the old and modern versions," explained Capt Hamish Davison (RTR).

Read our September issue for full coverage of the anniversary of the first ever tank battle.



↓  
**MEME OF THE MONTH...**



## TANK BATTLE TRIVIA

JOHN Lennon's maths teacher was among those who took the first tanks into action 100 years ago during the Battle of the Somme, according to a new book.

Liverpool schoolteacher Graeme Nixon survived the war to later award the young Beatle detention.

He is one of 400 individuals whose stories feature in *The First Tank Crews* by Stephen Pope (ex-RLC).

Published to coincide with the centenary of the Battle of Flers-Courclette last month, the title includes new material from official service records, first-hand descriptions and information provided by families.

"This book tells the previously untold stories of bravery, determination and dedication by a group of unsung heroes," said Pope.

## INFANTRY CHANGE INFO DELAYED

DETAILS on proposed changes to the structure of the Infantry have been delayed for a month.

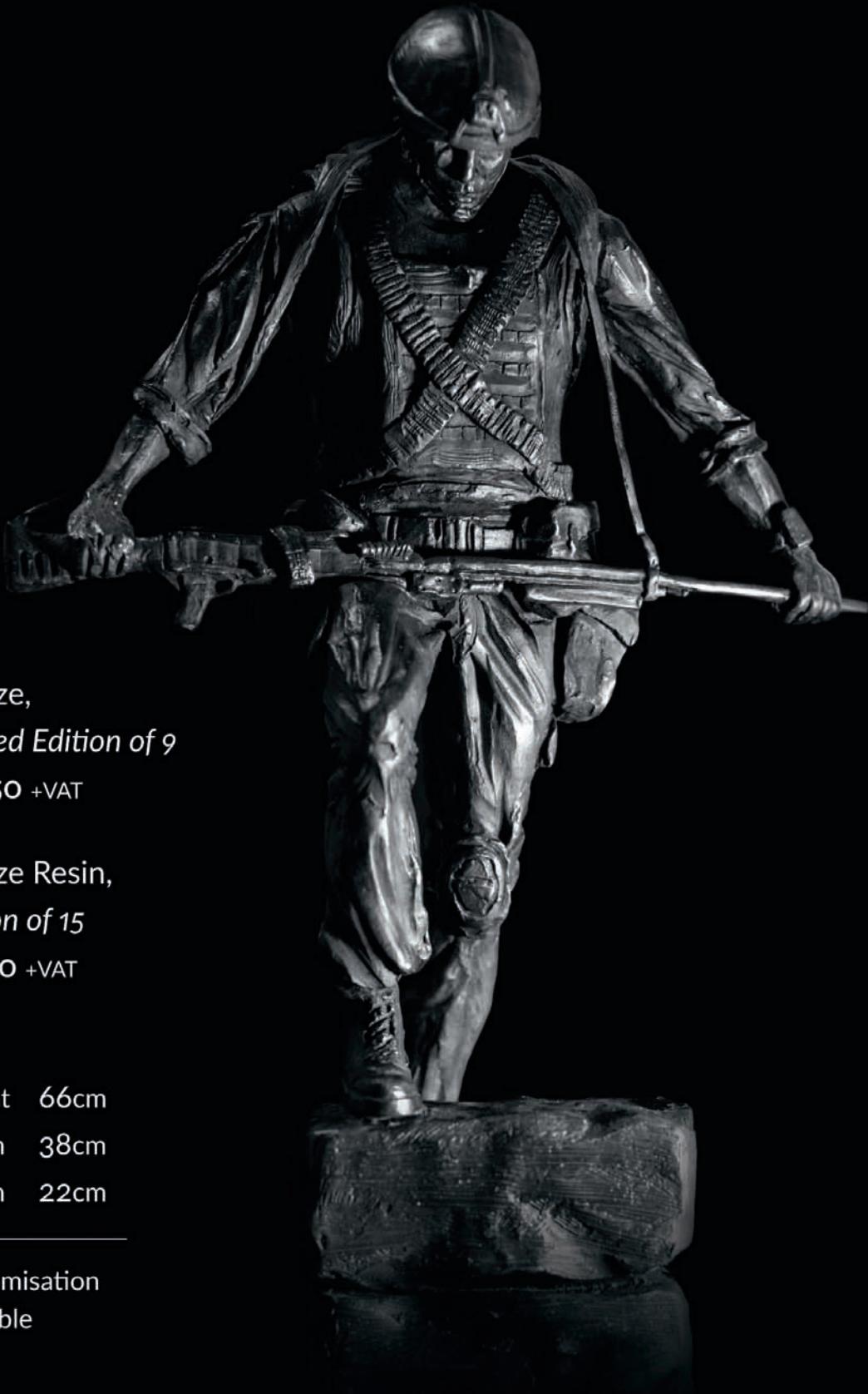
Earlier in the summer the MoD confirmed that work was underway to create new, smaller infantry battalions with specialist skills such as counter-terrorism who can train, advise and assist other forces. It followed a story about the plan in the *Sunday Times*.

Last month *Soldier* said more details would be available in this issue of the magazine, but senior officers are still working on the changes.

We will provide readers with more details as soon as we have them.

# STEPPING UP

A sculpture by Mark Jackson



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# THE BIG PICTURE



> REDBRIDGE CYCLING CENTRE

## LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

IT was double delight for the Army at the annual Inter-Services Road Race Championships as both the men's and women's teams triumphed over their Forces rivals. Capt Ryan Perry (REME) spearheaded his squad's victory charge while the Reds' female cohort dominated the top ten in what proved to be an emphatic win. Read the full report on page 85. Picture: Graeme Main

# SKIN DEEP

TO MARK BLACK HISTORY MONTH *SOLDIER* TALKS TO TWO SENIOR NCOS ABOUT THE CHANGING FACE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

CURRENT statistics put the proportion of Regular soldiers hailing from ethnic minority backgrounds at 10.3 per cent – already above the ten per cent target set for all three

Services by 2020.

The recent announcement that Commonwealth troops will no longer have to be resident in the UK for five years before applying to join certain specialist trades (page 11) will no doubt see this figure rise still further.

So far, so good.

However, a closer look at the data reveals that the number of personnel who come from British ethnic minority communities continues to hover at just under five per cent, suggesting that for whatever reason, a military career is not seen as an attractive option by everyone on home soil.

So what is life really like for these troops in the Army of 2016?

Are lingering doubts about racism in any way justified?

Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main

*Soldier* spoke to two senior NCOs, WO1 Steve Henry (RLC) and Sgt George Sale (WG), to get their take on the issue.

"When I first got to my regiment in 1998 there were very few ethnic minorities in my





“BEFORE I WALKED INTO THE  
RECRUITING OFFICE FRIENDS TOLD  
ME THERE WOULD BE ISSUES”

corps,” explained WO1 Henry.

“Before I walked into the recruiting office friends told me there would be issues but I didn’t have any concerns.

“Where I’m from is very culturally diverse so I never thought about it.

“From the day I joined to the day I passed out of training I didn’t experience any form of prejudice at all except for light-hearted banter, which I usually instigated anyway because among my group of friends that was the way we relieved stress and boredom.

“The colour of my skin has never been a factor, or held me back.”

Consistently top of his peer group on training courses and promotion cadres, WO1 Henry climbed the ranks and is now the regimental sergeant major of the Army Recruiting and Training Division Staff Leadership School in Pirbright.

But the 39-year-old said it wasn’t always plain sailing, citing a campaign of harassment by a corporal who singled him out early on in his career.

“When I was a private there was an NCO who went out of his way to make life difficult for me.

“He was a bully anyway but he made it clear he had a problem and had no qualms with throwing racial insults at me, but only when we were in the section, as soon as the troop sergeant or troop commander was there he knocked it on the head.

“There’s only so much you can do in terms of laughing it off.

“When it’s constant and everyone else stops laughing too, that’s when I think it got noticed.

“It was dealt with by the chain of command and stamped on, but I haven’t really made my peace with it.”

But WO1 Henry noticed attitudes changing some five years into his career when recruitment from foreign and Commonwealth countries increased.

“That changed everyone’s perception and pushed any remnants of prejudice out the door,” he continued.

“Now there’s no room for it.

“Unless you’ve got an inherent issue that you’ve brought to the Army from civvy street, you don’t get taught to discriminate in any way shape or form in the Service.”

Among the thousands answering the call from Fiji in the early 2000s was Sgt Sale, who shelved his teaching studies and jumped onto a plane for the very first time to join the Royal Welsh, before later transferring to the Welsh Guards.

“For me it was a quick fix,” he explained. »

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## “NOW I KNOW HOW TO WALK AWAY FROM SITUATIONS”

» “I wanted to get off the island and follow the old and bold back in Fiji who had already served and held the British Army in high esteem. A lot of good stories have come back with them.

“The transition to life in a foreign country wasn’t too bad because there were lots of other Fijians. And in a Welsh battalion the common denominator for us all was rugby.”

The 37-year-old said the only racism he experienced occurred outside the Army.

“There was an incident with a civilian,” he continued. “Unfortunately I dealt with it on my own and it got me into a bit of trouble but that’s part of growing up.

“It’s hard, especially if you’ve never experienced it in your life, but now I know how to walk away from situations. I learnt from it.”

Sgt Sale also thinks the harsh realities of Afghanistan and Iraq went a long way to proving that skin colour has nothing to do with ability or bravery.

“Not long after I joined the operational tempo picked up,” he recalled.

“We deployed with the British lads and they saw that the Commonwealth guys could fight and do their jobs side by side, looking after each other.”

The then corporal certainly put this mantra

into practice during 2010 on Op Herrick 11, when he was awarded a Military Cross for running across open ground to attack an enemy position after his section was pinned down by hostile fire.

Although he is no longer comfortable discussing what took place that day, his story will surely be among the tales that inspire the next generation of Fijians to consider a career in the British Army.

If so, he would have no hesitation encouraging them to enlist.

“I’m actually trying to get my little sister to join,” he said.

“The opportunities are there for everyone. It doesn’t matter where in the world you’re from.”

Recruiters and community engagement teams continue to work hard to spread this message to ethnic minority groups around the country.

However, getting people through the door is just the first step.

Among senior ranks in particular, black and Asian personnel are few.

Despite the positive strides that these two NCOs have observed during their time in uniform, there is much to be done in levelling the playing field. ■

## SUPPORT SYSTEM

● The Army has recently launched a new network specifically for ethnic minority personnel. Here, its co-chairman WO1 Steve Henry (pictured below) describes what the body can offer troops and their units:

“LIKE all networks it’s there to inform people, not just individuals but also their chain of command.

People say to me all the time, ‘come on Steve, there are all these networks being formed – for the LGBT community, Servicewomen, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs – where’s the white males’ network?’

And the answer’s simple. You’re in it. It’s known as the British Army.

If you have an issue and you can look out onto the parade square and find someone else who appears exactly like you who you can talk about it with, then there’s no problem.

But if not, you might need the support of a network that can provide you with career guidance, social information, or any other kind of advice.

It’s important to remember we’re here to support commanders too.

For example, a CO could phone me up and ask, ‘I’ve got a Rastafarian soldier who wants to grow dreadlocks, what are the rules?’

Allowances for equality have to be accepted and understood, it would be morally wrong not to allow someone to practise their culture, unless of course that had a direct impact on the operational effectiveness of the individual or their unit. ■

→ Think you or one of your soldiers could benefit from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Network? Call WO1 Henry on 94211 8523 or email [asis-rsm@mod.uk](mailto:asis-rsm@mod.uk) to get involved



HE annual two-week exercise is the focal point of the year for most Reserve units and 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's

Royal Regiment hasn't been afraid to hit the road to find suitably challenging environments for its big get-together.

Serials in Spain and Cyprus have been the highlights recently but the personnel have arguably taken their training to another level this year by participating in Exercise Baltic Star, along with nearly 2,000 troops from Estonia, America and Lithuania.

"We are the first Reserve unit to train in Estonia and I'm especially proud because this is a high profile exercise in what is a strategically important part of the world," the battalion's commanding officer Lt Col Andy Betts (pictured below) told *Soldier*.

The serial tested the Reservists on a number of levels, from the planning of a complex 2,000-mile move of 11 vehicles and equipment across Europe to integrating with multiple foreign forces as well as operating in unfamiliar and very tough conditions.

"This has given us a huge opportunity to build capability for the future by training hard in an austere environment and concentrating on the basics of soldiering; shooting, moving and communicating," Lt Col Betts explained.

"All three of those have been very well exercised while we've been here and this has been a chance to work alongside our allies, learn from them and at the same time build stronger links with a couple of Joint Expeditionary Force nations."

The 130-strong British contingent, which included 20 members of the paired Regular unit, 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, deployed to a forward operating base 50 miles from the Russian border and from there conducted low-level training before linking up with an Estonian battlegroup headquarters.

They received orders and completed rehearsals



alongside the Estonian Defence League, the country's reserve force, before entering a scenario where a highly mobile enemy formation, played by home troops and a US Stryker vehicle detachment, had invaded the country.

The dynamic nature and scope of the exercise amazed many of the British personnel involved.

Pte Scott Clark (PWRR), a 29-year-old electrician from Chatham, said: "I couldn't believe how fast we moved right across Estonia.

"Our exercises in Britain are often pretty static affairs, where you usually take a position on a patch of ground, but this was very kinetic – we had to keep on the move and one step ahead of a highly mobile enemy force.

"Our mission was to slow down the opposing formation with blockades and ambushes, which is the first time we've ever done that.

"We weren't restricted to training areas, we moved across the country with free reign, exchanging fire with the mock enemy. It was the most realistic exercise I've ever been in."

Pte Edward Sutton (PWRR, pictured right), a 19-year-old outdoor activities instructor from Brighton, added: "I've experienced weekends away fighting in woods and some urban ops but they in no way prepared me for this, it has been really full-on.

"It was a large operation with lots of forces involved so that made things much more interesting than a normal training weekend where you rock up, do some drills in one location and then go home the next day.

"We worked alongside the Estonian reservists and they were superb to train with; they seemed very able and most spoke good English so you could have a decent conversation with them.

"The exercise was epic because we literally went from one side of the country to the other fighting a fast-moving foe, even using open public roads when we had to; you couldn't get away with that in the UK."

The soldiers were also taken aback by the ground conditions, which were more akin to the tropics than northern Europe.

"Much of the terrain is very unforgiving at this time of the year, ridiculously boggy" 

A soldier in camouflage uniform and cap, holding a rifle with a scope, looking off to the side.

IT WAS EPIC  
BECAUSE WE  
LITERALLY WENT  
FROM ONE  
SIDE OF THE  
COUNTRY  
TO THE  
OTHER

# LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

RESERVISTS COMBINE FORCES WITH  
THEIR ESTONIAN COUNTERPARTS

► in fact; for much of the time we moved around up to our knees or even waist in mud," continued Pte Clark.

"It properly tested our fitness as well as our skills and drills at keeping our kit and equipment dry and in good order. Your personal admin becomes crucial in this environment.

"I've experienced similar sorts of conditions in the UK, in places like Sennybridge, but not as severe."

Pte Sutton also admitted he found the environment a major challenge.

"It was 90 per cent marsh and dense thick forest but the worst part was the huge number of mosquitos; we were bitten to pieces," he commented.

"I'm used to carrying Javelin kit so I volunteered to carry the Minimi light machine gun which was hard going."

Pte Neil Casson (PWRR), a Reservist for nine years and with two Herrick tours under his belt, felt the austerity of the package provided superb training conditions for real combat situations.

"There was a lot of sleep deprivation and the ground was a huge obstacle, I've never experienced anything quite like it before," he said.

"Everything got really wet and you rarely got proper time to let your kit dry."

The 31-year-old believes the exercise helped meld together the troops, who were mainly drawn from three companies based in Farnham, Rochester and Brighton.

"A problem with many Reserve units is that they, like us, can be spread around, so an exercise like this is an extremely valuable chance to mix properly and operate together in tough conditions.

"After two weeks we were working really well and gelling as a team.

"There are rumours we might be going to Kenya next year and if they are true I cannot wait."

The size and scope of the challenge was also crucial in



providing a platform for an assortment of personnel to become a more cohesive fighting force.

"We have guys here who passed out of Catterick four weeks ago and others who have done 22 years of service as a Regular before joining us; it's a real mix but these two weeks have had a big impact," Lt Col Betts added.

"It has really tested my G4 element; the road move and constructing a camp in the field and living out of that for a period has definitely challenged all the battalion's assets rather than just the individual companies.

"Communicating and coordinating with the Estonian battlegroup and understanding their intent and how we executed their orders was a considerable challenge, too.

"But the guys have been outstanding, they've immersed themselves in the concept of the exercise and delivered beyond what I could have asked for.

"For a number of individuals, the improvement in their basic soldiering ability, communications skills and self-confidence has been tangible.

"That should really benefit them, even back in civvy street." ■



**Soldiers from 3 PWRR exercise with troops from Estonia, USA and Lithuania during Exercise Baltic Star**



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# At the SHARP END

## British forces prepare to spearhead Nato's Very High Readiness Task Force

Report: Steve Muncy | Pictures: Graeme Main

UNIQUE moobs or scrumdiddlyumptious, the Army's favourite new word – interoperability – wasn't included in the recent update of the Oxford English Dictionary.

But, fortunately, none of the troops serving with 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade will feel the slightest need to look it up after taking part in Exercise Venerable Gauntlet on Sennelager Training Area.

This was their first chance to work with the 13 other countries that will make up Nato's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in 2017.

The UK will act as the lead nation for the first time next year, with the British brigade spearheading the force's land component (see overleaf).

In total, some 3,000 troops travelled to Germany.

British, Danish, Polish, Estonian and Spanish infantry worked together to ensure that armoured, mechanised and light role battlegroups could effectively communicate and operate together under pressure.

They were supported by multinational engineer, artillery, logistic and reconnaissance groups and attack helicopters, while Czech forces provided a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence function.

Soldiers from 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery used the Spanish 105mm Light Gun and members of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal

Regiment carried out urban patrol training with both Polish and Estonian troops.

The climax of the package was a scenario where the VJTF had to mount a counterattack against a mock enemy that had crossed the border of a Nato country.

Each stage of the battle saw soldiers of various nationalities fighting alongside each other – literally – and not just in coordinated separate engagements as is often the case in these serials.

During the initial stages a Danish surveillance team armed with a Puma UAV located the "invaders" and the AS90s of 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery, along with a Spanish battery,



Brig Mike Elvis

# 5,000 troops



were ordered to attack targets identified by British and Norwegian reconnaissance patrols.

These advance parties were then extracted by Norwegian personnel mounted on quad bikes before a combined force repelled the invading army in a series of fast-moving coordinated assaults.

Challenger 2 main battle tanks of the Queen's Royal Hussars were at the forefront of the attacks, supported by Warriors carrying PWRR personnel, Estonian troops in Patria Pasi carriers, Danish soldiers in Mowag Piranhas, Norwegians in M113s and Polish infantry in BMP-1s.

"When have you ever seen such a mix of Nato forces working together in such close proximity and at such speed?" exclaimed Brig Mike Elviss, commander of 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade.

"What we have here is a very purposeful task force made up of 14 nations who will be more than ready to do a job of work next year."

Certain elements of the VJTF will be required to deploy in just 48 hours and all units have to be ready to move within seven days.

Consequently, finding out how these various armies could best work together was the most crucial aspect of the exercise.

"It's been fascinating to see how everyone does things when they are in and amongst one attack, how their soldiers dismount and get into position," Pte Alex Hamer (PWRR) told *Soldier*.

"Some of the other armies do everything a bit differently to us, like the Poles for instance, who dismount as a platoon out the back door while their vehicle is still on the move to keep the momentum going, using the platform as a shield as they advance on foot.

"We dismount as four- or eight-man sections and quickly move away from the vehicle but we all still worked together effectively in the attack stage."

Capt David Heads (PWRR) added: "Meeting personnel from the other nations we are going to be in the VJTF with and going through battle runs with them has been incredibly valuable.

"It's given us a rare opportunity to see their tactics up close and look at



their kit and capability.

"We could see where we can plug holes they've got and vice versa.

"For example, the Danish bring their logistics up to the front line in Mowag Eagles, which are more heavily armoured than the vehicles we use so we now know it would be better to employ their assets for this job in certain situations."

But it's not just at the front line where achieving efficient integration is key.

"Our job is to keep operationally effective kit in the hands of all the soldiers who need to use it," said Maj Phil Carrotte, officer commanding 18 Field Company, 3 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

"Our role in the VJTF is to take the lead in facilitating other armies' maintenance sections, to keep their assets on the move as well as ours.

"The main challenges have included understanding what everyone is bringing to this task force but those worries have now gone thanks to this exercise because we have had the opportunity to witness how their vehicles work, what their maintenance platoons look like and how they operate."

It has been a steep learning curve for all involved, even the more seasoned personnel.

"Our operating procedures are slightly different to those of some other nations because we have developed certain ways of doing things from the operations we've deployed on over the course of the last ten to 15 years," Sgt Lee Barber (PWRR) explained.

"We've been fighting



Capt David Heads (PWRR)

14 nations





unconventional forces and we now have to change our approach and go back to training to fight a large, well trained, well equipped conventional army again where the landscape is very different from the Middle East."

But the senior NCO admitted the interoperability hurdles have been surprisingly low.

"It's not been as difficult to communicate and integrate as I thought it would be," he said.

"They mostly speak pretty good English to be honest, and I didn't realise just how high the standard of their troops would actually be.

"The people they have here are highly experienced and very capable and that's made integration a lot easier."

And the cherry on the cake is that being part of the VJTF appears to be motivating everyone who is involved.

"It's exciting to think we could be deployed somewhere," added Sgt Barber.

"But if we don't, there'll be lots of exercises to keep us in a state of high readiness and we will also enjoy some stability as a unit.

"People won't get called away because of trawls for other serials; those tasks won't be coming to our battlegroup so everyone will be present when we do go training.

"In fact, the 12 months of 2017 will probably be one of the longest periods we will have stayed together as a battalion so all of us are really looking forward to it." ■



## VJTF 2017 nations

United Kingdom  
Denmark  
Croatia  
Netherlands  
Romania

Albania  
Spain  
Lithuania  
Norway  
USA

Czech Republic  
Estonia  
Latvia  
Poland

## Fast and flexible

AT their 2014 Wales summit, Nato members agreed to enhance the Nato Response Force by creating the VJTF.

It comprises a multinational brigade of around 5,000 troops, supported by air, maritime and special forces, ready to deploy to protect Nato allies from potential threats and acts of aggression.

The VJTF is manned on a rotational and persistent basis and is not permanently based.

The UK will contribute about 3,000 personnel in total with 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade spearheading the land component for 2017.

As the lead nation it will provide the brigade headquarters, armoured infantry and light role infantry battlegroups plus communications, reconnaissance, intelligence capabilities, combat

support and logistic elements, which will ensure the formation can deploy rapidly and effectively.

France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Turkey have offered to serve as lead nations in the future.



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# FOREST FIRES

Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Steve Docks

THE British Army may not have had to fight in woodland in recent years but in an unpredictable world, instructors at the Infantry Battle School are ensuring that troops retain the skills to operate in this challenging environment... ➤



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- Proven operational use – German Army in Afghanistan.
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DEFENCE



The forest clearance serial in Sennybridge was also a demonstration for visiting personnel from the Spanish army, which is introducing its own FIWAF course this month.



"When you try and talk to someone it echoes, the gunfire echoes, it's loud and disorientating, you can't necessarily see the man to the left or right of you and all of that really stretches people's ability to control what's going on.

"You have to enable your subordinates and empower them to fulfil the task.

"Additionally, because of the difficulties of seeing people and knowing where your friendly forces are you have to apply some very strict measures to ensure there's no possibility of fratricide."

Despite the challenges, an hour later the would-be platoon sergeants have succeeded in their task.

The enemy has been flushed out, but it has come at a price. According to the tactical engagement system, the British have suffered several casualties, including one KIA.

In Afghanistan or Iraq the advance would have halted while a casevac took place but under contingency operations the mission takes priority, in itself a huge shift in mindset for those familiar with the Herrick and Telic theatres.

Following an after-action review, the 31 students move off to their next serial.

Capt Glover explains how forest fighting is only one aspect of the unrelenting seven-week course, at the end of which they will have to step up and become the lynchpins of their units.

"This is just one element. We're training them for contingency – effectively to be able to operate in any possible scenario," he continues.

"It is some of the toughest training in the Infantry.

"The guys not only have to know the role of the platoon sergeant inside out, but also that of the platoon commander because, firstly, they're only ever a bullet away from becoming that platoon commander and secondly, they're the man with all the experience, who has to guide and mentor a junior officer.

"It's an incredibly demanding and intense package."

# 0

Na damp and misty ridge in Sennybridge, a platoon creeps towards the treeline.

Their objective; to clear a small patch of forest of enemy fighters.

There is no way of knowing whether the mortars they dropped on the position have done their job, or how many of the opposition remain concealed under the canopy.

As they reach the wood the first shots ring out, echoing off the trees in a deafening roar.

Figures flit from trunk to trunk in the gloom and it becomes hard to tell friend from foe.

Soon enough the call goes out: "Man down, man down!"

It is clear the soldiers have their work cut out to regain the initiative.

However, keeping a calm head in precisely this kind of confusing scenario is the bread and butter of an infantry NCO.

That's why this package on fighting in woods and forests (also known as FIWAF) makes up an important module on the Infantry Battle School's platoon sergeants' course.

Overseeing the serial is instructor and platoon commander Capt Tim Glover (Yorks), who describes why it is such a tough environment for the students to operate in.

"It is incredibly complex because you're in quite an enclosed space, with plenty of trees and shrubbery," says the 27-year-old.

# Ready to strike

## Wheels start to turn on new infantry vehicle programme

WITH work on the new Ajax reconnaissance platform well under way the Army has taken the first step in kitting out the strike brigades that will deliver a decisive edge on the battlefield.

The formations will offer agile, medium-weight forces capable of operating at long range with a reduced logistic demand and should form a key asset for the Service as it moves forward.

As the concept continues to evolve tentative steps are being taken on a mechanised infantry vehicle (MIV) programme that will provide additional hardware for troops on the sharp end of such operations.

"The strike concept is about long range and agility and is based on new doctrine that says we have to go far and fast," a Ministry of Defence spokesman told *Soldier*.

"One way of doing that is by wheels, on an 8x8 platform.

"But this programme is only at the concept phase and we are still looking at costs and potential timelines."

Reliability, adaptability and survivability are major requirements for the vehicles, which will transport Infantry personnel over considerable distances.

"It is about capacity, mobility and protection," explained one of the Army's technical advisers. "Lethality will be delivered as much by the soldiers on-board as the platform itself."

"They could be in the back of a platform for 1,000 kilometres but we want them to get out and be functional straight away."

With a business case far from complete and a delivery date yet to be agreed *Soldier* looked at some the options currently available on the market during the recent DVD event at Millbrook, Bedfordshire...





## General Dynamics - Piranha 5/Stryker/LAV

GENERAL Dynamics produce a variety of 8x8 infantry vehicles that are spacious, flexible and comfortable for those on-board.

**Piranha**, which has a capacity for 12 soldiers, features high levels of IED, mine and ballistic protection and has just been selected by the Danish Army, with deliveries starting in late 2017.

**Stryker** is a mainstay of the US military and a double V hull version will be delivered in 2017, while the LAV 6.0 forms part of the Canadian fleet. The LAV 700 is the latest generation model to enter production and is designed to offer superior mobility and ride quality in all terrains.

"They've all been to Iraq and Afghanistan and we have incorporated the lessons from that - in terms of survivability, mobility and capacity - in our latest designs," said business development manager Julian Forsyth.



## GENERAL DYNAMICS - STRYKER/LAV



## PATRIA - PATRIA AMV XP



### Patria - Patria AMV XP

THE first variant of the AMV was launched in 2002 and has been constantly evolving ever since.

At present it is in service with armies and defence forces in Finland, Sweden, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa.

The XP has built on the successes of earlier AMV models and can be adapted to meet the needs of each nation. For example, the Finnish operate an armoured personnel carrier and mortars platform, while the Croatians require a variant with a medium-calibre weapon system. Other options include an ambulance and repair and recovery vehicle.

It also features modular ballistic, mine and IED protection systems, all-wheel drive and a 530-amp generator for power needs.

"These vehicles are based on a combination of mobility and high protection," said Antti Huuskomäki, the company's senior vice president. "The soldiers appreciate the comfort inside and it has air conditioning, heating and minimal vibration."

### PERFORMANCE

**Engine capacity:** 450kW

**Maximum speed:** 100km/h

**Range:** 600-1,000km

**Climb capacity:** 60 per cent

**Length:** 8.4m

**Width:** 2.8m

**Height:** 2.4m

**Crew:** 2 (driver, commander/gunner)

**Capacity:** 8 soldiers (longer hull available to cater for ten dismounts)

**Other:** Automatic transmission, high performance LED light technology, hydraulically operated disc brakes with ABS, central tyre inflation system and a readiness for future protection technologies as well as future soldier equipment

### PERFORMANCE (STRYKER DVH)

**Engine capacity:** 450hp

**Maximum speed:** 100+km/h

**Range:** 500km

**Length:** 7m

**Width:** 2.7m

**Height:** 2.6m

**Crew:** 2

**Capacity:** 9 soldiers (infantry

carrier version)

**Other:** Central inflation and run flat tyres, forward two axles for steering, energy attenuating seats offer on-board protection for personnel, compatible with Bowman radio, mine blast and ballistic protection, water tight seal for fording rivers

## NEXTER - VBCI



### PERFORMANCE

**Engine capacity:** 600hp

**Maximum speed:** 100km/h

**Range:** 750km

**Length:** 8m

**Width:** 3m

**Height:** 2.5m

**Capacity:** Up to 14 men

**Other:** Engine and crew fire suppression systems, central tyre inflation system with run flat device, air transportable via C17 and A400M, external and internal stowage and 360-degree field of view for vehicle commander

**Additional options:**  
Infrared decoy missile protection, smoke grenade launcher systems and rear steering axle

to successfully cover long distances (2,500km in five days in Mali), while also enduring extreme conditions (temperatures in excess of 55 degrees Celsius).

Capable of manoeuvre alongside main battle tanks and medium-weight tracked vehicles it offers a number of variants from an armoured personnel carrier to an anti-tank missile platform.

It also boasts high protection against mines, IEDs and RPGs, with an aluminium alloy hull offering ballistic protection.

"The VBCI suits the French Army very well," said Jean-Christophe Bund, Nexter's vice president of international affairs. "They are happy with the technology, the comfort and the capability the vehicle provides."



### Nexter - VBCI

THIS vehicle may be familiar to British personnel who have conducted joint training with their French counterparts in recent times.

It has been in service with the French Army since 2008 and has successfully deployed to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Mali and the Central African Republic - performing everything from low-intensity peacekeeping missions to counter-insurgency operations and heavy combat.

During this time it has proven its ability



### ST Kinetics - Terrex 3

THE latest and most advanced platform in the Terrex family, this vehicle builds on the success of its predecessors to deliver a higher payload and enhanced protection.

Variants include a troop carrier, command post, engineering vehicle, ambulance and a mortar platform - all of which came online in 2016.

The Terrex 1 – an amphibious version – is used by the Singapore Armed Forces in a mechanised infantry role and Terrex 2 is in service with the US Marine Corps.

"There are health monitoring systems for maintenance and breakdowns and everything is covered from inside the vehicle," said Brig-Gen Winston Toh, executive vice president. "There are three cameras at the front, three on each side and two at the rear. That is very important when going into a fighting environment."

## PERFORMANCE

**Engine capacity:** 711hp  
**Maximum speed:** 88km/h  
**Range:** 520km  
**Climb capacity:** 60 per cent  
**Length:** 8.5m  
**Width:** 3m  
**Height:** 2.8m  
**Crew:** 2  
**Capacity:** 11 soldiers

**Other:**  
Protection  
is  
configurable  
to customer  
specifications,  
dual circuit  
hydraulic brake  
system with ABS,  
fording depth of 1.8m  
and eight-wheel independent  
suspension system



# ST KINETICS - TERREX 3

## KMW/RHEINMETTAL - BOXER



 KMW/Rheinmettal - Boxer

ALREADY a mainstay of the German and Dutch armies, this flexible platform has seen operational experience with the former in Afghanistan.

Boasting nine variants – including an armoured personnel carrier, cargo, ambulance and command post – it started production in 2009 and features a multi-hit capability protection system, an eight-tonne payload, permanent 8x8 drive and interchangeable modules that can be swapped within 30 minutes.

"It has been in service for seven years now and we've had good feedback from the Germans, who used it in theatre," said project manager Andreas Friedl. "This vehicle is highly protected and the soldiers really appreciate its mobility."

## PERFORMANCE (ARMOURED PERSONNEL CARRIER)

Engine capacity:  
530kW (720hp)

Maximum speed:  
103km/h

Range: 1.050km

Climb capacity: 60 per cent

Length: 7.93m

Width: 2.99m

Height: 2.37m

Crew: 3 (driver, commander, weapon operator)

Capacity: 8 soldiers

**Other:** Three hatches for show of force, air conditioning and fire extinguishing system in engine compartment

**Additional options:**  
Navigation system, smoke-grenade launching system, rear-view camera, remote-controlled weapon station, protection kits, crew seats with airbags, five hatches for crew of force.

# ARMOUR EVOLUTION

## SOLDIERS' SUGGESTIONS GUIDE VIRTUS UPDATES

**F**EEDBACK from the field has played a pivotal role in the Army's attempts to fine-tune the designs for its Virtus body armour system.

The equipment was rolled out to thousands of high-readiness troops earlier this year and their comments on its performance have resulted in a number of changes.

A top flap has been added to the Bergen and a metal ring to prevent the webbing straps slipping will be rolled out in the coming months, while the clips on its pouches have also been reorientated.

But the evolution does not stop there and a variety of designs are being worked on that will improve things further.

"We have been running feedback visits since the kit was initially issued," Maj Si Farley (Yorks), Virtus Requirements Manager, told *Soldier*.

"We accept that finding body armour to suit all elements of the dismounted infantry is a difficult job.

"We were told the helmet and armour was very good but there was room

for improvement with the webbing and Bergen.

"Everyone now gets a top flap on their Bergen and the turnaround on that has been really quick.

"In terms of pouches, the guys were saying they really liked the old quick-access magazine pouches and that is something which is now at the design stage with the manufacturers. They are also looking at a new slimline commanders' pouch.

"We are still conducting feedback sessions in a bid to improve things further and we now have the correct pathway in place for those adjustments to be made."

Another development will be the procurement of a new armour plate that is lighter than Osprey and available in a variety of sizes.

It will not replace the former but will protect against the most likely threat, rather than the most dangerous as Osprey does now.

The competition stage will launch next year and troops can expect to see the result of the project in 2019.

This means they will have three plates – the ECBA small plate, the new design and Osprey – which allows them to scale according to the threat and is in line with the Army's desire to drive down the weight that its Servicemen and women must carry into battle. ■

IT IS THE  
FIRST TIME I  
HAVE SEEN A  
MANUFACTURER  
BE SO RECEPTIVE  
TO THE  
COMMENTS OF  
USERS





## PARA APPROVAL

● VIRTUS has been in service with 2nd and 3rd Battalions, The Parachute Regiment for ten months and the latest updates have received a glowing endorsement from one Serviceman who has been happy to help.

As officer commanding B Company, 2 Para, Maj Nick French (pictured left) has trialled the kit on exercises in France and Germany and believes the evolving designs will deliver a decisive edge wherever soldiers deploy next.

One of the most pleasing upgrades has been the addition of the Bergen top flap, which allows easy access to kit and means items such as Javelin missile systems can be carried.

Assurances over improvements to the webbing have also been warmly received.

"This all stems from the feedback we have given and they have come up with the concepts," Maj French told *Soldier*. "It is the first time I have seen a manufacturer be so receptive to the comments of users. They want to make it work and that is great to see."

"I was a platoon commander in 2003 and have fought in every body armour version since then – this is light years ahead.

"The next generation of Virtus will have lighter and thinner plates and that will take even more weight off the soldier."

Another key element of the kit from a para perspective is the helmet.

Under the old system personnel would need two helmets – one for jumps and another for use on the ground – but that burden has been removed courtesy of the new design.

"The old Mark 7 was not good enough to jump in, while the para helmet did not offer enough ballistic protection," Maj French explained. "But Virtus does both, which is great from our point of view."

"On the whole it is good, although there are still things that could be improved. I have got confidence that if I have to go on operations it will perform well."





# ANew Dawn

## 4 Para tread new ground in the Falklands

**A**S Reservists take greater prominence in the new-look Army structure it is fair to say such soldiers will be expected to match their Regular counterparts in terms of ability and commitment to the cause.

Many have been doing this for some time now but the personnel of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment took things to a new level recently when they became the first Reserve unit to perform the role of Roulement Infantry Company (RIC) in the Falkland Islands.

The deployment saw the troops conduct patrols and live firing on Onion Ranges, while also providing the manpower for an operational quick reaction force.

Like any tour, planning was key and preparations began at the start of the year, with a three-week mission specific training package at Norfolk's Stanta proving ground ensuring participants were fully up to speed ahead of their trip.

This covered core areas such as weapon handling, marksmanship, signals, medical skills, patrolling, navigational work and tips on how to prevent cold weather injuries.

While such drills sound familiar to those in Regular service the 4 Para hierarchy faced a different dilemma when it came to seeking volunteers for the mission.

Being a national unit, the call was made to personnel across the country and a wide geographical spread was represented in the specially formed Falkland Company Group that travelled to the South Atlantic.

"As a seminal tour for the Army Reserve it went really well," OC Maj Justin Tancrel, a former Regular in The Parachute Regiment, told *Soldier*.

"We were tasked with force generating a company to have people patrolling right across the islands.

"The live firing – up to company level – was a success, despite the weather not going in our favour. That made things more physically challenging.

"But the biggest thing I think we can ↗

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Graeme Main





→ take away is the skill set we have as Reserve personnel.

"There were a lot of people from the construction industry on this tour. When patrolling on farmland we were asked to complete routine maintenance tasks in return.

"The farmers soon realised they had professional tradesmen building fences and fixing roofs; they had not seen that before – it was brilliant."

With 4 Para taking such an important step for the Reserves as a whole there was a certain degree of pressure on the battalion, which was only heightened by visits from two of the Army's biggest hitters.

The Chief of Joint Operations, Lt Gen John Lorimer, and the Deputy Commander Field Army, Maj Gen Simon Brooks-Ward, both made specific trips to the Falkland Islands to see the troops carry out their work but Maj Tancrel was happy to report his men rose to the challenge.

"There was definitely an element of 'right guys, we cannot let the reputation of The Parachute Regiment down,'" he said.

"When the visits were confirmed we knew we had to be 100 per cent on the ball. I emphasised how it was a fantastic opportunity to sell ourselves because a Regular rifle company acting as the RIC would not be exposed to such levels of seniority.

"I think they came away knowing the Reserves had delivered and can do so again in the future."

Such success was predicted by company sergeant major WO2 Mike Steiner on the eve of departure.

Speaking to *Soldier* during a live-firing exercise at Stanta he said the groundwork put in had been superb and there was a real determination among those about to deploy.

"The preparations have been very thorough," he added.

"It is only when you do extreme

things that you see a person for who he really is.

"This is some of the best training for Reservists that I have seen."

WO2 Steiner enjoyed a successful spell as a Regular having joined 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment in August 1982. He was among the first replacements to arrive at the unit after the Falklands War and later served in Belize, Cyprus and Northern Ireland before deploying on Op Telic 1.

Like many full-time soldiers, turning his back on military life proved difficult so when the opportunity to extend his time in uniform came about it was something that was swiftly seized upon.

"I was not really ready to leave and when I realised I could continue my career in the Reserves I joined 4 Para," he explained.

"Going to the Falklands is great; it means I am still soldiering. The motivation and keenness is greater than ever.

"It is about me going down there and looking after the guys.

"For some it will be their first time away from home and their families. I am used to it so I guess I'm almost like a father figure. I know what they are going through.

"We can stand toe-to-toe with any Regular unit. Confidence is building and we will go out there and give a good show for the Reserves."

With positive feedback garnered from two of the Army's most senior officers it seems the show was better than good.

An impressive tick has been placed in the Reserves' box and Maj Tancrel believes there is more to come from his part-time counterparts.

"This has opened the door for Reservists," he said. "4 Para have shown the way and there is no reason why more units cannot deploy to the Falkland Islands as the RIC." □

## IN NUMBERS

# 10

the length of the deployment in weeks

# 122

personnel formed the Roulement Infantry Company, of which just **30** were Regular troops, meaning there were **92** soldiers from 4 Para on tour

# 14

the date in June that marks Liberation Day in the Falkland Islands. Personnel from 4 Para were invited to march through the streets of Stanley as part of the celebrations

# 66

**This is some of the best training for Reservists that I have seen**

# 99



**"I could not have received a simpler explanation. We need a guardian or at least a nightwatchman with a whistle, like FPS."**



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Chris Henwood, FPS Member



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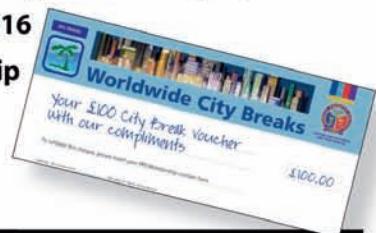
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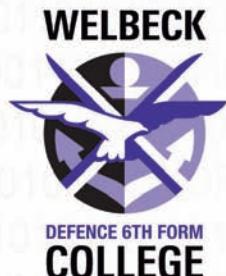
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## IF THAT PHONECALL COMES...

IHAT only ever interviews troops as suspects after they have been cautioned and if that happens individuals are normally asked to attend voluntarily, accompanied by their legal representative.

Many cases have been rejected at an early stage and some will only be subject to an investigation if the unit believes it can obtain sufficient evidence.

The vast majority of serving and former Service personnel who are contacted by the team are not suspected of any crime at all, however.

Investigators often need to find witnesses to establish a record of events during an incident, and detail evidence as part of their research.

In the case of serving personnel, IHAT will normally make contact through the individual's commanding officer.

With veterans, they write to them at their home address.



# TOUGH CALL

How investigators are tackling a controversial caseload of allegations from the Iraq War... and what you might not know about their work

**T**HE much-criticised law firm Public Interest Lawyers may have closed its doors but that doesn't mean the allegations stemming from its offices have disappeared.

It is the government's duty to investigate any accusation of serious criminal behaviour by members of the Armed Forces.

And although this responsibility has attracted much criticism over recent weeks – with the defence secretary himself labelling it a "witch-hunt" – the Iraq Historical Allegations Team (IHAT) is continuing its mission to assist the Royal Military Police after the emergence of multiple claims against British troops.

Currently, there are more than 3,300 alleged victims whose cases are being looked at by the 145-strong organisation.

Many accusations relate to low-level crime, but they also include more serious claims including unlawful killings while in custody, grievous bodily harm, rape and sexual assault.

IHAT's investigations

are independent of the chain of command and conducted in line with standard police procedures.

But because the MoD does not have sufficiently experienced professional investigators those on its payroll include civilian experts too.

Led by a retired police detective, the team also comprises Royal Navy Police personnel as well as civil servants.

Once an investigation is finished, the team decides whether there is sufficient evidence to charge a suspect with an offence.

If they believe there is, the matter is referred to the Service Prosecuting Authority for it to weigh up whether the case should go to trial.

Despite the high caseload, IHAT says it takes every possible measure to ensure all witnesses and suspects are treated fairly and with respect.

It also knows that those who have served in very difficult circumstances may need emotional support, which can be provided before, during and after talking to investigators.

The team aims to conclude its work by December 2019.

Any soldiers who are worried about being contacted can get advice from their chain of command or the Army Personnel Services Group on 01264 383926 or [apsg-hd@mod.uk](mailto:apsg-hd@mod.uk). Veterans should contact Veterans UK.

Individuals can also raise concerns with IHAT directly by writing to the organisation at Building 398, Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Wiltshire SN9 6BE or [ihat-ops-support-team@mod.uk](mailto:ihat-ops-support-team@mod.uk) ■

## IN NUMBERS

IHAT has already decided that **1,500** allegations do not justify further scrutiny.

It has completed **176** investigations and of those, **172** were closed, **1** was referred to the Royal Air Force Police, **1** soldier was referred for administrative action and fined, and **2** were referred to the SPA, who decided not to prosecute.



**Tough challenge:** Pte Darren Budgen, (main picture, RG), and other troops from the Queen's Division test themselves during the seven-week fire team commanders course



Report: Richard Long Pictures: Graeme Main

**T**ORRENTIAL rain batters soldiers as they make their way along a patrol route. But the weather fails to break their resolve as completing the task will result in substantial rewards.

These personnel are nearing the end of the fire team commanders course and a successful conclusion to the seven-week programme will see them taking their initial steps on the promotion ladder.

Staged by and for troops of the Queen's Division, the gruelling package is tailored specifically for private soldiers in the Infantry who have aspirations of becoming a lance corporal.

Candidates participate in two- to eight-mile marches before testing themselves further with a series of long-range navigational tasks around the rugged Black Mountains of the Brecon Beacons.

An "attack week" sees participants repeatedly drilled in the art of section attacks until the skill becomes almost second nature, while the patrols element focuses on everything from recces to ambushes.

A final exercise consists of a 20-kilometre tab ahead of a company-level assault and the tactics phase is then rounded off with a 16-kilometre march carrying personal and section equipment.

The course finishes with a battle exercise, in which students plan and stage lessons for their counterparts in order to prove their mettle as potential junior commanders.

So it is fair to say it is an intensive seven weeks.

"This is for guys who have been out of training for at least 12 months and shown clear ability, through to those who have served for five years as a private soldier," explained Capt Elvis Pearce (RG, pictured below), officer commanding Queen's Division courses.

"It is the first step towards promotion. They've passed out of Catterick and have spent time at their units so we have candidates who are turning up with passion and the right attitude.

"Seeing them progress from someone who is used to following to the one who is leading is great.

"This is one of the best training areas in the country – it is arduous and the weather makes it a lot harder to operate in. But that is the bread and butter of what the Infantry does; we work in difficult conditions and tough climates."

The Queen's Division adopts the deliberate approach of integrating soldiers from its nine Regular and Reserve battalions, where commanding officers often hold selection stages to ensure the best candidates progress.

With three courses running each year places are much coveted given the fact that fully competent potential junior NCOs will return to the ranks just a few short weeks later.

The programme has achieved a fearsome reputation but Capt Pearce was quick to stress that it is perfectly achievable for those with the determination to succeed and who boast decent fitness levels.

"This is about creating the right foundations so that when they go forward in their careers they should have the basic building



Here they are tested and tested again





# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Queen's Division tests potential junior commanders

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blocks in place," he added.

"If a soldier is not trained properly from the start he will struggle as he goes on."

"An individual may have all the attributes of a great RSM but if he does not have the right foundations he may not get past corporal and will always struggle to catch up."

"Here they are tested and tested again to ensure they have that vital knowledge in place."

Lt Col Martin Travers, the Queen's Division's lieutenant colonel, visited the latest cohort during the closing stages of the programme and spoke to *Soldier* about the value of the training.

Having praised the efforts of personnel he explained how the formation continues to operate at a high tempo – with missions in Iraq and Nigeria among its many commitments – so the skills mastered in Brecon will be crucial when they step up to a leadership role in the future.

"This is probably the first time since finishing recruit training that they have come together as a division with their mates from other battalions and regiments," the officer said.

"It is also the first time they would have worked alongside their Reserve counterparts so it is undoubtedly great experience for them."

"It is important we maximise our resources. The units are very busy so this is the best way of providing them with the best instruction in the time we have available."

"From here they will promote to lance corporal and take over a fire team on operations, wherever that may be."

"That operational focus is at the forefront of our minds."

"The soldiers know that everything they learn here will be put into effect when they are deployed."

WO1 Dale Jackson (1 RRF, pictured below), the Queen's Division's command sergeant major, echoed the value of the integrated approach.

"This course pulls soldiers away so they mix with people outside their units," he explained. "It is an opportunity for them to grow their leadership skills."

"When they leave they are prepared for life as a section second-in-command and it sets them well on their way to becoming junior commanders."

The division was keen to base its training element in Brecon given the varied terrain on offer and the system, which has been in place for nine years, is now much admired by other formations.

"You do not need rain to make this a challenging environment but the addition of some harsh weather conditions really puts the guys through their paces," said WO1 Jackson.

"It gives them a taste of the area and the countryside so when they come back to do the junior and senior Brecon courses it is not a shock to the system."

"When I speak to other command sergeant majors they see the Queen's Division courses as the ideal solution."

The first step on the promotion ladder is hard-earned but with these vital skills now in place the next rung should be easily within reach. ■

● Final Word – page 90



**Steep learning curve:** Candidates on the fire team commanders course under instruction in the Welsh countryside

# IN NUMBERS:

The **Queen's Division** consists of

6

Regular battalions,  
**1 PWRR, 2 PWRR,**  
**1 RRF, 1 R Anglian,**  
**2 R Anglian** and **1 RG**,  
and 3 Reserve battalions,  
**3 PWRR, 5 RRF and**  
**3 R Anglian**

3

The **number of fire team commanders courses**  
run each year, with 80/90  
students on each



Other programmes  
include the **pre-Brecon**,  
**specialist weapons**  
and **sniper operator**  
courses, meaning it runs  
**21 courses a year** with  
a **turnover of**

590  
soldiers





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“

# TALKBACK

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails ([mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:mail@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.

”

## Church rule does a disservice

**T**HE Army is committed to equality and inclusion so I am dismayed that women are instructed to keep their headwear on during church services.

As a female officer who recently graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) I am well aware of the importance of tradition but we are, first and foremost, soldiers so why use an outdated tradition to distinguish us?

Having voiced my concerns, I received support from the chain of command but have been told to comply with Army dress regulations nonetheless.

I believe the practice stems from religious symbolism, where women are deemed to be lesser than men and must cover themselves in public to demonstrate modesty and indicate marital status.

However, across the wider Christian community the vast majority of British women choose not to cover their heads in church – and our personnel should have the same choice.

At RMAS we are trained to hold leadership and management positions and in the majority of cases this will include leading male peers in the field and setting examples of the behaviour expected in wider society.

Visibly differentiating the sexes on religious grounds or otherwise, in any kind of context, undermines an authority that has been won through hard work and all reaching the same

exacting standards. – **Name and address supplied**

**Brig John Donnelly, Head of Army Personnel Services Group, responds:** You will already have realised that the Armed Forces are conservative organisations, resisting the latest fashions and whims, but in doing so they achieve a degree of consistency and stability that is appreciated by most who opt for a military career.

This is not to say that we are stuck in the past; we still move with the times but only when fashion becomes mainstream or commonplace.

I appreciate the point you make about dress regulations requiring only females in uniform to wear their hats in church.

It certainly was a cultural norm and some would say still is.

However, as a result of your letter this particular aspect of our regulations will be discussed at the next Army dress committee meeting.



## ‘It is high time this tradition was trimmed’

● **TEETH** arms are now open to female applicants and soldiers can be tattooed almost from head to toe.

Yet the hierarchy clings to one archaic tradition that is apparently untouchable – the ban on beards.

It is strange that we are ordered to disguise and hide ourselves in public from those who wish us harm but scores of clean-shaven, short-haired young men are deemed inconspicuous.

Beards are worn throughout Nato and are very fashionable in civvy street.

Only this year Prince Harry paraded at Trooping the Colour in number one dress with plenty of facial hair so a precedent isn't hard to find.

Should we ask whether the MoD has shares in Wilkinson Sword or Gillette?

– **Name and address supplied**



**Brig John Donnelly, Head of Army Personnel Services Group, responds:**

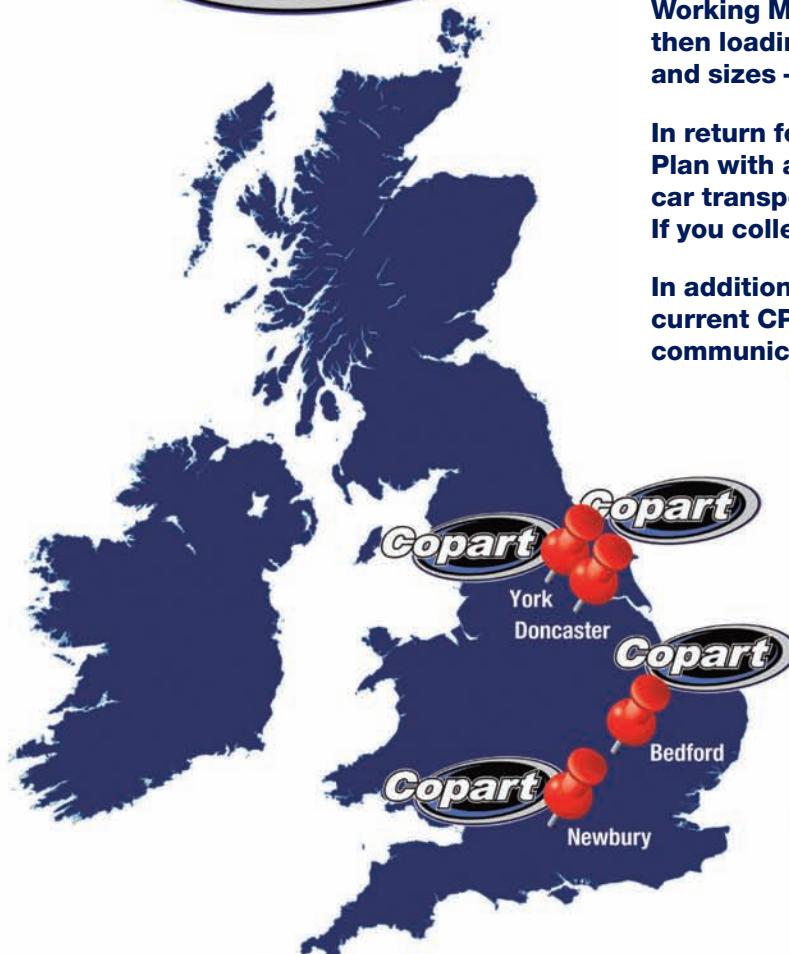
Beards are not compatible with many aspects of operational life – for example, they cannot be worn with a respirator, an oxygen mask or even diving equipment.

In addition, facial hair can have health and safety implications when working with weapons and in the close confines of an armoured vehicle.

Finally, there are so many varieties, from short stubble to full free-flowing growth, it would be very difficult for personnel to achieve a uniform appearance on parade.

As a consequence, the general rule in the Army is that beards of any sort may not be worn, although there are certain exceptions, particularly for those soldiers where they have religious significance.

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## Canteen con claim

I HEARD that the cost of a pay-as-you-dine (PAYD) meal was being increased to improve the standard of food (*Soldier*, September) and while I like the idea I'm also concerned.

When PAYD was introduced along with new catering contracts we were assured the cuisine would improve.

But it resulted in the same staff wearing a new company logo and serving up a menu no better than before.

When I spoke to the contractors at my base I was surprised they knew nothing about an impending increase in meal cost (except at the till) and had no idea an improvement in quality was required.

They do have a nice new complaints sign on the counter, though.

Can you tell me how improved standards will be quantified? –

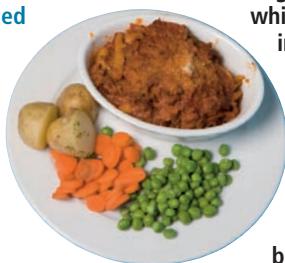
**Name and address supplied**

**Col David Wheeler, Assistant Head of Army Personnel Services Group, replies:** The Armed Forces pay review body set the core meal price (net of VAT) so it matches the

daily food charge. While it will increase prices at the till, it also provides our contractors with 17.5 per cent more funding to raise the food's nutritional content to meet Institute of Naval Medicine guidelines.

A strategy has been developed to provide uniformed subject matter experts and Defence Infrastructure Organisation assurance teams with a clear view of recipes and costings. This will give them the tools to better monitor the situation and, where necessary, hold a contractor to account.

Service personnel will also be able to see for themselves how changes are being delivered through a core meal charter detailing the improvements, which will be displayed in messes and dining rooms. If your food does not meet expectations then please raise the issue at the time and don't wait for surveys or a briefing team visit.



“  
THEY ARE  
SERVING  
UP A MENU  
THAT WAS  
NO BETTER  
THAN  
BEFORE  
”

## This is the real housing threat

● I FULLY agree with the results of the Army Families Federation survey with regards to Service family accommodation (SFA).

The future accommodation model may be looking to fix many issues but from my experience increased home ownership has the potential to kill mess life, destroy unit cohesion, damage the collective belief that the Army is more than just a job and leave our families with little support when they need it.

I spent more than two years serving with the Royal Australian Engineers and on my return I realised they were at least ten years ahead of where the British Army is hoping to be.

However, my time there also made clear the negative aspects of the ambition to create more home ownership among the military.

In the Australian Defence Force 95 per cent of SFA is contracted out to a government-led letting agent which provides personnel with a huge choice of civilian housing pretty much anywhere they would like to live.

If someone wants to pay the extra rent to live by Sydney Harbour Bridge or commute up to two hours away, that is totally their choice.

The impact of this means that the messes do not fulfil the role we expect of them in the British Army because they are rarely supported.

And as many soldiers don't live around each other there is no positive pressure or enthusiasm to attend mess or unit events.

It has also produced a widespread need and expectation for flexible working hours and practices, which the new employment model champions.

This has had a direct impact on all aspects of military life and there is an undoubted feeling of soldiers being civvies in green kit much of the time.

Going down the same path here will cause damage to the fabric of military life and one day we will wake up and realise we own our own house where we want to live but have lost everything we joined the Army for in the first place.

– **Name and address supplied**

## RANT OF THE MONTH



Get it off your chest and on social media



[www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine](http://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine)

Last month's feature on the planned overhaul of military accommodation got our Facebook followers hot under the collar.



**Emma Hayles**

How on earth are Army families that aren't in the position to buy expected to afford private rent? Where we are now the average rent for a four-bed house is over £1,300 per month. I am so glad hubby is out next year and we are buying our own home. This will severely affect morale and many comments on the survey state that they would leave if this was to happen.



**Jay James**

Couldn't make it up, maybe if they hadn't sold a large chunk of real estate like they did on my old camp they wouldn't be in this mess. Sold 23-30 houses and then expanded the regiment. Also, whilst they're having a shake-up of family housing, why not get a decent maintenance company. Some of the stories I've heard...



**Paul White**

Nice idea, but I bet it never gets the go ahead, I am sure Carillion Amey have about a 50-year contract LOL.

## Food fury fails to fade away

● COMPLAINTS to Sodexo about the food they provide don't work so many personnel are now taking to social media outlets to complain about the substandard fare being served up.

One soldier even found a shard of metal in his meal.

Surely, the company shouldn't be getting away with this since the reports of appalling food are continually coming in. — **Name and address supplied**

**Sam Stephenson, DIO Total Facilities Management Change Manager, responds:** We are aware of complaints about food on social media and very sorry that some personnel have had negative experiences.

If you feel your menu is not of a reasonable standard you should raise it at the time with the contractor, face-to-face, or by way of a comment in the complaints book located within the mess facility.

You can also contact the chain of command.

If, having voiced your concerns via the appropriate channel, you feel the response does not resolve the problem, it should be formally raised at the next mess committee meeting so it can be investigated.

All our contractors are required to deliver food to the standards set by JSP 456.

Various assurance activities take place, including contract monitoring, site visits, reviews and customer engagement to maintain and improve the service provided.

“ ONE SOLDIER EVEN FOUND A SHARD OF METAL IN HIS MEAL ”



## Allowance barrier too high

I AM on a course lasting less than 12 months and, as a result, not paying to live in single living accommodation on camp.

However, I was disappointed to learn that when my tuition ends I will have to pay to live in the mess.

Grade A accommodation will cost me £250 per month on top of my mortgage, bills and nursery fees.

I do not qualify for the over-37 package but a colleague who is that age and married with two young children is not charged for his accommodation needs.

Surely, this allowance should be based on circumstances not your date of birth.

And what is being done to help those younger soldiers who are married unaccompanied?

On the one hand the Army is encouraging us to buy our own homes through the Forces Help To Buy scheme — I used it to boost my deposit for our first family home — and on the other it penalises those who enter the housing market.

I am classed as voluntarily, not involuntary, separated — something I would argue firmly against.



I do not choose to be away from my family, my posting has done that.

— **Name and address supplied**

**Col David Wheeler, Assistant Head of Army Personnel Services Group, replies:** You have made a decision to buy a home and do a weekly commute knowing you were not yet eligible for the over-37 package, which is designed to support personnel who have

made the decision to purchase a property in the later years of service.

I agree with your point that this is now inconsistent with an aspiration to support home ownership across the Army and this policy will be reviewed as part of changes to the way defence provides housing.

The future accommodation model is still in development but will include significant revisions, including to the over-37 package.

A defence online survey went live in September to provide all of us with an opportunity to have our say on how and with whom we wish to live in the future.

## Postcard gives glimpse of the past



● I READ the article "The Blackest Day" in the July 2016 issue with great interest, particularly as my maternal grandfather, Charles Crow Gordon, was at the Somme as a signaller with 14th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Charles volunteered in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1914 and returned safely after the war.

He sent my grandmother a number of postcards, which we still have, about his time in France and this one, with the words "Who wouldn't be a soldier?", showing hundreds of men going off to war, is rather special in my opinion.

There was clearly a very efficient postal service to get such correspondence to and from the front. — **Charles Gordon Bell, North Shields**

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# BULLET POINTS

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## COMPETITIONS

**Spine line winners:** Capt John Dargavel, Bridgtown, Cannock; Cpl Josh Bancarz, Athlone Bks, BFPO 16

**Long Shadow DVD:** LCpl Mark O'Brien, RAF Linton-On-Ouse, North Yorkshire; Steve Wilkinson, Poynton Cheshire; Mrs G Matthews, Basildon, Essex; Robert Baker, London; John Southward, Morpeth, Northumberland

## DIRECTORY

**ABF The Soldiers' Charity:**  
0845 241 4820

**Armed Forces Buddhist Society:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;  
[www.afbs-uk.org](http://www.afbs-uk.org)

**Armed Forces Christian Union:**  
01252 311221; [www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

**Armed Forces Muslim Association:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;  
[www.afma.org.uk](http://www.afma.org.uk)

**Army Families Federation:**  
01264 382324; mil 94391 2324;  
[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

**Army LGBT Forum:**  
[www.armylgbt.org.uk](http://www.armylgbt.org.uk);  
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

**Army Libraries:** 01252 340094

**Army Ornithological Society:**  
[www.armybirding.org.uk](http://www.armybirding.org.uk)

**Army Welfare Service:**  
01904 882053;  
[www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support](http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support)

**Big White Wall:**  
[www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

**Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:**  
020 8590 1124; [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

**Blind Veterans UK:**  
(formerly St Dunstan's)  
020 7723 5021;  
[www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk)

**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

**Children's Education Advisory Service:**  
01980 618244;  
[dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk](mailto:dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk)

**Combat Stress:**  
01372 841600;  
[www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

**Defence Humanists:**  
[www.defencehumanists.org.uk](http://www.defencehumanists.org.uk)

**Erskine:**  
0141 814 4569; [www.erskine.org.uk](http://www.erskine.org.uk)

**Family Escort Service:**  
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## Forcesline:

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

## Forces Pension Society:

020 7820 9988

## Help for Heroes:

0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;  
[www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)

## Heroes Welcome:

[www.heroeswelcome.co.uk](http://www.heroeswelcome.co.uk)

## HighGround:

[www.highbound-uk.org.uk](http://www.highbound-uk.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](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk)

## National Ex-Services Association:

[www.nesa.org.uk](http://www.nesa.org.uk)

## National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:

24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;  
[www.ngvfa.org.uk](http://www.ngvfa.org.uk)

## PoppyScotland:

0131 557 2782;  
[www.poppyScotland.org.uk](http://www.poppyScotland.org.uk)

## Regular Forces' Employment Association:

0121 236 0058; [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)

## Remount:

01451 850 341; [www.remount.net](http://www.remount.net)

## Royal British Legion:

0808 802 8080;  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

## Royal British Legion Scotland:

0131 550 1583;  
[www.legionscotland.org.uk](http://www.legionscotland.org.uk)

## RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:

01622 795900; [www.rbl.co.uk](http://www.rbl.co.uk)

## Scottish Veterans' Residences:

0131 556 0091; [www.svronline.org](http://www.svronline.org)

## SPACES (Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services):

01748 833797; [www.spaces.org.uk](http://www.spaces.org.uk)

## SSAFA:

0845 1300 975; [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

## Stoll (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation):

020 7385 2110; [info@stoll.org.uk](mailto:info@stoll.org.uk);  
[www.stoll.org.uk](http://www.stoll.org.uk)

## The Not Forgotten Association:

020 7730 2400

[www.nfassociation.org](http://www.nfassociation.org)

## The Poppy Factory:

020 8940 3305;

[www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

**The Royal Star & Garter Homes:**  
020 8481 7676; [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)

## The Veterans Charity:

01753 653772;  
[info@veteranscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@veteranscharity.org.uk)

## uk4u Thanks!:

01798 812081; [www.uk4u.org](http://www.uk4u.org)

## Veterans Welfare Service:

0808 1914 218 (from the UK);  
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)  
[www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service)

## INTELLIGENCE

**The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at [www.armynet.mod.uk](http://www.armynet.mod.uk)**

**ABN 119/16:** Sexual orientation monitoring on JPA

**ABN 118/16:** Joint medical employment standards harmonisation

**ABN 117/16:** Regular flexible duties – Army trial update 3

**ABN 116/16:** Revalidation of nurses working in and across the Army – allocation of confirmers

**ABN 115/16:** LGBT inclusive policy reminder

**ABN 114/16:** Pension taxation

**ABN 113/16:** Reservist employment support trial

**ABN 112/16:** Diversity and inclusion and bullying, harassment and discrimination policy

**ABN 111/16:** Opportunity for women flagship conference

**ABN 110/16:** Stonewall workplace equality index staff survey for Army personnel

**ABN 109/16:** Contact with the media

**DIN 2016DIN01-148:** Change to PAX personal accident premiums due to increase in insurance premium tax effective from October 1, 2016

**DIN 2016DIN01-147:** Defence patient tracking system – description and allocation of responsibilities

**DIN 2016DIN01-144:** Procedures for defence visitors to New Zealand

**DIN 2016DIN01-142:** Ministry of Defence Police: annual pay award

**DIN 2016DIN01-141:** Stonewall workplace equality index staff survey 2017

**DIN 2016DIN01-140:** Rules for annual allowance in tax year 2015/16

## DIN 2016DIN01-139:

Remembrance Day 2016 and The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

**DIN 2016DIN01-138:** Armed Forces bereavement scholarship scheme

**DIN 2016DIN01-137:** Opportunities for Defence Medical Services personnel to serve with the United Kingdom Special Forces Medical Group

**DIN 2016DIN01-136:** Regular Army professionally qualified officer terms of service – the 12-year short service commission. Implementation and transition

**DIN 2016DIN01-135:** Promotion rules for Army Reserve secondary health care consultant medical officers

**DIN 2016DIN01-134:** Changes to TV licence requirements to include BBC iPlayer

**DIN 2016DIN01-132:** Appraisal load reduction 3 first phase implementation

**DIN 2016DIN01-131:** Defence people health and wellbeing strategy 2016-2020

**DIN 2016DIN01-130:** The joint medical employment standard

**DIN 2016DIN01-129:** Recruitment – the removal of the six-month minimum service requirement for posts

**DIN 2016DIN01-128:** Promotion rules for Regular Royal Army Medical Corps allied health professionals

**DIN 2016DIN01-127:** Army Reserve – specialist Reserve officers and other ranks: entry process and career management

**DIN 2016DIN01-126:** Tri-Service policy for return of service in respect of training courses, command appointments and secondments

**DIN 2016DIN01-125:** Flexible working (non-standard working hours)

**DIN 2016DIN02-006:** Volunteers for specialist human intelligence duties interrogation

**DIN 2016DIN04-171:** Update on current range restriction of L129A1 sharpshooter weapon system

**DIN 2016DIN04-170:** The use of James component reports for

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 62**



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## INTELLIGENCE CONTINUED

incident reporting on BATCIS managed TacCIS equipment

**DIN 2016DIN04-169:** Waffle surgery table (mattress) pad with pump and surgical table straps

**DIN 2016DIN04-168:** Introduction to service of the meter radiation dose Raysafe RF Solo, utilised for testing diagnostic imaging equipment

**DIN 2016DIN04-167:** Amendments to operational medical modules contents – formal introduction into service of Hygea 2850VM ultrasonic cleaner

**DIN 2016DIN04-166:** Confirmed out-of-service date L9 trailer (Python firing platform)

**DIN 2016DIN04-165:** Declaration of obsolete: intelligent battery management system

**DIN 2016DIN04-164:** Declaration of obsolete: BCIP/Bowman baselines 5.0, 5.1, 5.2, 5.2.

**DIN 2016DIN04-163:** Gifting assessment policy

**DIN 2016DIN04-162:** Amendments to operational medical modules contents – July 2016

**DIN 2016DIN04-161:** Introduction of the future aircrew clothing system and drawdown of legacy clothing systems – update August 2016

**DIN 2016DIN04-160:** Declaration of obsolete: BCIP/Bowman baseline 4F

**DIN 2016DIN04-159:** Notice of immediate withdrawal of all

Cartridge IR Seduction Mk 245 A2 with the BKI suffix R or RS

**DIN 2016DIN04-158:** Intended out-of-service date – declaration of obsolete hand tool

**DIN 2016DIN04-157:** Joint C-CBRN availability working group direction for the defence-wide review of chemical sense equipment holdings

**DIN 2016DIN04-156:** Intended out-of-service date – declaration of obsolete hand tool

**DIN 2016DIN04-155:** DES Chinook PT – new email tallies

**DIN 2016DIN04-154:** The withdrawal from service of command detonated munition and the introduction of the replacement fixed direction fragmentation weapon

**DIN 2016DIN04-153:** Formal introduction into service of Eschmann Little Sister SES3000B dental steriliser

**DIN 2016DIN04-152:** Outdated special instructions (line 8) on unit catalogue MJDI

**DIN 2016DIN04-151:** Horiba ABX micros ES 60

**DIN 2016DIN04-150:** Declaration of obsolescence of three-legged lifting sling for Paveway munitions ASE (AGSE) type code LBU

**DIN 2016DIN04-149:** Declaration of obsolete equipment – floodlight mobile Hylite Mk1 and 2

**DIN 2016DIN04-148:** Urgent capability requirements

**DIN 2016DIN04-147:** Declaration of obsolescence of specific serial

numbered Avery Hardoll master meters type code ADX NSN 6680-99-861-7130

**DIN 2016DIN05-026:** Cryptographic items/services: In force directory due diligence project

**DIN 2016DIN05-025:** Contact with parliamentarians

**DIN 2016DIN05-024:** Departmental instructions on handling parliamentary business including parliamentary questions, ministerial correspondence and parliamentary committees

**DIN 2016DIN05-023:** Changes to the provision of Mood business architecture software – introduction of a new centralisation route to obtain licences

**DIN 2016DIN06-027:** Publication of DSA01.1: *Defence Policy for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection*

**DIN 2016DIN07-118:** Instructions for the all-arms commando course

**DIN 2016DIN07-117:** Tactical leadership programme academic courses

**DIN 2016DIN07-115:** Joint Equality and Diversity Training Centre: equality, diversity and inclusion specialist training, 2016/17

**DIN 2016DIN07-114:** The provision of simulated media support

**DIN 2016DIN07-113:** Bonds of friendship scheme, France

**DIN 2016DIN07-112:** Commercial off-the-shelf remotely piloted air systems multi-rotor operations and remote pilot training

**DIN 2016DIN07-110:** Army

resettlement information staff training

**DIN 2016DIN07-109:** Incremental staff required for Joint Service Sub Aqua Dive Centre

**DIN 2016DIN07-108:** Joint Service sub aqua diving conference, HMS Raleigh, March 16, 2016

**DIN 2016DIN07-107:** Training in management accountancy

**DIN 2016DIN07-106:** Mountaineering in Nepal: Army Mountaineering Association sponsored adventurous training expedition Exercise AMA 60

**DIN 2016DIN07-105:** Wounded, injured and sick unit recovery officers training courses 2016/17

**DIN 2016DIN07-103:** The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst senior non-commissioned officer

**DIN 2016DIN08-010:** Flagging of positions and personnel for recruitment and retention payment (nursing)

**DIN 2016DIN09-022:** The use of the VR post-nominals by volunteer Reserves

**DIN 2016DIN10-043:** Army Telemark championships – Ex Telemark Titan 2017

**DIN 2016DIN10-040:** Army Squash Rackets Association sponsored championships 2016/17

**DIN 2016DIN10-039:** WT/WTF Taekwondo intermediate course

NO. 899

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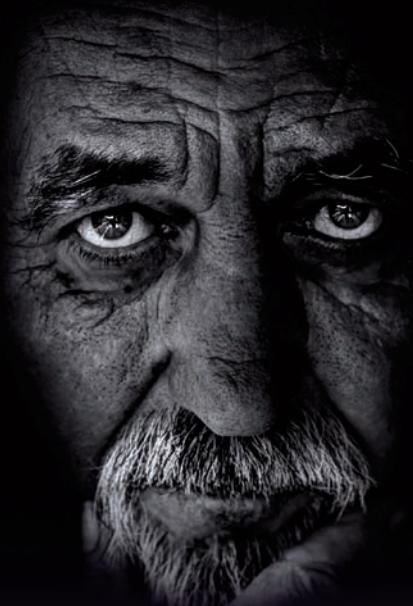
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Rest assured, we understand the pressures that your family has to go through. About a fifth of our pupils come from Forces backgrounds and we work hard to support those children and the difficulties they face being away from home and worrying about their serving parents.

The College has seen another outstanding year with its A level results. 87% of grades at A level were A\*-A and 98% were A\*-B.

The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's, which offers students the opportunity

to do more vocational subjects at BTEC, celebrated some of its best results ever. 84% of grades at A level were A\*-A and 96% of grades were A\*-B. The Faculty's 91% Distinction\*-Distinction pass rate at BTEC (equating in UCAS points to an A/A\* grade at A level) shows equal strength in these qualifications.

Over the last few years our Combined Cadet Force has gone from strength to strength and we have a thriving contingent with cadets split between the Air Force and the Army.

With the backing of The Collegiate Charitable Foundation we are able to guarantee that your contribution to fees is no more than £895 per child per term. This makes us one of the most competitively priced boarding schools in the United Kingdom for Forces children.

With our investment now standing at £100m, 2016 has seen more facilities come online including 8 new grassed sports pitches with over 100 floodlights, state-of-the-art gym and Activity Centre with further

developments underway for 2017. Please see our dedicated sports village website ([www.sportsvillageqe.org](http://www.sportsvillageqe.org)) for further information, including Elite Rugby (supported by Yorkshire Carnegie) and Netball (with Yorkshire Jets). With the number of young people we have living on campus it is important that there is always a range of things to do in their spare time. This is the idea behind our new Activity Centre, packed full of all the favourite things young people like. It combines outdoor energetic activities and challenges such as a huge climbing tower, assault course, trampolines, roller boating, go-karts, Segways and a professionally built BMX track with indoor activities like electronic games, musical activities plus much more. Don't just take our word for it, pay us a visit and see for yourself.

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2	Westminster School	89.91
3	Magdalen College School	87.85
4	North London Collegiate School	87.44
5	Queen Ethelburga's College	86.86
6	Wycombe Abbey School	85.81
7	King Edward's School, Birmingham	85.59
8	The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's	83.67
9	Guildford High School for Girls	83.64
10	James Allen's Girls' School	82.91
11	Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls	81.89
12	Withington Girls' School	81.43
13	The Perse School	80.22
14	St John's College, Cardiff	80.17
15	Brighton College	79.13
16	The Stephen Perse Foundation	79.03
17	Royal Grammar School	78.49
18	Concord College	78.47
19	Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School	78.46
20	King's College School (KCS)	76.99



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# REVIEWS

## OCTOBER'S OFFERINGS



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**P72**  
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**P74**  
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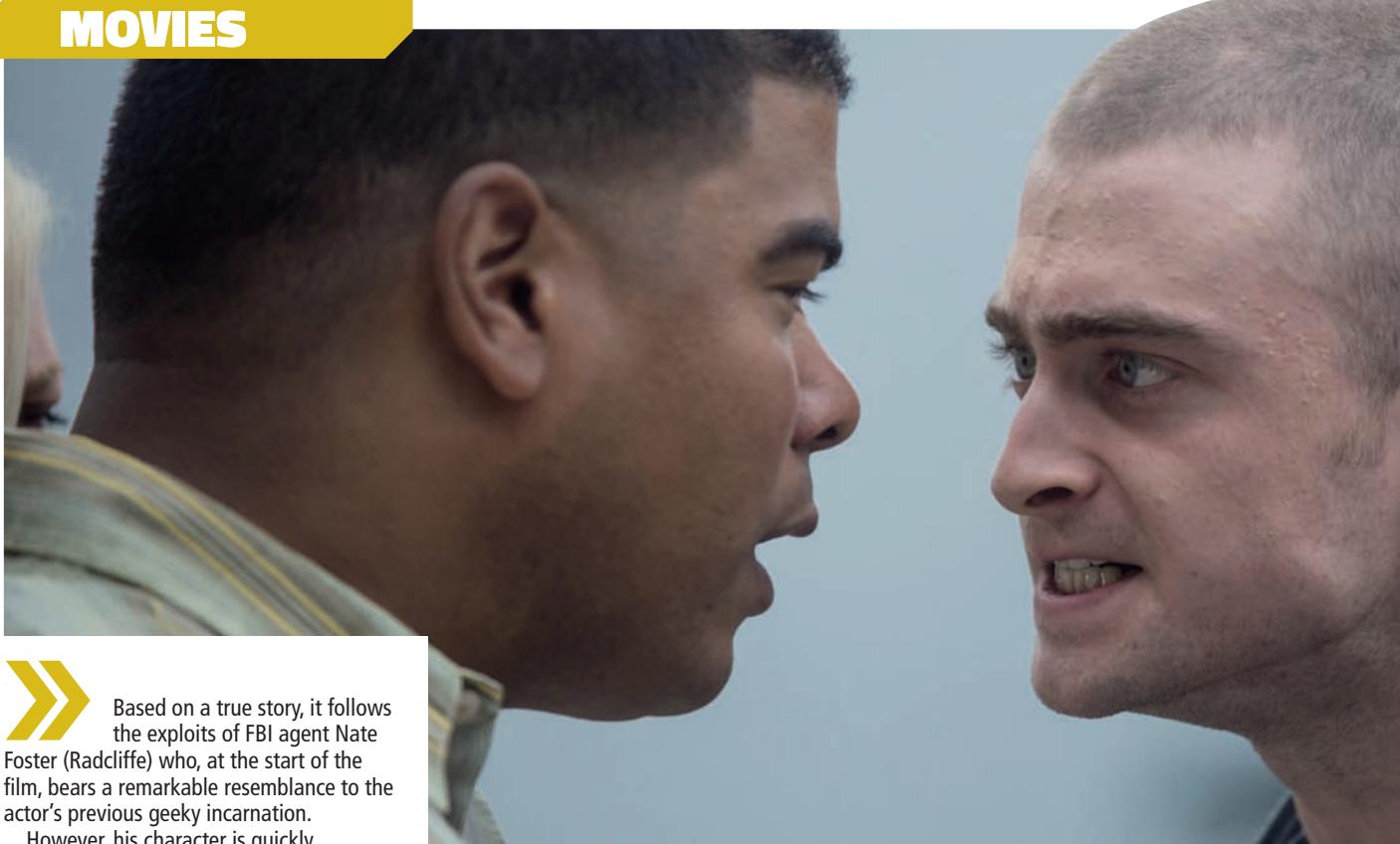
**MOVIES**

### VISION OF HATE

**Daniel Radcliffe thriller falls short**

IN another massive departure from the world of wizardry, Daniel Radcliffe's latest movie *Imperium* – out now in cinemas – deals with the issue of white supremacists in the USA. >>>

## MOVIES



Based on a true story, it follows the exploits of FBI agent Nate Foster (Radcliffe) who, at the start of the film, bears a remarkable resemblance to the actor's previous geeky incarnation.

However, his character is quickly transformed as his hair is shorn and he dons the thuggish attire of those whose world he is trying to infiltrate.

The 27-year-old actor plays the part of the "thinking" racist rather well in this title and, although it is touted as a thriller, for me it lacks pace.

In fact, at times it seems almost pedestrian.

With no set action pieces, this is definitely one to watch and reflect on rather than switch off the brain and munch something tasty to.

Saying that, the overall viewing experience is okay with just a couple of exceptions.

The first is the incessant gum-chewing of **Toni Collette**'s character, fellow FBI agent Angela Zamparo. It was so bad – like a cow on amphetamine at times.

This may be a small niggle but, boy, did it grate.

The second, more significant, gripe goes back to the issue of pace.

Bizarrely, despite the film feeling slow at times, the plot still manages to feel rushed.

Radcliffe's character infiltrates the lower order of the groups, rises up through the ranks and steps into the confidence of the real bad guy, all in virtually no time at all.

There was no sense of the journey being made, and it all just seemed a bit lazy.

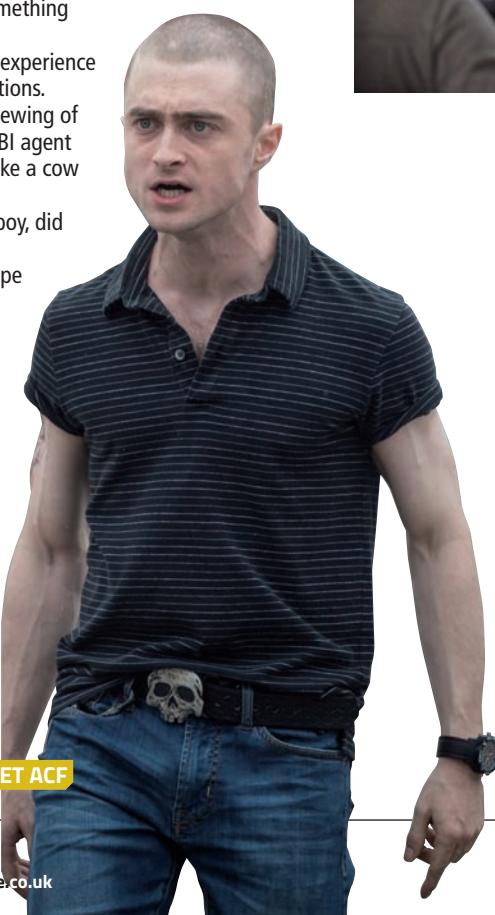
Maybe the story would have been better suited to a Netflix box set. ■

**REVIEW: THOR ELLISON, DORSET ACF**

### VERDICT:

No amount of wizardry could pep up the pace

★★★★★



## WIN!

### Level Up

GRITTY British action thriller *Level Up*, starring Josh Bowman (*Revenge*), is out now on DVD. It tells the story of a directionless 20-something who must battle across London to save his kidnapped girlfriend. *Soldier* has a copy of the DVD to give away to five lucky winners. To be in with a chance of scooping one, tell us which London Underground line serves Hyde Park Corner.

Answers to the usual postal address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

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## DVD RELEASES



### Gods of Egypt

Out October 24

THIS title follows a mortal called Bek (Brenton Thwaites) as he assists the god Horus (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) on a quest for vengeance against rival deity Set (Gerard Butler). I found it quite an easy watch, Sunday-afternoon-with-the-kids type movie, with loads of CGI fight scenes. The storyline is nice and simple and doesn't require a lot of effort to watch.

Cpl Adam Jackson, Para



### The Nice Guys

Out now

RUSSELL Crowe and Ryan Gosling star in this slapstick yet dark comedy, set in 1977 Los Angeles. The pair are thrown into the seedy, violent underbelly of the adult film industry but although

there is potential for belly laughs too few emerge. The gruff, paunchy Crowe counters Gosling's inept private investigator character, while they seek out a damsel in distress with a collective ham fist. But, unfortunately, it didn't really fire my jets. Knuckle dusters and flared trousers, a truly wild opening scene and some rib-tickling moments all feature. But this title is not as quick-fire as the genre demands.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

# FORZA HORIZON 3

Xbox One

► MOST video games come with warnings advising against prolonged use.

However, *Forza Horizon 3* really should come with a different warning, one that vividly describes the possibility of dribbling.

Like the previous two iterations in the series, this is filled to bursting with beautifully recreated cars, all of which can be utilised in an impressive Australian environment ranging from the harsh desert of the outback to sweeping coastal roads and lush, tree-filled forests.

It all looks sublime. Customisation is taken to a new level this time round.



**VERDICT:**  
Fun in the fast lane doesn't get any better

★★★★★

Previously, any tinkering was limited to the cars but now, as the Horizon boss, you can customise the racing events, recruit drivers for promoting a festival, sign music talent and turn your typical timid-looking saloon car into a fire-spitting, road-eating monster.

This feature is truly revolutionary and allows you to utilise a wide range of body kits or choose from a selection of avatars, instead of just the generic one seen in *Horizon 2*.

The one thing that will stand out here, besides the stunning countryside, is the huge selection of vehicles. Initially, there are more than 350 and they all look superb.



## GAMES



To add to the fun, and to test your abilities, the variable weather and day-night cycle is back.

Torrential downpours result in slick racing conditions and cars that look even better when coated in rain that beads and threads its way along the paintwork.

But racing is where it's at here. It doesn't matter if you favour the baritone roar of the new Lamborghini Centenario or the perky 1981 Fiesta XR2, it's all good.

And thundering along the road has never been this good. There is plenty to do and see between events and races, such as simple acts of exploration where there is a plentiful supply of "barn finds".

Online play is still superb; in fact it's encouraged and *Forza Horizon 3* will find you plenty of digital counterparts to test your mettle against.

But that's not to say going it alone is a dull affair, because it isn't.

All in all, this is the one driving game that shows other studios how it's done, without losing the fun. ■

REVIEW: DAVID McDougall, CIVVY

## SOLDIER SELECTS



**NBA 2k17**  
Playstation, Xbox and PC

THE stars of basketball's biggest league return to the court for another polished instalment in this slam-dunking series.

Expanded gameplay options and improved graphics rank as the title's most significant improvements, with the look of the arenas and players now more refined. However, the controls and flow to the matches remain largely unchanged. Fans will be pleased to hear the array of retro teams are still in place and there are welcome contributions from a host of European clubs. On the downside, those ordering a digital copy should prepare themselves for a lengthy download time and there are a few annoying bugs in some of the online play. But these are just minor gripes and *NBA 2k17* serves to underline this franchise's reputation as the best basketball option on the market.

Richard Long, *Soldier*

## PICK OF THE MONTH:

# GAME OF SPIES

**Paddy Ashdown serves up a tangled tale of wartime intrigue**

➤ OCCUPIED France in 1942. British secret operatives, acting on Churchill's orders to "set Europe ablaze", have joined with the French Resistance to wage a campaign of sabotage against German activities.

With the Gestapo hot on their heels, a high stakes game of cat and mouse ensues.

It is a time of night parachute drops, coded messages, disguises and double agents – fertile ground for the latest literary project by Special Forces soldier-turned-politician, **Paddy Ashdown**.

His new offering, *Game of Spies*, reveals the story behind the Bordeaux-based spy triangle involving British agent Roger Landes, Gestapo counter-espionage officer Friedrich Dohse and aristocratic French Resistance leader Andre Grandclement.

In a plot worthy of any thriller, he traces their lives as they intertwine more closely and precariously as the liberation looms.

The book came about through the chance discovery of Landes' diary but when *Soldier* spoke to Ashdown he seemed reluctant to talk about the title's origins, preferring instead to discuss how little Brexit Britain resembles that of the 1940s.

"I reflect on how far our country has moved, from a nation that was prepared to reach out into Europe and place the lives of its young men and women at risk and expend a huge amount of treasure to give Europe freedom," he said.

"It was a time when Britain was the sole refuge for those fleeing from the battlefields whereas now we won't accept any refugees at all.

"Back then, the rest of Europe looked to us to give them liberty and now we've taken the decision that we don't want to be part of all that and I find that quite sad."

Ashdown's admiration for those who were prepared to sacrifice their lives – on both sides of the cause – comes across loud and clear in the book; unsurprisingly, given his own background in the Royal Marines and the security services.

But although he has fond memories of his time in uniform he bristles at being pigeonholed and is quick to dismiss the experience as "highly formative" but "the least interesting" of the many jobs that prepared him for politics.

As well as Commando officer, his CV includes Liberal Democrat leader, diplomat, the distinction of being the only member of parliament elected from the unemployed register (yes, really), life peer in the House of Lords and now the co-founder of crowdfunded political start-up More United. Ashdown's career has been nothing if not eventful.

But back to his guise as a bestselling author. Warming to the business of promoting his book, he continued: "If you want to know the reality of what it was like to be a secret agent, operating in enemy occupied France or what it was like to be a Gestapo officer trying to deal with the Resistance, then this is the most complete picture, I think, that has ever been published."

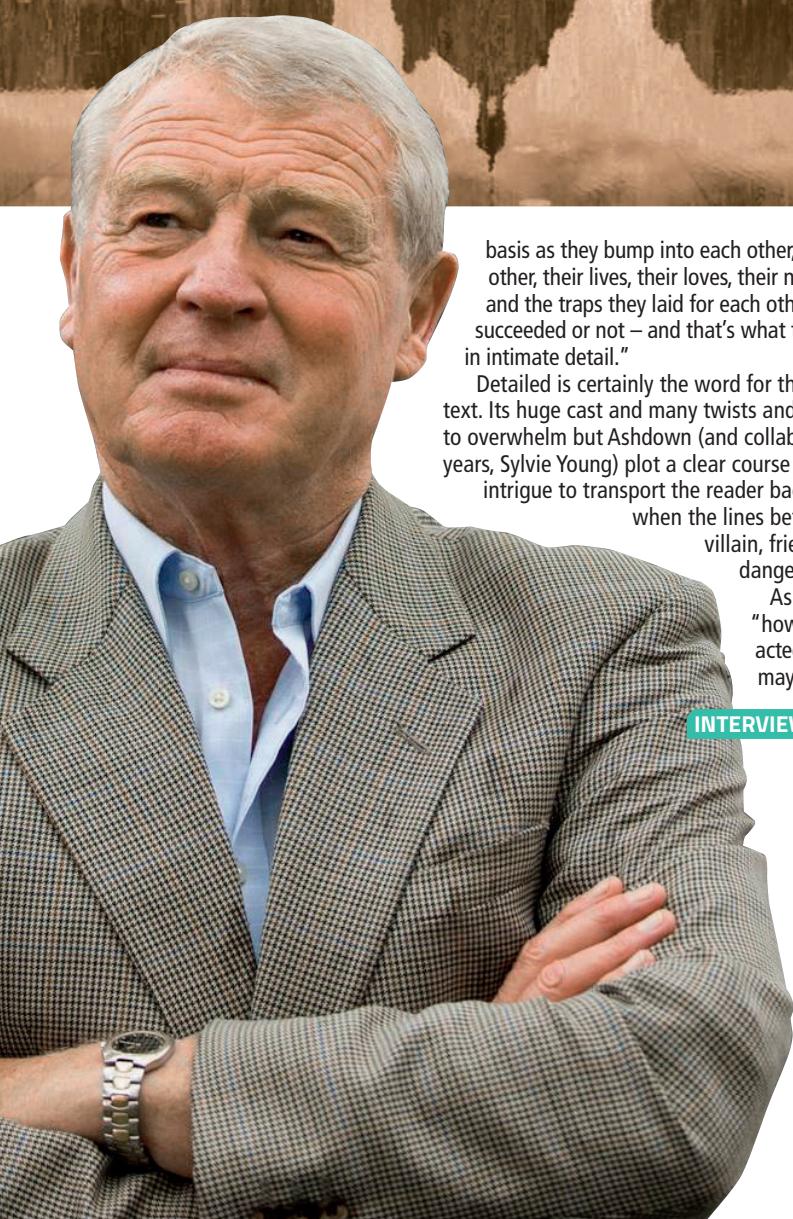
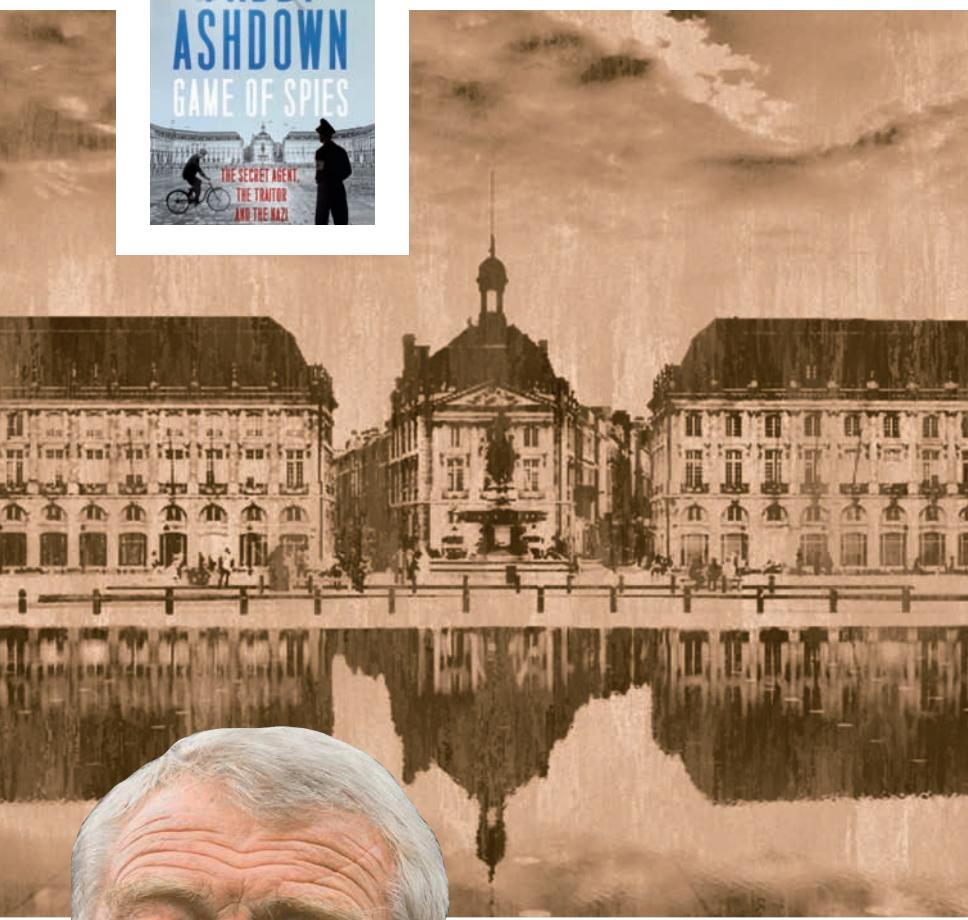
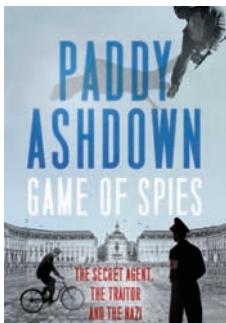
"It is a story about ordinary people on a day-to-day



## VERDICT:

I'll eat my hat if you don't enjoy this book





basis as they bump into each other, try to catch each other, their lives, their loves, their narrow escapes and the traps they laid for each other – whether they succeeded or not – and that's what this book tells you in intimate detail."

Detailed is certainly the word for this compelling text. Its huge cast and many twists and turns threaten to overwhelm but Ashdown (and collaborator of four years, Sylvie Young) plot a clear course through the intrigue to transport the reader back to a bygone era when the lines between hero and villain, friend and foe were dangerously blurred.

As the title concludes, "how we may have acted in their place, we may only guess at".

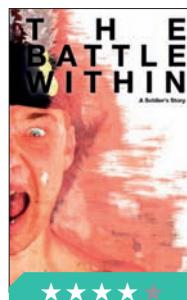
**INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK**



**It is a story about ordinary people as they bump into each other, try to catch each other, their lives, their loves, their narrow escapes and the traps they laid for each other**



#### SOLDIER SELECTS

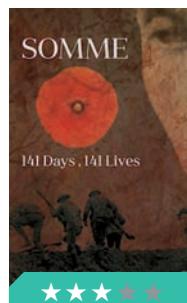


★★★★★

**The Battle Within**  
by Neil Spencer

MUCH has been said about post-traumatic stress disorder, but rarely do sufferers relate their experiences in book form. The author of this title deserves much credit, not only for picking himself up and putting his life back together after struggling with the condition, but for fronting up and telling others about the hell he went through and how he dealt with it. He pulls no punches and gets right to the heart of the matter. It may well be that some readers – possibly in PTSD-denial – recognise aspects of their own lives in this highly recommended account.

WO1 Dave Henley, Int Corps



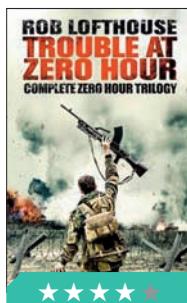
★★★★★

**Somme: 141 Days, 141 Lives**  
by Alexandra Churchill

THIS title offers a different viewpoint of the Battle of the Somme by selecting 141 casualties from the British and Empire armies – one for each day of the campaign – and describing as much as is

known about their final hours. These are, in the main, ordinary people, ranging from a major general down to a private soldier shot for desertion. Each story ends with the location of their grave but, inevitably, many were never found. It is a simplistic approach, but not a shallow one and I found it an informative – if sombre – read.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



### Trouble at Zero Hour

by Rob Lofthouse

IN this wonderful Second World War trilogy by former infantryman Rob Lofthouse we track the fictional adventures of young private, Robbie Stokes, from his London home into France, the

Netherlands and finally Germany. With plenty of thrills and spills along the way, the author succeeds in placing us side by side with his character as he fights for Queen and country while seeking justice for the vulnerable. As we see him mature we experience all of his ups and downs, his failures and triumphs. For all his imperfections, Stokes emerges as a true hero.

Janet Dornan, ex R Signals



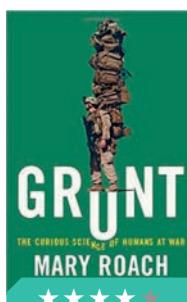
### March by Moonlight

by Jack and Barry Love

AN exciting insight into the lives of young men thrust into battle in the skies over Europe, this title tells the story of Jack Love and his Wellington bomber crew. After crash-landing in Northern France they tried

to trek to safety in Switzerland. The group became split up and Jack and one pal were taken prisoner, spending three years in captivity before the Germans forced them on the "Long March" away from the advancing Russians. It is not until an emotional reunion decades later that the fates of the other crew members are revealed. This is a hair-raising tale of wartime adventure.

Tony David, ex-RE



### Grunt

by Mary Roach

IMAGINE if *MythBusters* wrote a book on military technology; what you'd get isn't that far from this hilarious and informative offering. All your random questions are answered. How did my uniform come to look like this?

What makes ear defence work? And how has the transgender community transformed military reconstructive surgery? You'll find yourself laughing along but the author also covers more serious subjects including the effects of stress and heat on the modern battlefield, how the US military are combating diarrhoea and vomiting and – the topic I found most interesting – how medics are trained to deal with mass trauma.

LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## WILD WORLD

### Bastille

IT'S only six years since **Dan Smith** started Bastille alone in his South London bedroom, releasing just 300 copies of his debut single.

But relentless gigging, word of mouth, some smartly produced mix tapes and the recruitment of new members meant that by 2013 the group were ready to emerge from the shadows.

The release of album *Bad Blood* completed the journey. The record went on to sell more than four million copies and spawned hit singles *Pompeii*, *Flaws*, *Laura Palmer* and *Things We Lost in the Fire*.

Add a billion Spotify streams and a British Breakthrough award at the Brits to the mix and it is fair to say the days of striving for the top are firmly in the past.

The band are now hoping to add another chapter to their impressive recent history with the release of new offering *Wild World*.

"If our first album was about growing up and freaking out about it our second focuses more on trying to make sense of the world around you, both as you see it and as it's presented to you through the media," Smith explained.

"It's also about asking questions of the world and the people in it."

"We wanted the tracks to be a bit disorientating – at times extroverted and introverted, light and dark."

While the themes have changed there has also been a shift in the musical approach.

"On the first record we didn't have guitars simply because I couldn't play guitar," the frontman added.

"So we used strings, layered vocals and beats to get around that. This time we've



added them to the mix – but they're still a massive novelty to us, so it's been fun developing our sound."

Personally, I found it difficult to understand the hype last time round. This was mainly due to the way in which ubiquitous track *Pompeii* was hammered to death on the radio so hopes were not particularly high here.

Despite Smith's claims of a change in focus the end result sounds largely the same as mainstream electro-pop anthems dominate proceedings, leaving the attempted guitar work on the sidelines.

The political leanings in the lyrics offer greater interest, though, and *The Currents* forms one of the standout tracks.

Written about "specific people on both sides of the Atlantic", Smith argues how it is hard to believe that these individuals can have such thoughts, let alone voice them in public.

Other highlights include the lead single *Good Grief* and *Warmth*, which ponders the feeling of helplessness felt at watching global events play out via the television.

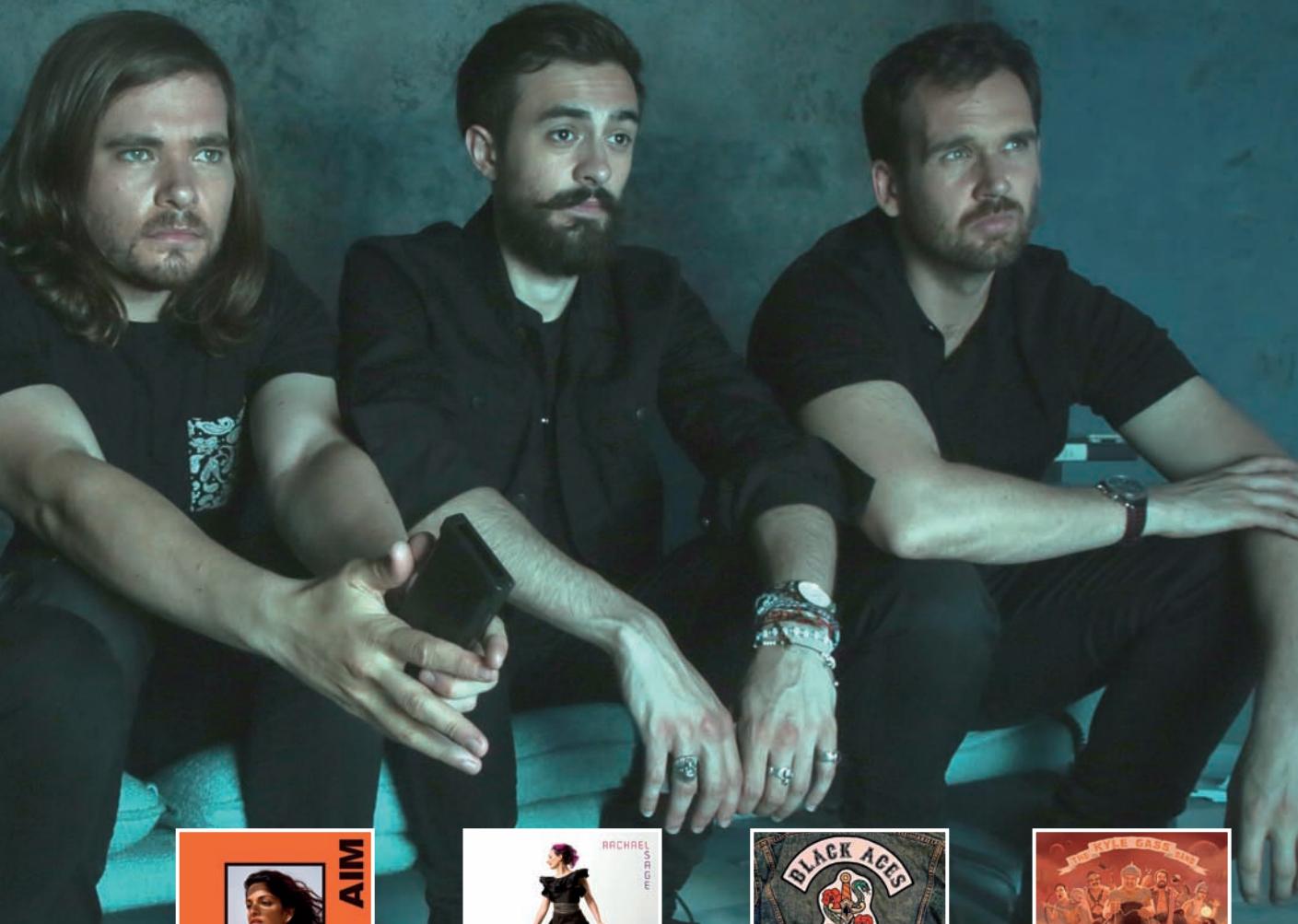
While being far from radical *Wild World* shows enough in the way of progression and it will be interesting to see what they serve up next. ■

### REVIEW: RICHARD LONG

#### VERDICT:

A shift in the right direction but more is needed to justify the hype





## SOLDIER SELECTS


**AIM**  
by MIA

THIS album is reportedly the last release from rapper **MIA** and if that is the case it is a triumphant farewell from one of the most innovative artists of recent times. As always, political themes figure prominently and the ongoing refugee crisis comes to the fore on tracks such as *Borders*, *Foreign Friend* and *Visa* – which is hardly surprising given the titles. There is even an appearance from former **One Direction** heart-throb **Zayn Malik**, who lends his vocals to the incredibly poppy *Freedun*. Greater inventiveness can be found on *Bird Song* while *Go Off* features the trademark hooks found on earlier offerings. As varied as ever and worthy of consideration.

**Richard Long, Soldier**


**Choreographic**  
by Rachael Sage

**RACHAEL Sage** makes her highly anticipated return to the UK's shores with the release of her 12th studio album. Describing her sound as "ballet-pop", she delivers a musically ambitious and emotionally accessible tribute to her very first love – dance. Connecting to her roots in ballet, the New York-based singer envisioned each song as a fully choreographed multimedia experience. Given such bold claims I was expecting some sort of funky *Swan Lake*. But this offering is nothing like such preconceptions; it is fresh, well put together and very easy listening – which is exactly how she described it in her various promotional engagements. I look forward to her next effort.

**Rodge Tapply, ex-RE**


**Shot in the Dark**  
by Black Aces

WHAT is wrong with wearing your influences plainly on your sleeve? Nothing, if you can pull it off. It is evident that **Black Aces** have two feet firmly set in the 1970s and their look and sound are reminiscent of the denim-clad rock scene of the era. As Australians the comparisons with fellow countrymen **AC/DC** are inevitable, but that's where the similarities end. Singer **Tyler Kinder** possibly has the worst screech I have had the misfortune to hear – it is so bad that it detracts from anything else. The music is very simplistic and delivered in a pub-rock production style. Unfortunately, there are no standout tracks and nothing at all to make me want to listen to them again.

**Damian Hern, ex-AGC (SPS)**


**Thundering Herd**  
by The Kyle Gass Band

LIKE **Tenacious D** before them, I wasn't quite sure if **The Kyle Gass Band** were a genuine attempt at a group or a parody of the real thing. With songs like *Bro Code*, a track written solely about putting your mates first, you will discover that they are in fact both. *Gypsy Scroll II: Toot of the Valley* is more theatrical rock-opera than song and makes you feel like you're watching a *Hobbit* or *Lord of the Rings* film. If anything, this might be seen as the sequel to **Tenacious D**'s 2002 release *Wonder Boy*. The whole record should be considered as a musical comedy rather than a serious attempt at a rock offering, and with that in mind it's not actually that bad at all.

**LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles**

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# SOLDIERSPORT

Sports Editor: Richard Long

Photographers: Graeme Main and Steve Dock

**Down to the wire:** The Infantry celebrated a dramatic win in cricket's Inter-Corps Twenty20 final. Read about their nerve-shredding clash with the Royal Logistic Corps on page 81...



# MAN ON A MISSION

Bath flier hopes club form will herald international return as new season gets under way

**W**ITH the autumn internationals just weeks away all eyes will be on Army star LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) as he looks to add to his solitary England cap.

The 29-year-old made his debut against world champions New Zealand in 2014 but has not featured since as injury, and the form of his fellow wingers, left him on the sidelines.

However, the soldier remains firmly in contention having starred for the England Saxons during the summer tour of South Africa and with the new domestic season now under way he is hoping his form for club side Bath will help the cause.

Rokoduguni posted some impressive figures during the 2015/16 campaign – including 12 tries and 68 defenders beaten – but he is refusing to rest on his laurels as he returns to the pressure-cooker environment found within the Aviva Premiership.

"There is still room for improvement," he told *SoldierSport* on the eve of his team's opening-day victory over Northampton.

"But I'd like to pick up from where I left off last season. There are certain areas – such as my kicking and aerial contacts – that I'm working on and I've been doing extra sessions after training.

"When it comes to England all I can do is keep performing, then hopefully my selection will take care of itself.

"The guys are doing really well so it is going to take a big push from me to get in the team – so that's what I'm going to do."

While Rokoduguni's personal form hit new highs last term the same could not be said about the team as a whole, with Bath

finishing in a disappointing ninth position.

The poor run of results saw Todd Blackadder replace Mike Ford at the helm and the Serviceman is relishing the prospect of playing under the former All Blacks captain.

"We have been looking at what went wrong last season so we can build on that this time round," the winger said.

"Last year we were missing a lot of people due to international commitments so there were a lot of academy guys in the side.

"We know we have good players in the squad and the coaching set-up is great. At the moment we are just looking at things on a week-by-week basis and we'll go from there.

"As soon as we reach those goals we will set new ones. We are taking it one game at a time."

Despite having club and international ambitions firmly in his thoughts Rokoduguni also found time to underline his commitment to the Army rugby cause.

The Reds squad is going through a period of transition having lost out to the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy in the last two Inter-Services campaigns but their star man is up for the fight when it comes to talk of reclaiming the coveted prize.

"The guys will want to step up their game this year," he explained.

"Hopefully we can turn that downfall into a stepping stone.

"Fair play to the RAF and Navy, they have really improved, but the blokes are already looking forward to next year so we can put things right.

"If Bath release me for the game with the RAF then I will play but I will definitely be at Twickenham for the Army-Navy match." ■

4

Tries scored by Rokoduguni in the first four matches of the 2016/17 Aviva Premiership season



CAMPAIGN WITH A NARROW 17-12 AGAINST THE NETHERLANDS IN AMSTERDAM

## RUGBY UNION



Picture: Patrick Khachfe/Onside Images/Bath Rugby



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# MONTH in sport

October's key fixtures...



**WHAT:** Inter-Corps Road Race Championships

**WHEN:** October 5

**WHERE:** Redbridge Cycling Centre

**COMMENTS:** The Royal Army Physical Training Corps will be the team to beat having won the title in both the 2014 and 2015 seasons



**WHAT:** Army Women v Middlesex, Football

**WHEN:** October 19 (1930)

**WHERE:** Army Football Stadium, Aldershot

**COMMENTS:** The Reds play their first competitive fixture of the season in the Southern Counties Cup following two trials matches last month



**WHAT:** Inter-Unit Netball Championships

**WHEN:** October 27-28

**WHERE:** Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre

**COMMENTS:** A record number of teams took to the court in 2015 and it was the soldiers from Army Headquarters who claimed the top honours



## SIMON STEALS THE SHOW

**A** LL-ROUNDERS LCpl "Spice" Narayan and Fus Marlon Simon took centre stage in the Inter-Corps Twenty20 final as the Army cricket season reached a thrilling finale in Aldershot.

Both players smashed rapid-fire half-centuries as well as claiming three wickets with the ball but it was the latter who was left celebrating as his efforts steered the Infantry to an unlikely three-wicket win over the Royal Logistic Corps.

The loggies looked well set for victory as a superb fielding display left their rivals needing 56 runs off the final four overs.

But Simon and partner Cpl Kester Baptiste led a boundary-laden counter-attack to bring the target within sight and they eventually eased home with two balls to spare.

There was little sign of the drama to come as the RLC set about building a healthy score as they batted first.

Narayan offered some much-needed impetus after the Infantry claimed an early scalp and the right-hander dominated a 40-run stand for the second wicket.

He then found a willing ally in Sgt Uriel Hill and the duo pushed the score to 95 before Narayan was caught in the deep for 51.

Hill maintained the initiative before being bowled for 32 and his side finished on 146-9, with Simon claiming figures of 3-28.

The total looked to be a winning one after Narayan weaved a magical four-over spell that saw him snare three victims for seven runs.

With his teammates perishing Simon looked to ease the tension but

when skipper LCpl Rob Hislop was caught at point the champions-elect were struggling at 50-4.

A shambolic run-out added to the pressure and with the run rate climbing their opponents were in control.

However, Baptiste cut loose with a devastating barrage that saw him smash three successive sixes as the 17th over leaked 26 runs.

The batsman was dismissed soon after but Simon continued the assault and a booming maximum brought up his 50 and left the Infantry needing seven off the final over.

Three leg-byes and a boundary from Cpl Shane Lottering then sealed the win.

"We left it until late, which is the Infantry way," Hislop said. "Marlon Simon is a great asset with bat and ball and he was superb today." ■



## SPORT SHORTS



### Homeless help

THE Army was represented at the Homeless World Cup in the shape of CSgt Chris Bonnar (Scots).

A total of 64 teams from 52 countries competed at the four-a-side tournament in Glasgow, with the senior NCO acting as a referee during the week-long festival of football.

"To have the opportunity to referee at an event like this was extremely humbling," the Serviceman said.

"I thought I had seen a lot in my 17 years of service but to listen to some of the stories and meet people who have been through more than most of us can comprehend was at times heart-wrenching."



### Captain confirmed

CAPT Gemma Rowland (RA) has been named as the new skipper of the Army women's rugby union team.

Fellow international player Sgt Bianca Dawson (AGC (RMP)) will be the side's vice-captain.

"They will make a formidable leadership team," explained head coach Capt Glyn Barracough (RAMC).

Picture: Anita Milas

## → Team of the month

### 7 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps Cricket Team



THE cricketers of 7th Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps capped their rapid emergence in the middle with a three-wicket victory in the final of the Army Major Units Cup.

Having only formed two years ago the loggies were seen as rank outsiders as they entered the Service's premier competition for the first time but a stunning run of form saw them reach the showpiece fixture, where they downed 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards during a tense afternoon.

After winning the toss and electing to field the champions-elect made a welcome early breakthrough as their opponents found themselves on 5-1.

But Gdsm Sam Blackburn and Capt Jonny Allen steadied the ship with a fluent counter-attacking partnership that appeared to lay the foundations for a big total.

However, opener

Blackburn perished in unfortunate circumstances as he was bowled for 46 and when his partner was caught off the bowling of Pte Chris Hedges the momentum was halted.

Allen eventually fell for 72, an innings that featured seven fours and two sixes.

The guards' lower order failed to match the fluency of their colleagues and they closed on 210 – a total that appeared 40 runs short of being competitive.

Their opponents made the perfect start in reply as they posted a 62-run opening stand. But the loss of two wickets in two balls halted the progress and they eventually found themselves 99-3 at the halfway stage.

Lcpl Upkal Singh proved a calming influence and he anchored the innings with a composed knock of 54 that was complemented by the efforts of the middle and lower order.

Skipper Pte Arun

Raveendran added 20 and the stylish Pte Gopi Singh steered his side home with help from tailender Pte Riyas Kilalathodi.

"We tried to restrict them to a score of around 200 and the blokes did that," Raveendran said afterwards. "It is a great victory for us.

"We are only in our second season and as captain I'm really proud of our achievements."



### Major Units Cricket Final

1st Bn, Coldrm Gds 210  
7 Regt, RLC 212-7



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## SPORT SHORTS



Catterick call

Pictures: Warren Fletcher

» SERVICE fighters put on a stunning show in the ring to help raise more than £30,000 during a charity boxing night in Catterick.

The event – which featured athletes from the Household Division, Army development team, Scots Dragoon Guards, The Royal Lancers and 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment – was staged at the local leisure centre and included ABF The Soldiers' Charity among its beneficiaries.

It was organised by SSgt Tony Davis (RAPTC), former coach of the Army boxing team, and was attended by ex-world cruiserweight champion Glenn McCrory and Team GB star Pat McCormack.

"I'm leaving the military in December and I wanted to show that the garrison is capable of putting on a show like this while also raising money for charity," Davis told *SoldierSport*.



## Paralympic pride

WOUNDED veterans contributed to the Team GB medal rush at last month's Paralympics in Rio.

Former MoD civil servant Jo Butterfield, part of the Help for Heroes sports recovery programme, claimed gold in the F51 club throw – setting a new world record in the process.

Dave Henson, who served in the Royal Engineers, highlighted his progress on the track by winning bronze in the T42 200 metres.

"Two years to the day, I won gold at the very first Invictus Games in London and then a week later I gave up smoking and thought I'd give Rio a bash," he said afterwards.

"It just shows what you can do."

Bronze was also the prize won by Nick Beighton (pictured) in the final of the canoe sprint, with gold going to fellow Afghanistan veteran Curtis McGrath of Australia.

Beighton competed in the rowing at London 2012, finishing fourth, but switched to canoeing ahead of its Paralympic debut in Rio.

Elsewhere, Micky Yule (ex-RE) came sixth in his powerlifting competition and archer Mikey Hall (ex-QDG) finished in the top eight of his event. ■



Picture: Roger Keller/Help for Heroes



» THE serene setting of Boscombe Beach played host to the 2016 Inter-Services Open Water Swimming Championships. Having claimed top honours last year the Reds maintained their fine form to secure the team title – despite seeing one of their Royal Air Force rivals complete the five-kilometre course in the fastest time. The day also doubled as the Army Championships, with athletes from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst winning the inter-unit prize, while the Army Medical Services lifted the inter-corps trophy.



## SADDLE STARS RACE TO GLORY

THE Army reaffirmed their status as the team to beat on two wheels as they celebrated a fine double at cycling's Inter-Services Road Race Championships.

Returning star Capt Ryan Perry (REME) was at the forefront of the men's victory charge but the collective honours proved hard-fought thanks to a stunning display from the Royal Air Force.

With Perry surging to the line to claim the individual crown it was far more competitive in the peloton – with the Reds eventually earning a four-point win.

The officer has enjoyed

another terrific season on the civilian scene – the highlight of which saw him claim a national time-trial title – but representing the Army at the sport's showpiece event was a commitment he was keen to fulfill.

"This is my last event of the year and it has been a long season," he said afterwards. "It is an important race to finish on.

"I love coming back and getting the Army kit on – it feels good. To come and win is even better.

"Last year we walked it a bit and at the start of the season I thought we were

even stronger. But we couldn't shake the RAF and with about ten minutes to go I was panicking thinking 'we need to get this win'.

"They got a kicking last year and thought 'let's get it together'. That will work for us now as we've probably rested on our laurels somewhat."

There was no sign of complacency in the women's race as the all-conquering soldiers dominated the field once again.

The Army claimed the first four places – with the top three crossing the line together – and also took eight of the top-ten spots.

Such dominance emphasised the progress made by the team in 2016, with the cyclists regularly testing themselves against the best in the business in the national series.

"It was a big step," said race winner Pte Charmaine Porter (RLC). "But we still managed to do it.

"The support we get is massive. Without the Army we would not be able to enter the series and would lack funding so it has been great.

"Here, the RAF have been out in force and they pushed us but we managed to come through stronger." ■



## SOLDIERS SET FOR WINTER

PREPARATIONS for another busy winter sports season got underway last month at the annual Army Indoor Snowboard and Ski Championships.

Staged in Hemel Hempstead, the event attracted a strong turnout from the Service's boarding community along with representatives from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

OCdt Mohsin Hussain claimed the individual honours, with the Royal Signals winning the corps competition. WO2 Fergus Jeffrey (REME) took the skiing title.

The main Army Freestyle Championships will be held in Kaunertal, Austria, from October 8 to 22 with the Inter-Services following in January.

Visit [www.awsa.org.uk/snowboard](http://www.awsa.org.uk/snowboard) for more details.



## IN NUMBERS

75

The cost, in pence, of each ticket in the Army Sports Lottery



98

Soldiers currently representing their countries at international level – all of whom are eligible for funding

300

Overseas tours supported in 2015/16



60

Nations visited including an AGC hockey tour to Singapore and an RLC cricket trip to Barbados

## TICKET TO RIDE



Sports Lottery toasts milestone as drive to boost numbers continues

**T**HE Army Sports Lottery celebrates a major landmark this month as the 100,000th ticket is sold for the weekly draws.

Having launched in 1993 the scheme has become one of the biggest funding streams in Service sport with more than £18 million being distributed in grants.

A significant increase in revenue and allocations has been made in 2015/16 thanks to the efforts of manager Lee Dyson and Maj Gen (Ret'd) Shaun Burley, director of the Army Sports Control Board.

The latter has only been in post for little over a year but he arrived on a mission to boost participation levels on pitches, courts and gymnasiums and his attention soon turned to funding.

"The most significant income source is the lottery," he told *SoldierSport*.

"When I came we were selling 82,000 tickets a week, which was generating £3.2 million per year.

"We set a target of

100,000 by the end of this year and have already reached that, which gives us £3.9 million in revenue.

"Each month I can give people money in grants. If a unit wants to take a football or hockey team on tour they can come to us for help.

"We want commanding officers to raise participation at unit level at a time when we're increasing the level of grants available."

Membership of the scheme is simple. A ticket costs 75p and every soldier is entitled to purchase up to five tickets.

The money is collected via standing order and each week a total of £25,000 is given away – with the first prize standing at £10,000.

Members can apply for grants to help fund an overseas tour, with different amounts available depending on where they are going.

A sum is also directed to the body's charitable fund that is used to purchase equipment, infrastructure and other projects that help Army sport.

"If we can sort out the

pitches and give them equipment and referees that's all a CO needs to encourage participation," Burley added.

"Now we have moved away from large-scale operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan we want to use sport in the Army as part of the offer for recruitment and retention.

"The Service benefits as sport develops the character and competitive edge that is really important in soldiers."

Dyson was quick to point out that grants are given to a wide variety of sports and for competitors at all ends of the spectrum – from international athletes to those participating at unit level.

"As long as applicants meet the criteria set out in the Army Sports Lottery DIN they should be fine," he explained.

"Of course, football and rugby union are the two biggest sports due to the numbers that take part.

"But we are seeing an increase in other activities, such as road cycling, and will fund any sport that is recognised in JSP 660." ■

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## SPORT SHORTS



Pictures: Roger Thompson

### Kings of Cowes

THE latest staging of the world famous Cowes Regatta heralded a new era for Army offshore sailing as the Service outfit competed for the under-25 trophy.

In the final outing of the current *British Soldier* vessel, the Service crew gave a strong showing in a fleet of more than 40 boats to claim second place.

That the Army was in contention against sponsored teams with significant budgets was a sign of the quality that currently exists within the set-up as a cohort of eight officer cadets were joined on the water by four soldiers – with the highest rank being a lance corporal.

Skipper OCdt George Jorgensen was among the more experienced members but two had never sailed before.

"We didn't break anything, our heads are held high and in 2017 we are coming back for more," he said.



Pictures: Steve McCormick

## Structural flaws prove costly

### Inter-Services Rugby League

Army 12  
Royal Navy 25

**H**EAD coach SSgt Liam Garside (AAC) was left to reflect on a "no show" from his players as the Army slipped to a 25-12 defeat against the Royal Navy in the opening match of the 2016 Inter-Services rugby league campaign.

The shellshocked Reds found themselves trailing 18-0 at the interval before second-half tries from Sgt Jordan Kerman (RAPTC) and Pte Micky Hoyle (Yorks) restored some much-needed pride at

Salford's AJ Bell Stadium.

But all is not lost in terms of the overall silverware as a win by more than 18 points against the Royal Air Force would secure the title for the soldiers. The deciding match was being played as this issue went to press.

"We just didn't turn up at the races," Garside told *SoldierSport*. "We had a great week leading up to the match with some fantastic training, structure and composure.

"But when we came out to play it all went wrong.

"Our fringes did not show up as much as they should but there was a strong display from Spr Andy Ward (RE), who did exceptionally well."

The head coach also found time to praise the performances of Pte Dom

Maloney (Para) and Capt Matt Keenan (AGC (RMP)).

And with injuries and fatigue hitting the squad he hinted at possible changes for the clash with the RAF.

"We need to shore up the defence in our own half and play with the structure we have implemented all year," Garside added.

"If we do that hopefully we can turn them over.

"There were some encouraging signs from the academy lads so a few of them will be coming into the full side to reinforce certain areas and inject some youth."

"We need to win by three converted tries, which is not much, but we are not worrying about the points difference – we'll be concentrating on getting the victory."





## BOARDERS LAUNCH EXPANSION PLAN

In terms of the Army's sporting participation it is hard to look beyond the mainstream disciplines of football, rugby and boxing when it comes to sheer weight of numbers.

But the Service casts its athletic net much further than these headline acts and it is now difficult to think of a pursuit that is not represented in the military.

Among those pushing for increased exposure are wakeboarding and waterskiing.

The events have been on the Force's fixture list for some time but more numbers are needed if the sports are to grow.

Personnel took to the waters at Bedfordshire's Box End Park last month for the annual Army training camp and championships and with the Inter-Services being staged as this issue went to press there has

been no shortage of action.

A total of 39 soldiers competed in the former event – six of which were women – but ladies skipper Capt Sam Blackshaw (R Signals) believes greater recruiting is still needed.

"We want to promote the fact there is an Army team, with training at development level through to an advanced stage," she told *SoldierSport*.

"We also need to attract more people at the grass roots, especially among the women.

"The standard is improving. People are coming to us with the ability to perform at a decent level but around a third of entrants here had never tried the sport before.

"If you were to do this as a civilian it would cost a lot more money. We receive funding from the Army Sports Control Board and other bodies which means we can get the equipment for guys to come and have a go."

IF YOU WERE  
TO DO THIS AS  
A CIVILIAN IT  
WOULD COST  
A LOT MORE  
MONEY

As Army champion he has been keen to share his expertise with those around him and Blackshaw said this exemplifies the inclusive nature of the organisation.

She added: "Dale is happy to help. He now competes on the world stage and the Army has supported him all

the way so it is great to have him involved with us."

It is a similar story in the waterskiing ranks, where Maj Ross Haines (RA) – an advance-level sportsman – has been passing on some tricks of the trade.

"He will sit on the boat and give instructions – it is great to have that feedback," said Cpl Toby Colley (REME), runner-up in the Army event.

"When I first turned up I was a complete beginner; I'd never done it before.

"At the start it is quite easy to master but when it comes to getting round the buoys it is more difficult.

"But I want to keep going until I get to a similar level as Maj Haines." ■



For more details on how to get involved join the British Army Wakeboard and Waterskiing group

# Final word

*Soldier* spoke to students from the Queen's Division about life on the fire team commanders course



#### Pte Darren Budgen (RG)

It has been a shock to the system. When you arrive you realise everyone is in the same position so you just get on with it. There are a lot of kilometres to cover in the navigation stage and you really need to be on top of your game. But the harder it is here the easier it will be elsewhere. Hopefully I can pick up when I get back to my unit. I've learnt so much and would definitely feel confident about being put in charge.



#### Pte Tim Notton (R Anglian)

It has been fairly straightforward. I joined the Army in 2007 so I've done a few things – including two tours of Afghanistan. I left for a year as I wanted to see what life is like on civvy street but then rejoined in 2015. A lot of my mates are now sergeants so it's time I caught up. It is pretty tough going out here and I can't think of anywhere more demanding but I now feel a lot more confident in myself.



#### Fus Cory Prem (RRF)

It is quite fast paced. You find yourself starting a new week and before you know it you're doing the end-of-week interviews. I come from an armoured unit so we don't really cover the role of light infantry and it has been good to get back out on the ground. I heard rumours about how guys are thrashed all the time and that put me off but the course is completely different to what I expected. The staff are actually training us and I've come out thinking I've learnt quite a lot.

#### Pte Alistair Reid (R Anglian)

Some of the rumours about the course probably put people off. I heard how hard it is and that it is unachievable but in reality that is not the case. As long as you prepare physically and mentally you can progress. I've been in the Army for six years and am still a private so it's now or never for me, I want to get to lance corporal and being here makes you keen for the job.

#### Pte Charlie Penfold (PWRR)

It has been challenging at times. We had to get our hill legs by putting in the kilometres on arduous terrain. I had never done a three- or five-miler before so it was good to do different types of fitness tests. The pace is quite intensive but it has to be to make us the soldiers we need to be.



#### Pte Mitchell Popman (PWRR)

Being a private soldier you find yourself following a leader without really understanding the role of a 2iC or section commander. I have learnt a lot during my time here and when I go back to my unit I will be confident taking on any patrol actions. I've done well in the physical and navigational tests and hopefully I can promote straight away.





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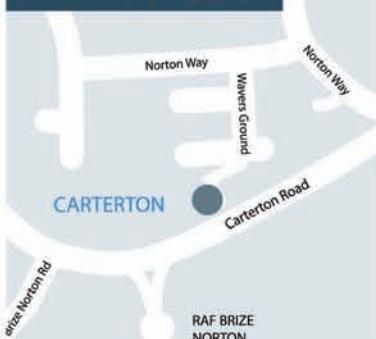
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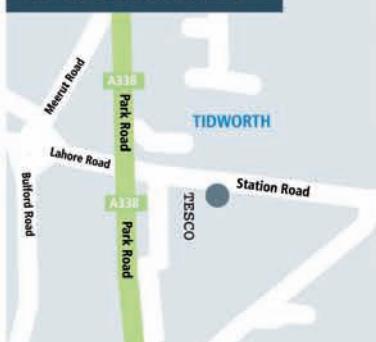
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