

SOLDIER

HOODIES TO HEROES

UK's 'mistaken' generation sets record straight in Afghan arena



INVESTMENT IN YOUTH PAYS DIVIDENDS

INSIDE: PHASE ONE TRAINING • WORLD BOOK DAY • EXCLUSIVE AG INTERVIEW

A-GRADE EDUCATION FOR CADETS

Soldiers of
tomorrow
break student
stereotype



WELCOME TO THE GUN SHOW

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in this issue

MARCH 2010 Vol 66/3

26 **Camo kids**

Vibrant youth keep Cadet Force going strong

30 **Bright future**

Oxford undergraduates sample military life

32 **University challenge**

Students sign up to Officer Training Corps

35 **High techs**

Academics provide hands-on expertise

37 **Booking in**

McNab sings reading's praises

38 **Experience pays**

Recruits benefit from front-line veterans

40 **Force for good**

Education scheme teaches soldiers new tricks

43 **Top guns**

A closer look at the Army's light weapons

53 **Plain preparation**

Herrick-bound soldiers complete their training

56 **Ranked**

Top ten battlefield tactics

95 **SoldierSport**

Regulars

7 **The Informer**

59 **Talkback**

69 **Home Truths**

72 **Bulletin board**

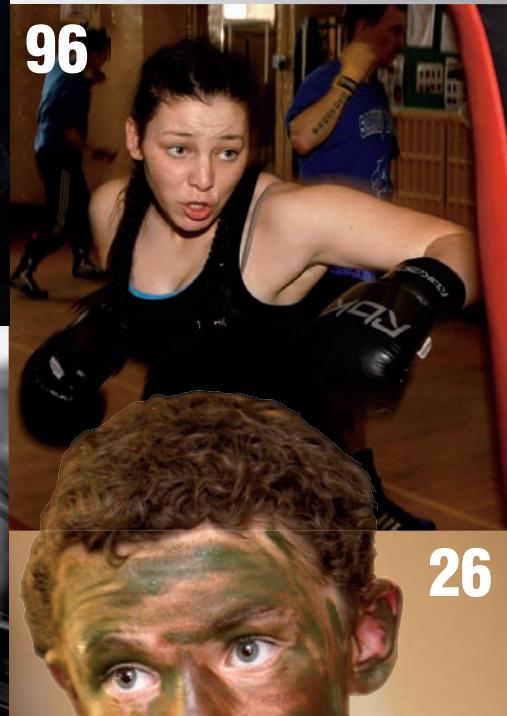
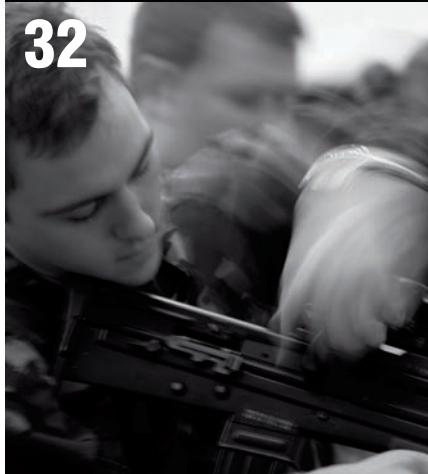
84 **Movies**

86 **Games**

88 **Music**

90 **Books**

92 **Top gear**



Cover picture (left): Gdsm Callum Acton (Coldrm Gds) with his Op Herrick medal Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Army Cadet Force members learn important teamwork skills Picture: Graeme Main

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Est 1945 – incorporating the
Territorial Army Magazine

Parsons House, Ordnance Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

All enquiries: Tel 01252 347353
(Ald Mil 94222 2353)
Fax: 01252 347358 (2358)

Email: mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Managing Editor: Andrew Simms

EDITORIAL

Editor:
Stephen Tyler 01252 347356 (2356)
styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk

News Editor:
Cliff Caswell 01252 340753 (5753)
ccaswell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:
Joe Clapson 01252 347154 (2154)
jclapson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Sports Editor:
Richard Long 01252 347362 (2362)
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Editorial Assistant:
Doreen Cadwallader 01252 347360 (2360)
dcadwallader@soldiermagazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Art Editor:
Tudor Morgan 01252 347169 (2169)
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Graphic Designers:
Chris Sell 01252 355080 (8080)
csell@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Kath Lee 01252 347361 (2361)
klee@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chief Photographer:
Mike Weston 01252 347357 (2357)
mweston@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographers:
Graeme Main 01252 347357 (2357)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Steve Dock 01252 347357 (2357)
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

ARCHIVE

Archivist/Information Manager:
Ruth Kusionowicz 01252 355056 (8056)
rkusionowicz@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MARKETING and ADVERTISING

Business Manager:
Andy Clarkson 01252 347351 (2351)
aclarkson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising:
Heather Shekyls 01252 347352 (2352)
hshekyls@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions:
Stephen King 01252 347353 (2353)
sking@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Distribution:
Patricia Lampert 01252 347354 (2354)
plampert@soldiermagazine.co.uk



ARMY



CIPR EXCELLENCE AWARDS

WINNER

SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by St. Ives Roche Limited. Print
contract managed by CDS.

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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"Boyd, you're supposed to be aiming at the target, not the dean's car... Now watch your front!" University challenge – Pages 32-33

Nothing but a number

FOR all his sterling work on the football pitch and in front of the *Match of The Day* cameras, opinionated Scot Alan Hansen will forever be remembered for his ill-fated comment "you'll never win anything with kids".

The former Liverpool defender's bold prediction about Manchester United's title-winning chances in the 1995-96 season turned out to be as accurate as theories about the Y2K bug bringing western society to its knees as the Red Devils' young squad went on to win the domestic double.

Hansen was unfortunate in that his embarrassing blunder was broadcast to millions of homes, but he is in no means alone in his underestimation of modern British youth.

For while certain sections of the press make it easy to believe we live in a nation plagued by hordes of hoodie-wearing vandals, the truth is that today's children and young adults are something to be heralded rather than scorned.

A bold statement? Perhaps, but you need look no further than the ranks of the British Army for proof. Yes, some junior soldiers – including the Op Herrick veteran on our cover – might wear hoodies, but they also risk life and limb serving their country in dangerous conflicts overseas.

These teenagers encapsulate everything that is commendable about the current generation of youth and their feats of bravery on the front line should be borne in mind by anyone who sums them up based on an ill-conceived stereotype.

Even younger examples of children going against the media-created grain exist in the Army Cadet Force (ACF), which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year (Pages 26-27).

The ACF attracts thousands of bright and motivated members into its fold and while not all of them go on to a military career as remarkable as Military Cross winner LCpl Michelle Norris (Page 29), they all gain important skills they can use in later life.

The Officer Training Corps (OTC) system is another haven of enthusiastic students who want to find out a bit more about the Army. Whether at Oxford (Pages 30-31) or Southampton (Pages 32-33), OTCs provide a further example of young people going out of their way to better themselves.

While neither group exists explicitly to feed the Army with new soldiers, the excellence of their instruction means that anyone who does move into the military does so with an enviable skill set that is matched by an awesome array of kit.

The Service's latest light weapons line-up (Pages 43-45) is tailor-made for the demands of Helmand province and constant innovations such as the Generic Vehicle Architecture programme (Pages 47-49) mean that deployed troops are always one step ahead of their enemy.

The heroic actions taking place in Afghanistan sadly lead to casualties, but the Army is again leading the way in doing everything it can to help wounded soldiers either stay in the Armed Forces or make a smooth transition into civvy street.

Key to this strategy is the new Army Recovery Capability (Page 51), which will massively boost the support and options open to injured soldiers.

All of this goes to show that Britain's next generation is in fine fettle. Sorry Alan, but it looks like age really is nothing but a number. ■

**These teenagers
encapsulate
everything that
is commendable
about the current
generation of youth,**

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THE **informer...**

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

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Picture: MoD/Crown Copyright 2010

Afghan outreach: British troops have been joined by coalition allies and Afghan National Army soldiers for Op Moshtarak in Helmand province

Huge op puts Taliban on back foot

BATTLE-hardened troops have been consolidating their gains after seizing ground from the Taliban during a massive multinational action in Afghanistan.

Hundreds of soldiers from 11 Light Brigade moved to drive the insurgents from their last strongholds in Helmand province after arriving for Op Moshtarak in the largest UK-led helicopter assault ever conducted.

As this issue went to press, the mission was progressing on schedule, with UK Forces, American troops and soldiers from the Afghan National Army all taking objectives.

Personnel were conducting meetings – or shuras – with community leaders to reassure civilians and encouraging would-be insurgents to engage with the

political process. In addition, projects to improve life for the Afghan people, including the building of hospitals and schools, had been identified.

Speaking from theatre, Task Force Helmand spokesman Lt Col David Wakefield told *Soldier* that the situation on the ground had been “extremely quiet” since the action’s initial phases.

But he said the Taliban remained a threat, adding: “We know they are watching for weakness and will come back at us – that is what we are prepared for.

“We have had quite large drugs and IED-making finds and there have also been a lot of shuras happening. At one of them a [suspected Taliban] detainee was handed back by the Afghans amid assurances of good behaviour.”

Commanders are reported to be “very positive” at the progress of Op Moshtarak, which began with a show of overwhelming force when a 15,000-strong multinational contingent was moved into position. Around 1,200 British and Afghan troops dropped into 16 locations in Nad-e-Ali district while the American-led part of the action focused on the settlement of Marjah.

Nearly 40 helicopters were involved in the assault with top cover provided by Nato ground attack jets including four Tornados and a pair of A-10s.

Following the statement of intent, UK troops on the ground met little resistance although sporadic exchanges of fire with insurgents were reported.

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth emphasised that the toughest part of the action – keeping the Taliban from re-emerging – was now beginning.

He said: “The most important phase of operations [is] winning over the hearts and minds of the people of Nad-e-Ali and Marjah so that they don’t tolerate the Taliban in their midst.”

40 THE NUMBER OF IEDs IN AN ARMS CACHE UNEARTHED BY ALPHA COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, THE ROYAL WELSH DURING OP MOSHTARAK. THE HAUL ALSO INCLUDED ARMAMENTS AND 2KG OF HEROIN



SOLDIERS from The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers helped to lay to rest the bodies of their First World War counterparts in a ceremony that marked the start of the burial of 250 unknown British and Australian soldiers. The first of the troops who fell in 1916 at the Battle of Fromelles, northern France, was buried with full military honours in the presence of Veterans' Minister Kevan Jones and Australian Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin, as well as families of those killed in the battle. Capt Matthew Clarke (RRF) said: "It is a real honour for us to be taking part in this historic task, finally giving these soldiers who sacrificed everything for our freedom a fitting military burial." The bodies were discovered last year and were excavated from six mass graves in which the Germans had buried them after the battle. They will all be moved to a purpose-built cemetery called Pheasant Wood, due to be completed this summer. Anyone who believes they may be related to British soldiers buried at Fromelles should contact the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre at fromelles@spva.mod.uk or 01452 712 612, extension 6303. The full list of Australian and British Servicemen who may be among those buried at Fromelles can be viewed by visiting the project's website, www.cwgc.org/fromelles

NEWS IN BRIEF

HELP is at hand for serving personnel who are worried about their weight.

The PCRF Gymnasium at Aldershot's Duchess of Kent Barracks is hosting a new weekly weight management and healthy lifestyle group.

The first session is at 1100 on Thursday, March 4. For more information call Cheryl Zuij on 01252 335819.

REGULAR and Reserve troops from Northern Ireland will deploy to Cyprus later this month for peacekeeping duties with the United Nations.

More than 270 soldiers have been selected to wear the blue beret and serve under 40 (Ulster) Signal Regiment Group.

They will be responsible for controlling a 30-kilometre section of the Green Line in the capital Nicosia.

This is only the second time in the 100-year history of the Territorial Army that an entire unit has deployed on a peacekeeping mission.

Basra wall brought home

A MEMORIAL which stood outside coalition headquarters in southern Iraq to honour the fallen of Op Telic has been rebuilt in England.

The wall, which contains the names of the 179 UK personnel who died during the mission, was dismantled at the end of the conflict in 2009 and will be unveiled in its new position at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire later this month.

Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell explained: "The Basra memorial wall is hugely significant for the families of those who fell during operations in Iraq and for all of those who served alongside them.

"I hope it will provide a place for people to come together and pay tribute to those remarkable men and women who gave their lives setting Iraq on the path to stability and prosperity."

The rebuilt wall, which was originally constructed by members

of 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron, will contain brass plaques bearing the names of each Telic casualty.

The bricks used in the original construction are not able to withstand UK weather conditions and have been used to form the foundations and core of the new structure. The outer surface has been faced in marble.

Brig John Palmer, whose son Lt Richard Palmer (Scots DG) was killed by a roadside bomb in 2006, added: "All our family is tremendously proud of our son and what he was achieving in Iraq. While nothing can make his tragic loss any easier, we and the other families will have a new focal point for our remembrance.

"We will be honoured to attend the dedication service and hope that as well as being a personal memorial for us, it will become a national memorial so that people will not forget the sacrifices made by people like Richard."

Handover plan unveiled

THE Prime Minister has spoken of his delight at the positive outcome from last month's London Conference on Afghanistan.

A number of key strategies stemmed from the talks, the most notable of which could see Taliban fighters paid to lay down their weapons and work within the democratic process.

It was also revealed that the international community has been working with the Afghan Government on a handover plan, which could start later this year and would signify the first move towards a drawdown.

Gordon Brown believes the high-profile meeting generated some much-needed political impetus and acknowledged that such momentum could not have been generated without the bravery of those in theatre.

In his opening address the Prime Minister said: "2009 was a difficult year in Afghanistan – and there will be more tough times ahead.

"All our forces have made great sacrifices, with hundreds of lives lost and thousands of casualties sustained; in the last year Britain alone has suffered over 100 fatalities.

"But these sacrifices are not in vain – all the countries represented here recognise that this campaign is vital to our own national security, to the stability of this crucial region and to the security of the world."

Representatives of 67 countries attended the conference, which also featured a speech from the President of

Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.

Targets were approved for an increase in the size of Afghan National Security Forces, with numbers planned to exceed 300,000 by late 2011, and measures were agreed to tackle corruption within Afghan society, including the establishment of an independent Office of High Oversight.

The military surge will be matched by greater emphasis on civilian coordination and delivery, while development assistance will be increasingly channelled through the Afghan Government.

Mr Brown added: "It will take time, but I believe the conditions set out in the plan can be met sooner than many expect, and that as a result the process of handover will begin later this year.

"This will not signal an end to our support for Afghanistan. I know that none of us here today wants to repeat the mistakes of past decades when the international community abandoned Afghanistan and the region.

"But it will mark the beginning of a new phase, and a step towards Afghans taking control of their own security."

Mr Karzai echoed the sentiments of his fellow leader, adding: "The success and legitimacy of our collective efforts will depend on building the confidence of the Afghan people.

"To win Afghans' confidence we need to clearly focus on bringing security to their daily lives by providing them with the needed protection, justice, employment and good governance."

NEWS IN BRIEF

SERVICE personnel in Afghanistan have been playing bingo on the front line to help raise money for charity.

Troops from The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment sent a plea for help to bingo giant Gala for cards, dabbers and prize vouchers and the company was delighted to support the idea.

LCpl George Horne said: "By playing bingo we have been raising money for Cancer Research."

Gala Bingo will also treat the soldiers and their families to a series of games and an evening of free entertainment when they return from theatre.

CHILDREN born to Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) parents serving with the Army overseas can now apply for British citizenship.

Previously, the offspring of F&C or Gurkha soldiers born on accompanied postings outside Britain were unable to start the process, but the UK Border Agency has agreed to change the rules.

Parents can apply for citizenship by completing application form MN1 and sending it to a British Consulate, Embassy or High Commission.

For more information or to download the form, telephone 0845 010 5200 or visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

DELICIOUS biscuits are being sent out to troops in Afghanistan by US-based charity Freedom Cookies to show home-baked support.

To find out more about the charity or to send details of a Serviceman or woman who deserves a free cookie, log on to www.freedomcookies.org

Soccer star saved by dogged defender

A PROFESSIONAL footballer-turned-Army officer escaped injury when his Mastiff armoured vehicle protected him and his soldiers from a roadside bomb.

Lt Stephen Healey (1 R Welsh), who played for Swansea City for several years before injury cut short his career, was commanding a convoy in Helmand province from the turret of the lead vehicle when it hit an IED.

"We were driving along and then suddenly I felt a massive explosion and got thrown up into the air by the blast," the 27-year-old said. "I fell back into the turret and then all the debris from the explosion rained down on my head.

"My first thought was for the blokes in the vehicle and I felt sick thinking what I would find below me. There were eight soldiers and an interpreter down there."

Lt Healey looked down and was relieved to discover that nobody was injured in the blast.

He added: "We had taken a direct hit under the belly of the Mastiff.

"The wagon was un-driveable but it had done its job and saved us – it was damaged but we weren't.

"I know it is a cliche and everyone says it, but in situations like this you really feel the training kick in."

The officer served a two-year apprenticeship with Swansea City and later signed a professional contract with the club before a succession of injuries ended his football career.

Now back to full fitness Lt Healey still plays football, but his main focus is looking after his platoon, which deployed to Afghanistan in December.

"Obviously working really long hours and living in harsh conditions out here is a very different life, but I really do love the Army," he said.

"Being a platoon commander on the front line is the best job."



Picture: Crown Copyright

New deal for wounded

GOOD DRILLS

MAGNIFICENT MOTHER

SPECIAL recognition has been given to the tireless work of Bonnie Lewington and her campaign to support troops in Afghanistan.

Her son Sgt Scott Burrell (APTC) contacted *Soldier* to highlight the numerous charity events she has organised, such as concerts and bingo evenings. The money raised has paid for hundreds of shoeboxes filled with useful items for front-line troops.

CARING CADETS

MEMBERS of the Army Cadet Force's Royal Signals (Kinross) Detachment have made a great start to their mission to raise £5,000 for the Chimwemwe Project, a charity that works with street kids in Malawi.

The youngsters were given a £500 boost thanks to a generous donation from Kinross's Roundtable group.

FRAUD FOUND OUT

AN NCO who lied about the circumstances of his conviction for benefit fraud in a civilian court has been barred from attending promotion boards for the next two years.

The corporal did not inform his unit of the proceedings as required by Queen's Regulations and lied to his OC when the conviction was reported to Service police through the courts.

For bringing the Army into disrepute and lacking the moral courage to admit what had happened, promotion boards in 2013 and 2014 will also be made aware of his case.

AWOL SOLDIER

A YOUNG rifleman was sentenced to 154 days detention and dismissal from the Army for going absent without official leave ahead of a tour of Afghanistan.

The soldier went missing for seven months before being arrested by the RMP and sent for court martial, where he was told that only a technicality had prevented him facing the more serious charge of desertion.

BAD DRILLS

INJURED soldiers will be placed firmly on the road to recovery with the introduction of a new initiative to ensure they are fully fit for Service life or civvy street.

Working in partnership with Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion and other leading Service charities, the MoD has set up the Army Recovery Capability, which will unite several separate medical schemes under a single umbrella.

The £30 million initiative, which is underpinned by the creation of new recovery centres, aims to bring troops back up to the health standards required to continue their military careers – or to return them to a fit enough state for discharge into civilian life – however long it takes.

Defence Under-Secretary Kevan Jones believed the new recovery capability would further bolster standards of care for soldiers and help them in their battle back to fitness.

He added in a statement: "This is another step in the ongoing improvements we have made to welfare support for Service personnel, their families and veterans.

"It underlines the Government's commitment, outlined in the 2008

Service Personnel Command Paper, to deliver world class services for our Armed Forces."

As part of the recovery plan, Personnel Recovery Units will replace the Army's existing sickness and absence management teams. Based around the UK, these will tailor personal health and fitness plans to individual injured soldiers to assist in their treatment.

Construction of the new centres will begin soon, with the first set to be up and running in Colchester next year, and others following in Bulford and Edinburgh. The scheme will be able to support up to 1,500 soldiers at any time, and will also be open to mobilised reservists and will assist personnel from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force where needed.

The implementation of the recovery plan follows a series of high profile improvements to military health care. Among them is a new 58-bed accommodation block at the Headley Court rehabilitation centre in Epsom, Surrey and a new package of measures to support personnel who have sustained serious injuries, which was unveiled by the Government earlier in the year.

3 THE NUMBER OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES POINTED OUT TO PATROLLING BRITISH TROOPS BY A RESIDENT OF KALAMIAN VILLAGE. THE BOMBS WERE DISPOSED OF BY INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE PERSONNEL

Afghan infants' idols

MILITARY medics saved the lives of two girls who were seriously injured by a Taliban IED.

Kamila (3) and six-year-old Wasila suffered severe head and stomach injuries after triggering the device while out playing in Musa Qala in Helmand province.

The girls' father took the injured pair to the town's district centre where coalition troops deemed their injuries to be so bad that the youngsters were flown to Kandahar by a British medical emergency response team for treatment.

Multinational staff provided life-saving care and the sisters made a full recovery before being flown back to Musa Qala.

Dr Kao, the Canadian physician who looked after the girls, said: "Before Kamila arrived, we had a

young boy with similar injuries who died so we were all very nervous about her chances.

"After initial treatment the signs were not good, but Kamila is now interacting with the people around her and even smiling. We consider Kamila our miracle child."

Lt Andrew Jelinek, an officer serving with the Household Cavalry Battlegroup in Musa Qala, said the incident highlighted the terrible toll that insurgent IEDs take on innocent civilians.

He added: "They have had a deadly effect on British and coalition forces, but it is the ordinary Afghan people that are hit the hardest. Unfortunately, children are the frequent victims of Taliban IEDs and, sadly, the story of Kamila and Wasila is far from unique."



Picture: Eli Dean SSAFA Forces Help

FORCES sweetheart Nell McAndrew provided a touch of glamour as The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help launched its 125th anniversary celebrations. The model was joined by Chelsea Pensioners and a timeline of troops from throughout the organisation's history – including the 1885 Redcoats pictured above – at the first of several events being held to commemorate the landmark birthday. She said: "What's so special about SSAFA is the fact that they will be there for our Servicemen and women and their families for the rest of their lives. They provide a huge amount of support to those who are out in Afghanistan fighting now and their loved ones." SSAFA offers a host of important services, including two "home from home" houses for the families of injured personnel and regularly-held family support groups. For more information, visit www.ssafa125.org.uk

Paper ponders UK security

A NEW publication posing important questions for the future of defence has been released by the MoD.

The green paper analyses the wide range of potential threats to the UK, including terrorism, nuclear states, cyber-warfare, resource scarcity and climate change.

It also reflects on the lessons learned in conflict, with particular reference to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The paper's key questions have been posed ahead of an expected post-election strategic defence review

and ask what contribution the Armed Forces should be making to ensure security within the UK.

Other queries include what efforts could be made to prevent conflict and strengthen international stability and whether our forces should be integrated with key allies and partners.

On publishing the paper, Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said: "Afghanistan is the top priority today but we must also ensure that our Armed Forces are ready to confront the challenges for tomorrow."

Tattoo tickets for troops

SERVICEMEN and women are being offered 1,000 free tickets to The Royal Tattoo at Windsor Castle.

The event will be held in the private grounds of the castle from May 12 to 15, with performances every evening from 2030 to 2230.

A total of 500 free tickets are being made available for personnel for the Thursday, May 13.

The Telegraph is making the same

offer for the show on Wednesday, May 12. Anyone interested should call the box office on 0871 2305570, quoting "Telegraph" and giving their name, rank, number and unit.

Tickets will be allocated at a maximum of two per person on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tickets, which cost from £20 to £65, can also be bought by visiting www.windsortattoo.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

A REVISED edition of the Army Staff Handbook has been published.

The book, which can be accessed on the Army intranet homepage, covers the functions of Headquarters Land Forces and working principles and practices for Army personnel.

THE King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery marked the anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne with a 41-royal gun salute in London's Hyde Park.

Colour-matched horses pulled six First World War-era 13-pounder guns through the park before each gun fired a blank cartridge at ten-second intervals at noon.

The spectacle was followed by a 62-gun salute by 14 Regiment Royal Artillery at the Tower of London.

PROMOTION for Army medical and dental officers will now take merit into account alongside seniority.

The change in policy, which has taken immediate effect, has been introduced to ensure that talented personnel are able to progress to senior posts at an early stage if their performance warrants it.

Clinical officers should contact their career managers for specific advice on how they will be affected.

Cash boost for wounded warriors

PAYOUTS for soldiers injured in the course of their service are to increase following a comprehensive review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth announced raises of up to 50 per cent to all lump-sum awards apart from the recently-doubled £570,000 top payout, as well as higher rates for mental illness.

The life-long, tax-free Guaranteed Income Payment has been increased to reflect the lasting effect on the promotion potential of those who have

suffered more serious injuries.

Increased time limits for claims to be filed as well as greater flexibility in cases where records have not been properly kept are also to be introduced when the review's recommendations are implemented within the next year.

Mr Ainsworth said: "It is vital that our Armed Forces know that if they are injured due to service they will be properly supported by the nation. This includes getting the right compensation.

"We have accepted [the report's] recommendations and we are

committed to implementing these changes as soon as possible."

Undertaken by a committee chaired by former Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Lord Boyce, the review aimed to examine the validity of the existing compensation scheme and ensure it remained fit for purpose in the current operational climate.

The panel's suggested new policies include the introduction of an interim payment to cover injured personnel financially during the claims process and the setting up of an expert medical body to advise on compensation for particular cases such as hearing loss, mental health and genital injury.

Lord Boyce said that although his team had found the current scheme to be "essentially fit for purpose", significant improvements were possible.

He added: "This has been a thorough and wide-ranging review conducted with pace but also with rigour.

"My recommendations have been accepted by defence ministers and I am confident that they will work to introduce them as soon as possible."

● To view the committee's full report, visit <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/PolicyStrategyandPlanning/TheReviewOfTheAfcs2010.htm>

Picture: Cpl Jon Bevan, RLC



Helping hand: Soldiers injured on operations are in line to receive increased compensation payouts

NEWS IN BRIEF

SECOND World War code-breaking centre Bletchley Park is appealing to history buffs to volunteer as tour guides and stewards.

A recruitment campaign is being launched at Bletchley on Friday, March 12 and Saturday, March 13 at 1100. For more information visit www.bletchleypark.org.uk or contact Niki Holmes-Bridges on 01908 272675 or by email at volunteer@bletchleypark.org.uk

SOLDIERS with PAX personal accident policies face a ten per cent price hike after the scheme raised its premiums to cover an increase in claims.

The higher fees are likely to cost the average deployed Serviceman with 11 units of personal accident-only cover £42.90 per month instead of £39.05.

An additional premium applied to policyholders on operations in Afghanistan has also been introduced, but the cost will be covered by the MoD under an extension to existing Service Risks Insurance Refunds.

PAX insurance is an optional extra for soldiers as the MoD already provides cover through the Armed Forces Compensation and Pension Schemes.

Civvy experts sign up for ops

A NEWLY-FORMED British group will have a vital part to play in bringing stability to trouble hot spots around the world, according to the Prime Minister.

Speaking at the launch of the Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG), Gordon Brown said that crack teams from the 1,000-strong pool of UK professionals would be ready to deploy to failing states and crisis zones with less than 24 hours notice.

CSG units will also help Afghanistan get back on its feet by working alongside elders and district governors in areas that have been secured by coalition and national troops.

Mr Brown added: "Hot stabilisation means civilian experts are able to deploy in close cooperation with the military and can show immediate progress.

"This work in the field that so often goes unnoticed is absolutely vital to the enduring success of any military or stabilisation operation."

The CSG was first mooted in 2008 when Mr Brown called for the

creation of a civilian contingent capable of bringing reconstruction and stabilisation expertise to troubled areas.

Covering fields including law enforcement, governance, economic recovery and security sector reform, the group is sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

As well as aiding the Army's mission on Op Herrick, CSG assets have been earmarked to boost the civilian effort in countries including Iraq, Sudan, Kosovo, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

They also provided assistance to the Haitian Government following the recent earthquakes by rebuilding prisons and helping the World Bank to identify priorities.

CSG head Sheelagh Stewart said: "The unit is the government's centre of expertise and best practice in stabilisation, responding to the complex challenges of fragile and conflict-affected states."



Green machine: Royal Engineers from 10 Field Squadron (Air Support) worked through the night and under fire to get a vital bridge in Nad-e-Ali into place

Bridge over troubled water

PLUCKY sappers dipped into their box of tricks to overcome a Taliban ambush and finish building an important bridge in the Nad-e-Ali district of Afghanistan.

The soldiers, from 10 Field Squadron (Air Support), were working on the structure when insurgents attacked, forcing them to take cover in a ditch while British and Afghan National Army troops fired back.

Returning to finish the job the next day, the engineers again came under contact but the use of smoke grenades provided them with the cover they needed to get the bridge into position.

Troop commander Lt Kristian Haagensen said: "We went in in the

middle of the night, assembled the bridge and placed it at first light.

"Again as it got light the insurgents contacted us with some small arms fire. The lads got down in the ditch and we actually used the digger scoop to get them into a safe position.

"Smoke was called in to provide us with cover and once it had cleared, the build was complete – a gleaming result."

Spr Craig Mellon explained how he and his colleagues had scrambled for cover after enemy fighters opened fire from a compound just 250 metres away.

"We were stuck in the ditch for an hour, but once the threat had passed we got on with it," the 24-year-old said. "I suppose I did feel nervous afterwards,

but this is the job we trained to do."

Fellow sapper Daniel Nansoz praised the strength of the plant equipment used by Royal Engineers in Afghanistan.

"I was in the cab of the digger when the insurgents opened fire," he said. "I was well protected by the armour and kept my head down until it was over."

The completed bridge is initially being used to allow troops to reach an area home to several insurgents but will eventually be opened up to civilian traffic. A second, smaller crossing for motorbikes is already in place.

Lt Haagensen added: "Once we have pushed the insurgents out the locals will be able to move freely and the vehicle bridge will make their lives a lot easier."

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£18,000	COLCHESTER MILITARY FESTIVAL The town's fifth Services' celebration was back with its biggest-ever set of military displays last year after taking a break in 2008. The bi-annual event returns on July 16, 2011	Army Benevolent Fund, 16 Air Assault Brigade Commander's Welfare Fund and Mayor of Colchester's Charities
2	£16,000	ALPHA TROOP, 256 SIGNAL SQUADRON An incredible year of fund-raising activities in 2009 – topped off by a 14-mile trip along a London canal on a swan-shaped pedalo – saw Alpha Troop pull in an impressive five-figure sum	Various Armed Forces charities and Cancer Research
3	£2,000	SSGT BRIAN CHENIER (RMP) The super-fit 40-year-old plans to cycle 650 miles from Cornwall to Yorkshire to support a charity offering holidays to bereaved Service families	Family Activity Breaks, www.uk.virginmoneygiving.com/BrianChenier

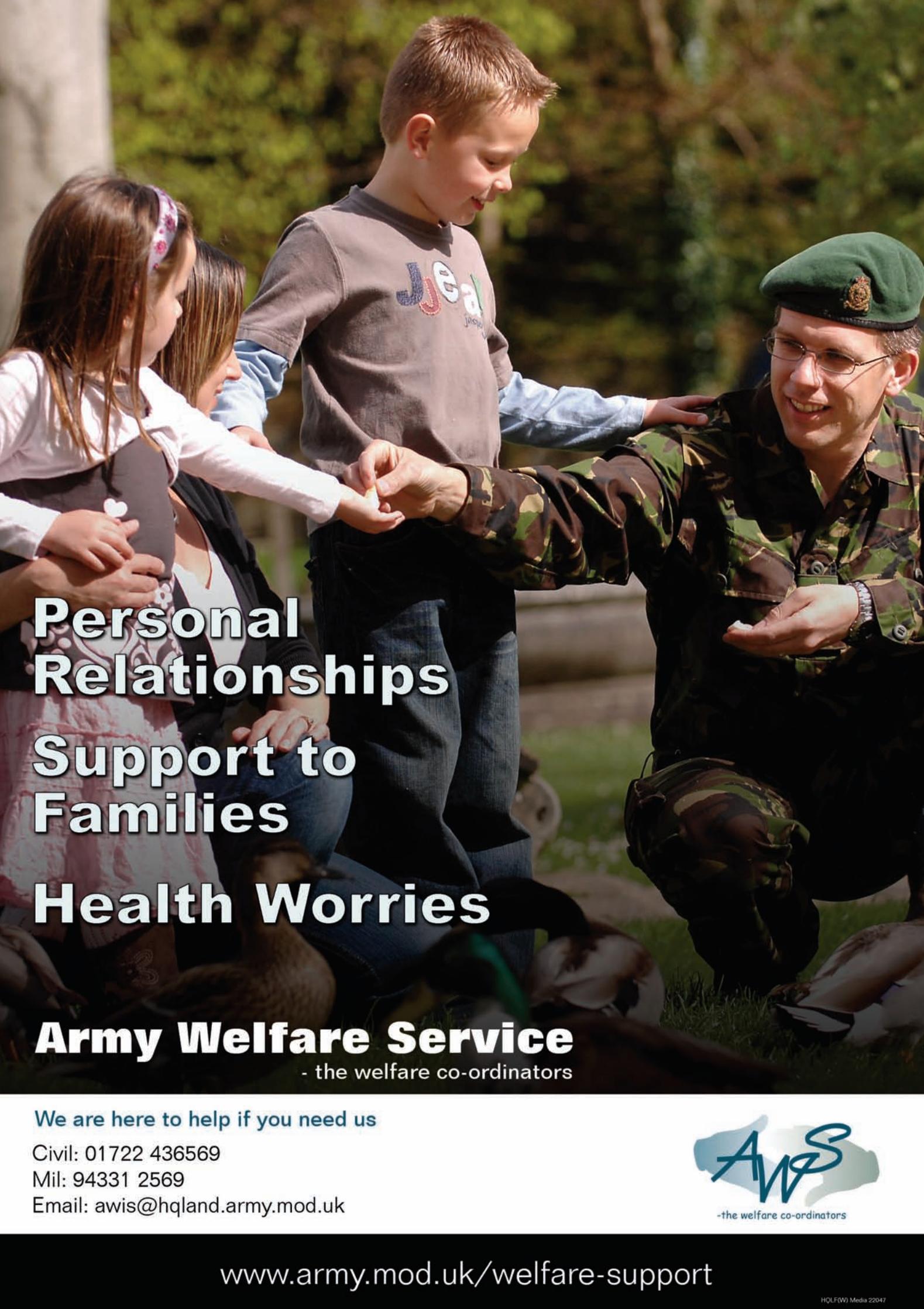
NEWS IN BRIEF

AN iconic Second World War aircraft has completed its move to the current home of British Airborne Forces.

The Dakota, which is the same model as those used in the conflict to deliver troops to the front line, has been moved to 16 Air Assault Brigade's headquarters at Colchester Garrison.

The plane had stood in Aldershot, the former home of The Parachute Regiment, since the mid-1970s and was moved to its new location outside the main gates of Merville Barracks in four sections on a road convoy.

Col Hugo Fletcher, deputy commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade, said: "We are pleased and proud to have the Dakota at Colchester."



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IN MEMORIAM



RFN PETER ALDRIDGE (19)
4TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JANUARY 22 – AFGHANISTAN

THE life of a young soldier who had a depth of experience "beyond his years" was cruelly taken during a tough tour of Afghanistan.

Rfn Peter Aldridge, of 4th Battalion, The Rifles, was killed after a roadside bomb detonated during a foot patrol in Sangin. With his last words, the 19-year-old asked a medic to tell his mother that he loved her.

Remembered as a consummate professional who was devoted to girlfriend Jem, Folkestone-born Rfn Aldridge enlisted in the Army Foundation College, Harrogate, in 2006.

He joined his battalion two years ago and had been excelling throughout his first operational tour in the military, where he was serving as part of the 3 Rifles Battlegroup.

Lt Col Rupert Jones, CO of 4 Rifles, remembered Rfn Aldridge as a natural leader who acted with courage and selflessness and was always in the thick of events.

He added: "It was clear when he first arrived in the battalion that he was more comfortable in the field than the barracks and in Afghanistan his character came to the fore.

"Early in the tour he was his platoon sergeant's wingman as the 60mm mortarman but later took over as a section lead man. There is no lonelier task and it demands real depth of courage and selflessness, but he had plenty.

"The most fitting testimony that can be paid to him is that we all continue the task on which he died. He would want nothing less."



LCPL DANIEL COOPER (21)
3RD BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JANUARY 24 – AFGHANISTAN

FRIENDS and colleagues of a much-respected "consummate soldier" have been remembering a life lived to the full following his death in southern Afghanistan.

LCpl Daniel Cooper, of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, died from his injuries after a roadside bomb detonated near Sangin, Helmand province, on the morning of January 24.

The 21-year-old, who was from Hereford, had been helping to clear a route for a resupply patrol through a known problem area when the explosion happened.

Remembered for his skill, talent and strong leadership potential, LCpl Cooper joined the Army in 2005, originally enlisting in 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry.

He deployed to southern Afghanistan with 3 Rifles in October last year, where he was promoted in the field after his section second-in-command was injured.

His commanding officer, Lt Col Nick Kitson, said: "LCpl Daniel Cooper was one of the greater characters of the battalion. His sense of humour and zest for life were topped only by his ability and determination.

"He will be sorely missed by all and we shall continue the noble task for which he laid down his life."

LCpl Cooper's company commander Maj Tim Harris added: "He was an excellent soldier with incredible stamina – he had clear and unequivocal potential for a long career."



CPL LIAM RILEY (21)
3RD BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 1 – AFGHANISTAN

TWO soldiers described as "extraordinarily fine representatives" of their regiment were killed in a double IED blast in southern Afghanistan.

Cpl Liam Riley and LCpl Graham Shaw, both of 3rd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, were serving with the Coldstream Guards Battlegroup in the Babaji district of Helmand. They were killed while on foot patrol near Malgir.

Cpl Riley had volunteered at short notice to serve in Afghanistan, such was his eagerness to do his duty.

Lt Col Tom Vallings, commanding officer of 3 Yorks, said: "I have little doubt that Cpl Riley was heading to the top of his profession. He led by example, with boundless energy and an infectious smile that would spur his team on when life got tough.

"He was killed while heroically returning fire to extract one of his team."

The 21-year-old from Sheffield wanted to join the Army from a young age. In a statement, Cpl Riley's family said: "He took to Army life like a duck to water.

"He was very conscientious in his work and didn't want to disappoint anyone.

"He loved and respected his family and friends and was very close to his siblings Jonathan and Olivia.

"He was a bubbly, fun-loving lad and all his family and friends loved him. No one will ever replace him."

LCpl Graham Shaw was from a military family and was proud to have been on operations with the British Army.

Of the junior NCO, Lt Col Vallings said: "Typically, LCpl Shaw was at the front of the patrol when he was killed.

"[He] was totally selfless, an excellent soldier and the best of fun. He would brighten your day with his sense of humour and determination to get the job done."

Born in Huddersfield, LCpl Shaw led a very active life and enjoyed it to the full, taking part in a wide range of different sports from skydiving to surfing as well as going skiing with the Army in Canada.

His parents, Russ and Karen, said: "All the members of Graham's family are deeply saddened by the loss of a beloved member of the family who has been taken away from us in the prime of life.

"We are all very proud of our hero."

LSgt Steve Stuart, a section commander serving with the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, described his fallen colleague as an inspiration to all those around him.

"He will be greatly missed by his friends and both regiments; he devoted his life to the service of both," he said.

Maj Charlie Foinette, officer commanding 4 Company, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, added: "That they are such a very strong multiple is to a large degree due to the infectious and highly-professional personalities of their team commanders.

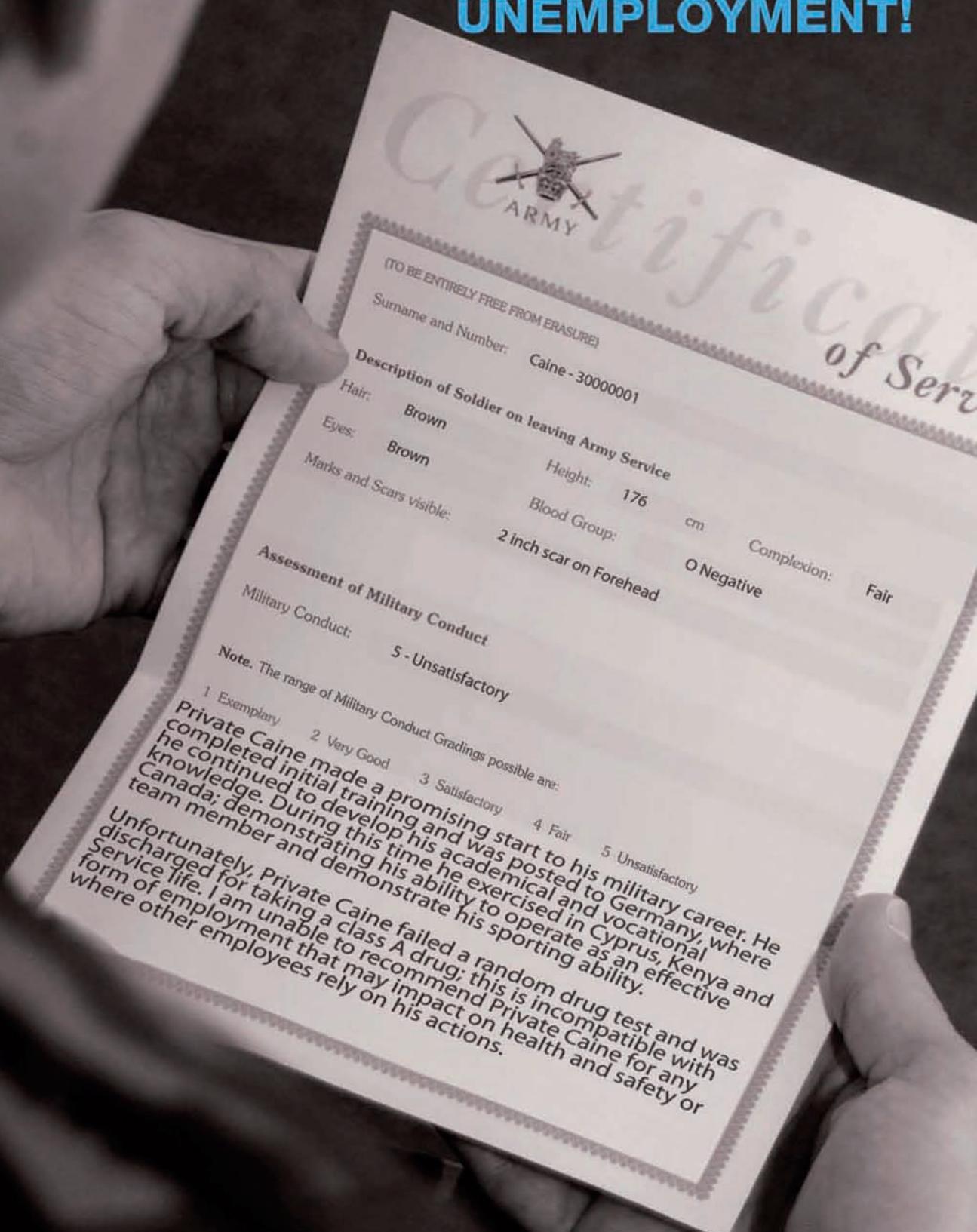
"Cpl Riley and LCpl Shaw were these men and will leave a huge gap, not just in their team, but also for the company at large."



LCPL GRAHAM SHAW (27)
3RD BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 1 – AFGHANISTAN

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IN MEMORIAM



CPL JOHN MOORE (22)
1ST BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA FEBRUARY 7 – AFGHANISTAN



PTE SEAN MCDONALD (26)
1ST BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA FEBRUARY 7 – AFGHANISTAN



WO2 DAVID MARKLAND (36)
36 ENGINEER REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 8 – AFGHANISTAN



LCPL DARREN HICKS (29)
1ST BATTALION,
COLDSTREAM GUARDS
KIA FEBRUARY 11 – AFGHANISTAN

TWO soldiers who died in an IED blast during a night patrol in Helmand province have been hailed for their courage and loyalty.

Cpl John Moore was commanding his section on the routine mission near Patrol Base Wishtan in Sangin when the device detonated, killing him and his lead man Pte Sean McDonald instantly.

Both men were serving with 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, as part of the 3 Rifles Battlegroup.

During his time with the Army Cpl Moore had proved to be a determined and committed soldier as well as a junior leader of immense quality and courage.

“Another of our brightest stars has given his all before we have had the chance to see his full and undoubted potential unfold,” said Lt Col Nick Kitson, the commanding officer of the battlegroup in Helmand province.

“Yet he would be the first to tell us not to dwell on our sense of terrible loss but to pick ourselves up and carry on the outstanding work he and his men have been doing.”

Cpl Moore enlisted at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate in 2004 and completed a year’s training, designed to promote junior leadership, before going to the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

He joined 1 Scots in March 2005 and completed two tours of Iraq before deploying to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 11.

Lt Col Charlie Herbert, CO of 1 Scots, said: “He had all the attributes of the perfect Scottish

warrior; bold, charismatic, tough as nails, utterly professional and a born leader of men.”

Pte McDonald deployed to Afghanistan in October and had been responsible for clearing the ground of IEDs to allow allied forces and local nationals to walk the streets with a reduced threat of death or serious injury.

“Fearlessly and without hesitation Pte McDonald threw himself at the most dangerous and daunting of tasks that the treacherous alleyways and towering compound walls of eastern Sangin could offer,” Lt Col Kitson said.

“Time and time again, day in, day out, he risked his life for his mates, the mission and also to ensure better prospects for an oppressed local population.”

Colleague Sgt Sean Jardine added: “He was well known within the platoon and company for being very strong and fit. He prided himself on this and whenever there was a hard task to be undertaken he would be there.”

The 26-year-old joined the Army in 2000 and completed three tours of Iraq as well as serving in Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

Platoon commander Lt Dave Clark added: “Pte McDonald was a fit and robust character who would push himself to the limits of endurance. He got on with the task at hand in Helmand and didn’t look to complain.”

His mother Jacqueline said: “My son was so proud to be a soldier. He will be desperately missed by all his family and friends. This tragedy has left a hole in our lives and a hole in our heart.”

THE Army’s bomb disposal experts are mourning the loss of an inspirational colleague who thrived in the counter-IED battle on Helmand’s front line.

W02 David Markland, who was serving with 36 Engineer Regiment, was killed in a bomb blast while working in support of the Centre South Battlegroup in Afghanistan.

The 36-year-old led a team of Royal Engineer advanced search specialists who were responsible for conducting route clearances and had been recently selected for a field squadron sergeant major’s post.

“He was a bear of a man, big and bold, but caring and compassionate,” said Lt Col Gareth Bex (RLC), commanding officer of the Counter-

IED Task Force on Op Herrick.

“W02 Markland was adored by his team; they would have followed him to the ends of the earth, such was the respect he inspired.”

“Afghanistan is the most taxing of threat environments and in his five months he had met some incredible challenges and never faltered.”

The senior soldier joined the Army in 1989 and was on his second tour of Afghanistan. He had also completed five tours of Bosnia and one of Iraq.

He leaves behind his wife Coralee and their two sons Keelen (10) and Logan (7).

A family statement read: “He will be sadly missed and leaves behind a family who he loved and loves him very, very much.”

A SEASONED NCO who died after falling victim to a roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan has been remembered as one the finest soldiers of his generation.

Lt Col Toby Gray, CO of the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, said that LCpl Darren Hicks had been hugely respected by those he commanded and was earmarked for promotion.

The senior officer added: “He led his men like a lance sergeant and they responded to his leadership as though he were a lance sergeant.

“The sun rarely set on his smile; he was ready always to lend a hand or offer a gentle word of support to those senior as well as junior to himself.”

LCpl Hicks died after being caught in an

explosion in Helmand’s Babaji district. He had deployed on Op Herrick 11 last year.

Remembered as being immensely popular with troops of all ranks, the NCO joined the Army in 1999 and soon deployed to Northern Ireland on a two-year residential tour.

The married father-of-two, from Mousehole in Cornwall, gained further operational experience in Iraq as a team commander on Op Telic 6 in 2005 and completed his first tour of Afghanistan two years later.

In a statement, LCpl Hicks’s wife Katie said while the loss of her husband was devastating, he had died doing the job he loved.

“I am immensely proud of what Darren achieved in a short lifetime,” she added.

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IN MEMORIAM



LSGT DAVE GREENHALGH (25)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADIER GUARDS
KIA FEBRUARY 13 – AFGHANISTAN

COMMANDERS and soldiers have been remembering the bravery of an enthusiastic and professional NCO who died protecting his comrades in Afghanistan.

LSgt Dave Greenhalgh of Queen's Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards was killed when his vehicle was caught in an explosion near Lashkar Gar in Helmand province.

Remembered as being a tough soldier and natural leader with shining integrity, he had been helping clear a route for a convoy through a threat area when he died.

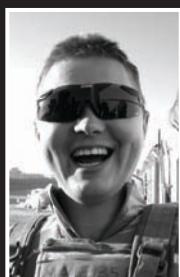
LSgt Greenhalgh, who was originally from Ilkeston in Derbyshire, joined the Army in 2001 and had served in Bosnia and Iraq as well as a previous Afghanistan tour.

He had also spent time on Op Fresco in 2002, when British troops covered the shifts of striking UK fire crews, and been on training exercises in the Falkland Islands and Kenya.

The 25-year-old was a qualified search team commander who could drive an array of military vehicles and was a tactical questioner on psychological operations.

Lt Col Roly Walker, commanding officer of the Grenadier Guards Battlegroup, described LSgt Greenhalgh as a "tough soldier and a natural commander".

He said: "He was a young fighting man in his prime, taken from this world in an instant on a dusty road in Afghanistan; he leaves a lasting impression on us all."



RFN MARK MARSHALL (20)
6TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA FEBRUARY 14 – AFGHANISTAN

A COURAGEOUS Territorial Army soldier who lost his life on a patrol in Afghanistan "epitomised everything that is great about the Reserve Forces".

Rfn Mark Marshall, of 6th Battalion, The Rifles, died when an IED detonated while he was helping to provide security for civilians in Sangin, Helmand province.

The soldier, who was 29 and from Exeter, joined the TA three years ago and passed through the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. He mobilised for his first operational tour on Op Herrick 11 last year, joining the 3 Rifles Battlegroup in Afghanistan.

Posted to C Company, Rfn Marshall initially served in Kajaki, northern Helmand, before

being sent to a patrol base in Sangin. During his time there he was consistently the point man in his patrols responsible for clearing lethal IEDs.

In paying tribute to the young reservist – who was a police community support officer in civilian life – 3 Rifles' CO Lt Col Nick Kitson said the loss had been keenly felt.

"He epitomised everything that is great about the Reserve Forces and the men and women who serve in them," the senior officer added. "He displayed courage, selflessness and humour and was treasured by those who served alongside him."

Lt Col Tim House, CO of 6 Rifles, said Rfn Marshall had been "a front runner for promotion" in the battalion.



KGN SEAN DAWSON (19)
2ND BATTALION, THE DUKE OF
LANCASTER'S REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 15 – AFGHANISTAN

A SOLDIER who died in a battle with insurgents in Helmand province has been remembered as "an English fighter extraordinaire".

Kgn Sean Dawson, of 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, was killed near his patrol base in Musa Qala after British troops ambushed the Taliban.

A gunshot wound claimed the life of the 19-year-old during the contact. Ministry of Defence officials have confirmed that an investigation is underway into the circumstances surrounding his death.

Kgn Dawson, who was from Stalybridge, Manchester, joined the Army in 2008 and had been in a Theatre Reserve Battalion role in Cyprus before deploying to Afghanistan.

The keen boxer was serving in Chindit Company, supporting the Household Cavalry Regiment Battlegroup south of Musa Qala, where he was the sharpshooter in a sniper pair.

Lt Col Robbie Boyd, CO of 2 Lancs, said his prayers were with the soldier's family and girlfriend Sadie. The officer added: "He fought for the people of Afghanistan, he fought for his friends and fought for England; an English fighter extraordinaire."

Kgn Dawson's friends also paid tribute to the much-missed soldier. Kgn Adam Clarke said: "He was one of those people who never had a bad thing said about them."

"He was like a younger brother to me. I will never forget him as long as I live."



SPR GUY MELLORS (20)
36 ENGINEER REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 15 – AFGHANISTAN

AN outstanding young sapper killed in action in Helmand province had helped save many lives with his roadside bomb detection skills, his superiors have confirmed.

Spr Guy Mellors, of 36 Engineer Regiment, had been serving with the Counter-IED Task Force when he was caught in an explosion near Patrol Base Ezaray, north east of the district centre in Sangin.

The 20-year-old, who had been involved in a clearance operation in support of A Company, 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, died of his wounds following the blast.

Originally from Coventry, Spr Mellors joined the Royal Engineers in 2006 and had been on his first operational tour.

He was trained as a searcher, responsible for seeking out IEDs in areas of risk. Highly regarded, he was first in line for a junior NCO cadre on his return to the UK.

Lt Col Gareth Bex (RLC), commanding officer of the Counter-IED Task Force, described Spr Mellors as a consummate professional who had a confidence beyond his years.

The CO added: "Spr Mellors was an impressive young man and an outstanding searcher – fearless and determined, he was a great team player, respected by his comrades."

Spr Stuart Coleman, of the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Group, recalled: "I trusted Guy with my life – he was a top bloke, one of the boys and one of my closest friends."

NEWS IN BRIEF

A CHARITY that supports blind ex-Servicemen and women is inviting soldiers from across the UK to set themselves a nocturnal or blindfolded challenge to understand what it's like for people who lose their sight.

St Dunstan's hopes the Forces Challenge will raise awareness and funds to help visually-impaired veterans rediscover their independence.

Members of 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment were quick to get involved as six colleagues stripped down and reassembled general purpose machine guns – completely blindfolded.

Event organiser Maj Marc Steventon said: "The challenge was quite tough due to the dark conditions we were working in but we were inspired to help St Dunstan's."

To support the Forces Challenge, contact St Dunstan's on 0207 616 7966 or visit www.st-dunstans.org.uk/forceschallenge

A SCHEME that aims to send 100 bereaved Armed Forces families on activity holidays has been launched.

Family Activity Breaks (FAB) provides trips for families with children aged up to 19 who have suffered the loss of a loved one serving in the Armed Forces.

The 2010 holidays will take place during July and August at locations in Cornwall, North Yorkshire, Wales and Scotland. To apply for a place visit www.mod.uk/fab

THE fitness theme running through last month's magazine extended to our spine line competition.

The names – McCall, Price, Cassidy, Waterman and Ellison – are all celebrities who have released home keep-fit DVDs.

Soldier has now teamed up with Jelly Belly, www.jellybelly-uk.com, to offer the winner of each month's challenge one of the company's selection boxes of gourmet jelly beans.

To stand a chance of winning, simply tell us the link between the names printed on this month's spine. Answers on a postcard marked "spine lines" to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk to reach us by March 31. Usual rules apply.

SOLDIER readers are being offered a huge discount on holidays at four of Pontin's fun-packed holiday parks.

Personnel can book breaks at Southport, Prestatyn Sands, Brean Sands and Camber Sands for as little as £39.50 for four people – a saving of up to 50 per cent on brochure prices.

To take advantage of the offer, ring Pontin's on 0844 576 6935 and quote offer code CU18.



Picture: Graeme Main

A DEATH-DEFYING infantryman who survived being shot by a Taliban round has carried out his wish to personally thank those who made his body armour. After being hit by a 7.62mm bullet in May last year, LSgt Daniel Collins, 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, said: "Thank you to whoever designed the body armour. If I ever meet them, I'd like to buy them a pint!" So *Soldier* tracked down the teams involved in developing the Osprey body armour and invited LSgt Collins to meet them. The 27-year-old, who served as a fire support section commander, was shown around the Bath base of Defence Equipment and Support (DES) before setting off to buy his symbolic pint. Speaking to an audience including Lt Col Matthew Tressider, chief of staff defence clothing, and Mike Piggot, from the DES combat protection team, LSgt Collins said: "We were looking at a map in a ditch and two shots were fired – I was hit by one and it was like being hit by a hammer. It's an honour to be able to meet the guys who made Osprey and to be able to say thanks. I am living proof that the kit works."

Viking brave after close shave

A SOLDIER who cheated death when he was shot in the neck by a Taliban sniper has spoken of his determination to rejoin his colleagues in Helmand.

LCpl Andrew Ferguson of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment was left fearing for his life when he was struck near Nad-e-Ali and discovered blood pouring from his wounds.

But, incredibly, the bullet passed through the back of his neck and missed his spinal chord by a matter of millimetres, a stroke of luck that has seen him dubbed "the miracle of Helmand" in the national media.

The 31-year-old had been engaged in a fierce firefight with insurgents as his patrol cleared compounds in the region and the NCO was preparing to fire an under-slung grenade launcher when he moved to inform his section

commander what was happening.

He added: "I turned round to crawl back to my firing position and I suddenly felt an incredible pain in my neck. In that split second I thought I was dead."

The father-of-two was airlifted to Camp Bastion hospital and was operated on immediately. Within 36 hours he was back in the UK for further treatment at Selly Oak Hospital.

He is now well on the road to recovery and is already back at work performing light duties at his battalion headquarters in Pirbright, Surrey.

"I hope to be back and fit for duty within a month," LCpl Ferguson said. "I have asked to be redeployed and I hope that happens, but if not I want to join my mates on normal duties when they get back."

Refocusing on the troops

A MAJOR Army support group has changed its name to reflect the lifetime of support it offers to Servicemen and women in need.

The Army Benevolent Fund's new title – ABF The Soldiers' Charity – was chosen to make it easier for troops to recognise the organisation as an important source of help both during and after their service.

The change in name coincides with a recent 30 per cent increase in requests for assistance received by the group and ABF The Soldiers' Charity is now aiming to double its income over the next five years to provide further support to those affected

by ongoing operations in Afghanistan.

Speaking during the launch of the rebranded charity during a 4 Mechanized Brigade exercise on Salisbury Plain, chief executive Maj Gen (Retd) Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter said: "We have an awful lot more work to do to make all soldiers understand that we are there for them. We are for soldiers for life."

LCpl Adam Smith (1 Mercian) added: "If you have an injury you feel like a bit of a lost soldier, so [it's good to know] there's some support if you have problems."

● www.soldierscharity.org

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EDITION

SOLDIER

MARCH 19 1945
FORTNIGHTLY
VOL. 1 - N° 1

ARMY MAGAZINE



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

I am glad to have this opportunity of being able to speak to all soldiers in the B.L.A. through the first number of "SOLDIER". You and I have come a long way together; we have been through some very bad times and some very good times.

And what is the situation to-day?

By no possible conceivable chance can Germany win this war; victory for the Allies, absolute and definite victory, is certain. All that now remains is the conquest of Germany itself.

We are fighting on German soil and we have entered the ring for the last round; there is no time limit for this round; we shall continue until our opponent has had



And what are we fighting for?

You remember the poem written in the Desert by a soldier of the Eighth Army, in one verse of which he gave his views as to what we were fighting for :

"Peace for the kids, our brothers' breed,
A kinder world, a cleaner breed."

That seems to describe it very well.

I like to feel that out of the comradeship of the great armies that are fighting in this war will be born a new factor : a factor for good, which will be a powerful influence in the difficult days that will lie ahead when the fighting is over.

We must see to it that this will be so.

On your behalf I send our greetings to our comrades serving in other theatres of war. There are many of our friends in Africa, in Italy, in India, in Burma, and in other places ; to all of them we send our best wishes, and to the many thousands who garrison and maintain the lines of communication throughout the world.

We salute our comrades in the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, and in the R.A.F. ; we soldiers know well that without their efforts we could have achieved little.

We send friendly greeting to the soldiers of the Allied nations fighting with us. And to our families and friends in the home countries we send a very special word of greeting.

I have often wished "Good luck" to soldiers.

I do so now to "SOLDIER".

R. H. Montgomery.

Field-Marshal,
21 Army Group.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

THE rousing words of Field Marshal Montgomery set the tone for the first issue of *Soldier*, which was published 65 years ago this month.

The 20-page journal of the British Liberation Army in Europe was the brainchild of Col Sean Fielding and started life as a fortnightly magazine created by a military staff of 41 – including a cook. Suffice to say the current line-up boasts no such luxuries.

Visit www.soldiermagazine.co.uk to view a digital version of this historic issue.

2

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Fresh force



Every month the nation's youth flock in their thousands to attend specialist Service groups. Soldier joined the masses to find out why talk of a hoodie-wearing Playstation generation is wide of the mark ...

Camo kids

**Bright young things
keep Army Cadet
Force going strong in
anniversary year**

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

UNDER the cover of darkness a platoon section patrolled the snow-covered flat ground as they prepared to mount an assault on an unseen enemy.

Moving stealthily forwards, the unit crept to within 50 metres of the insurgents' hideout before coming under fire.

The unwavering discipline of the camouflaged subjects was all you would expect from well-drilled troops deployed in southern Afghanistan, but this scenario was being played out far from the deserts of Helmand province.

Instead, the offensive was taking place in the much less-far-flung surroundings of Slough and the British contingent were all members



of the Army Cadet Force's (ACF) 2 Platoon, Cippenham Coldstream Guards detachment.

Soldier shadowed Sgt Jamie Cutting on the well-drilled manoeuvre to gain an insight into one of the UK's oldest and most successful youth organisations, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

"We obviously don't do everything that is done in the Army, but the project is based on the same ideals," said the former Coldstream Guard. "The cadets learn discipline and skills without being put in any danger."

The ACF gives young people unrivalled opportunities to develop themselves, learn how to work as part of a team, play sport and embark on adventurous activities.

To join, potential cadets need to be aged between 12 and 18, have a desire for excitement, a willingness to learn and be prepared to abide by the voluntary organisation's motto: "To inspire, to achieve."

Prior to the field offensive, personnel of 2 Pltn Cippenham were given their quick battle orders by 17-year-old LSgt Elliot Williams.

Delivered with authority, the teenager's words – spoken in a wooden building at the edge of a school field – would not have been out of place in a briefing at a forward operating base on Op Herrick's front lines.

"The ground out there is mainly grassy field and may be hazardous," said the East Berkshire College A-level student.

"Enemy forces have set up an OP [observation point] on a small mound 200 metres north-west of our PB [patrol base].

"Our intelligence tells us they have small

arms, their morale is high and they are likely to stand and fight."

The precise organisation of troops, the attention to detail and even the use of military abbreviations highlighted the fact that this section had been trained to a high standard.

Sgt Cutting, a veteran of conflicts in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, explained that although the ACF is not a recruiting tool for the Army, many of its members would make good soldiers.

"I have served in the British Army and in terms of knowledge these cadets are as good as those in the Regular Army," he said. "Obviously physically they are not conditioned like soldiers but they have a lot of military knowledge. I would say about 70 per cent of our members have intentions of joining the Army but everyone wants to learn and enjoy themselves."

After a final check on call signs and a run-through of what procedures to follow when under fire or if a casualty is taken, the mixed male and female group set off into the dark.

On the field the platoon was given advice on how to space itself on patrol and how to communicate effectively as a unit.

When the fire – albeit simulated – came down, the lightning-fast reactions of the youngsters resulted in a safe exit from danger.

The platoon is part of Berkshire's A Company, where meetings take place twice a week and cadets get involved in activities ranging from map reading and compass work

to shooting, football and fieldcraft.

"The structure is exactly the same as the Army and we have 18-year-olds mixing in with 12-year-olds – it's a team," said Sgt Cutting.

"All sorts of people from all walks of life join up and we try to teach them important skills which also keep them busy and off the streets."

LSgt Williams (17), who is currently studying maths, physics and politics, believes his time in the ACF will help him become a good soldier.

"I'm looking to join the Army in May next year and I think the ACF gives you an idea of what is required," he said.

"I've just been on the hardest course for cadets to pass followed by the section commanders course – it required a lot of revision and I had to remember the basics.

"Not everyone wants to sign up to the Army, but it's a good way of understanding what is on offer."

He added: "For me becoming a cadet made me realise it's definitely what I want to do."

With 150 years of history behind it, it is safe to assume that the ACF has helped to give several generations of young people a thorough grounding in discipline, leadership and adventure as well as giving them a taste of what the military is all about.

And from *Soldier*'s time with the cadets and instructors at Cippenham, it is clear that the group's current crop are following the ACF's motto to the letter. ■

Cadets learn discipline and skills through activities without being put in any danger





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Interview: Stephen Tyler

AS Pte Michelle Norris (RAMC) clambered on top of a Warrior in southern Iraq, the unmistakable crack and thump of sniper fire left her in no doubt as to the danger she was in.

The medic had known the risks as she left the safety of the armoured vehicle's innards to rescue her stricken commander in the turret, but her soldiering instincts kicked in and the then-19-year-old exposed herself to enemy fire to get her comrade to safety and administer life-saving first aid treatment.

Pte Norris's actions in 2006 earned her a Military Cross – making her the first female ever to receive the prestigious award – and represented the most high-profile chapter in a military career that sprouted its roots in the courageous Servicewoman's teenage years in the West Midlands.

Norris – who is now a lance corporal – got her first taste of life in green after signing up for the Army Cadet Force (ACF) detachment in Stourbridge.

Now, with the organisation celebrating its 150th anniversary, the junior NCO is keen to sing the praises of the movement.

"I was always sport-orientated and I went to an ACF open day with school," she told *Soldier*. "I was really interested in the Cadet Force and I found out that one of my mates was going so I asked if I could go along with her. When I did, I loved it."

"There were lots of reasons why, but the

social aspect of being around people who shared the same ideas was a major one. Cadets also get to experience and learn different things that other kids wouldn't, like map reading and adventurous training."

Although the ACF is not a direct feeder group for the Army, many of the skills that members learn during their time with detachments prove invaluable whether their future ultimately lies in or out of combats.

For LCpl Norris, the sense of discipline instilled by the organisation at a time of life when a lot of youngsters can be unruly was

an invaluable asset.

"I thought it was great," she explained. "All my family were convinced that I wouldn't be able to hack it but I actually enjoyed having that order and respect."

"When it came to deciding that I wanted to join the Army, I was in a good situation because I had that background and I could adapt to things a bit more easily."

Aside from the character-building benefits of being an Army Cadet, LCpl Norris said that the opportunity to see and experience new things was a key factor in her staying in the organisation for two-and-a-half years.

As well as learning new skills, she enjoyed regular weekend trips away along with annual camps where she got to put her navigation, marching and shooting skills to the test against other ACF detachments.

The two-time Telic veteran, who is currently attached to The Royal Irish Regiment in Shropshire, is now preparing

for a deployment on Op Herrick and said she has no regrets about following the military path for her career.

But regardless of whether being a part of the ACF leads to a full-time stint in the Forces, LCpl Norris has urged more youngsters to give the movement a go.

"I definitely think more people should try it out," she concluded. "Being a cadet meant that I was out of the house with something worthwhile to do twice a week rather than sitting around being bored."

"You get a lot of different experiences and it's something out of the ordinary you can talk about with your friends." ■

‘Being a cadet meant that I was out of the house with something worthwhile to do’

Firm foundations: Military Cross winner LCpl Michelle Norris (RAMC) believes her time in the Army Cadet Force prepared her well for service as a full-time soldier





Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Mike Weston

THE "best kept secret in the Army" fuses academia with military training to provide talented candidates for the front lines of industry as well as war.

The University Officer Training Corps (UOTC) prides itself on arming the cream of the crop with the skills they need to become leaders of men. And with centuries of history behind it, what better place for *Soldier* to get a taste of what motivates the more than 3,000 officer cadets currently signed up to the scheme than Oxford University?

Lt Col David Hannah, the man in charge at Oxford UOTC's Falklands House, explained that Army instruction has huge benefits – and not just for soldiers.

"It costs an awful lot of money to be at university and students want to get as much as possible for that investment," said the Balkans and Iraq veteran.

"Undergraduates are canny enough to sign up for things to enhance their degrees and set them apart – the OTC has a lot to offer."

There are 19 UOTCs throughout the UK and each one is effectively an independent regiment with its own cap badge.

Officer cadets face military exercises, adventurous training, community projects and expeditions at home and abroad.

Some – classed as "Group B" members of the Territorial Army – have long military backgrounds and are myopically focused on a career in camouflage.

Others just see an unrivalled opportunity to meet new friends and enjoy skiing, trekking and other



adventurous pursuits all over the world.

"Not all of our cadets want a career in the Army, in fact on average only about 30 per cent do," said the senior officer.

"From an altruistic point of view it's good to have the Army's standards taught to the future heads of industry."

Despite its setting among the town's dreaming spires, it would be wrong to assume Oxford UOTC is made up of intellectuals who rarely peek above their parchment textbooks.

The corps is made up of students from Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University, Reading University, the Royal Agricultural College Cirencester, The University of Gloucestershire and the Royal Military College in Shrivenham.

The mixture could not be more diverse and it makes for an enviable skill-set in the group.

OCdt Laura Winwood (22), president-elect of the world-famous Oxford Union, said: "The mix with the different universities is great and really helps to break the intense bubble surrounding Oxford.

"Everyone here has something different to offer, from amazing physical ability to impressive academic qualities."

The officer cadets have no obligation to sign up for the Armed Forces when they graduate, but it is clear that some see the UOTC as a vital springboard towards a glittering future in the military.

Alumni including Lawrence of Arabia, Capt Noel Chevasse – one of only three men to win

the Victoria Cross twice – and Olympic gold medallist Brig Gen Arnold Strode-Jackson provide motivation of what can be achieved.

Matt Moore, of Nuffield College, is in his fourth year with Oxford UOTC and had clear ambitions about what he wanted from the moment he joined.

"I really don't envy people on civvy street," said the 21-year-old.

"Since joining I've been adventurous training in California, skiing in Norway and on an expedition to Corsica. I'm hoping to pass out at Sandhurst and start work as soon as possible."

Until recent cuts by the MoD, officer cadets were paid to train and learn but currently there is no financial reward.

Lt Col Hannah said that although the financial incentive is certainly missed, its absence is not detracting from the levels of enthusiasm shown by his talented cadets.

"Payment being stopped is an issue because a full day was worth £35 which is a decent amount for a student," he added.

"But they are still turning out in impressive numbers and we've been told that the money will be restored by this April. We seriously hope that happens."

"There are UOTCs across the country that are carrying out wide-ranging initiatives and it would be a shame to lose a goose that is laying some golden eggs."

Nevertheless there is still a very busy schedule lined up for those who remain in Lt Col Hannah's ranks, including nerve-racking

expeditions on foreign soil.

Skiing the challenging Haute Route in the Alps, diving, trekking and climbing are all on the "to-do" list and slackers will not be catered for.

"This is high-level training and dealing with real risk, not just a walk round the beach," said Lt Col Hannah.

"As well as our core syllabus there will be a trip to Jersey. Also, private funding enables cadets to embark on some top-class adventurous training."

But those contemplating an Army career are given the full picture of what might lie ahead, not just a rose-tinted version.

The deaths in Afghanistan of Lt Mark Evison and Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards struck a particular chord as both came through Oxford UOTC.

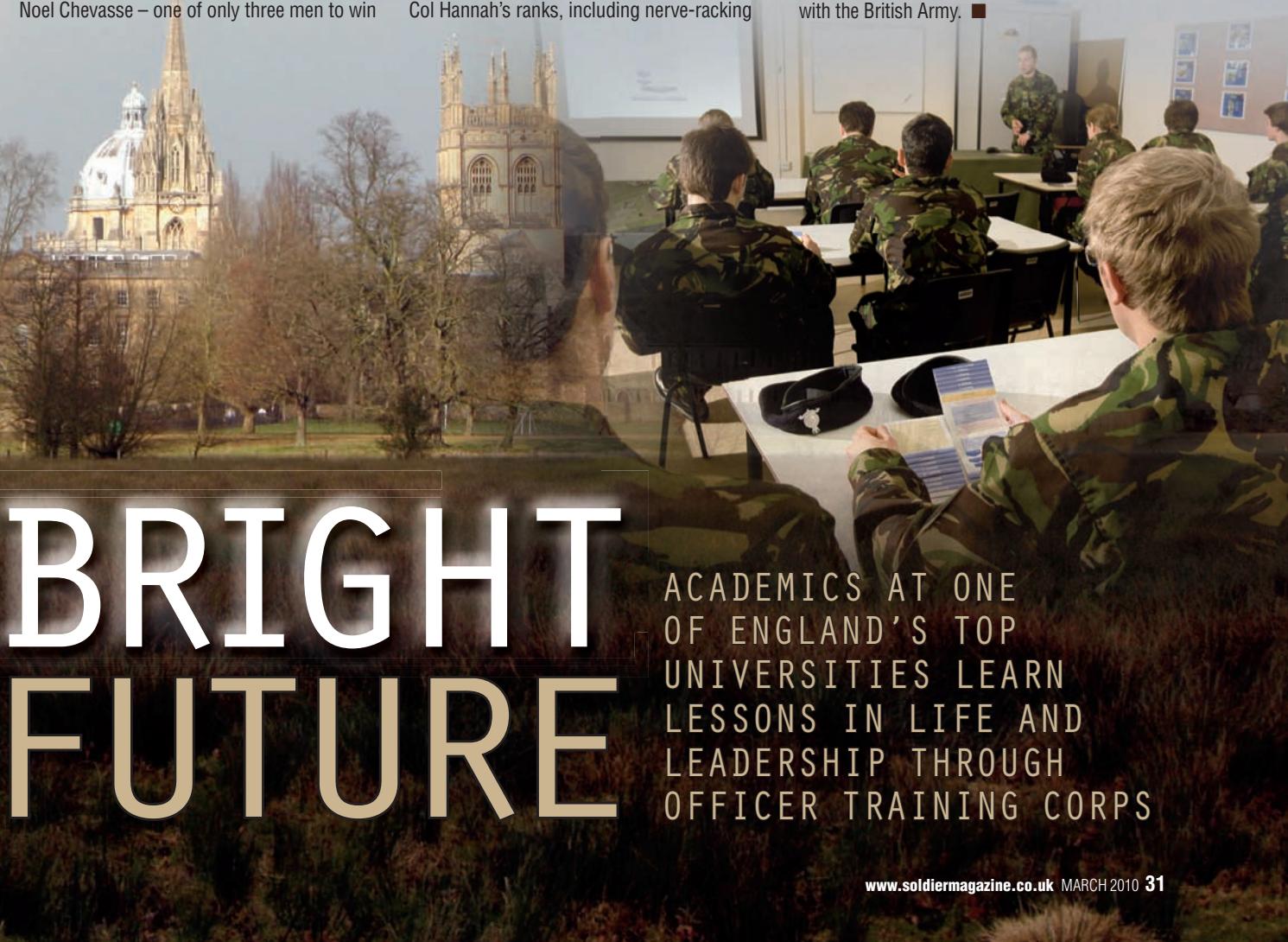
"Any of the cadets who are hoping to pursue a career in the Army are made acutely aware of the implications within the job," said Lt Col Hannah.

"This is one of the great untold secrets of the British Army, with a significant number of officers at Sandhurst joining through the UOTC route."

Some officer cadets take their learning and experiences of the UOTC into commercial business and are in a prime position to state the case for the military in the civilian corridors of power.

But for those who choose to don camouflage full-time, the experience of serving in a UOTC ensures they are better prepared than most to add to the inspirational ranks of soldiers serving in theatres of conflict with the British Army. ■

It's good to have the Army standards taught to the future heads of industry



BRIGHT FUTURE

ACADEMICS AT ONE OF ENGLAND'S TOP UNIVERSITIES LEARN LESSONS IN LIFE AND LEADERSHIP THROUGH OFFICER TRAINING CORPS

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk MARCH 2010 31

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Steve Dock

SITTING discreetly in the heart of Southampton, the city's Officer Training Corps (OTC) headquarters boast a Tardis-like quality.

Nestled on a terraced street filled with bars and restaurants, the building looks anything but special from the outside.

Open the solid doors and take a look around the centre's innards, however, and you are confronted with more facilities than it should be possible to fit into such a seemingly-compact space.

Housing an armory and firing range, bar, offices and classrooms, the converted stable block features assets usually reserved for much larger establishments.

The other immediately-apparent fact noticeable on *Soldier*'s visit to one of Southampton University OTC's bi-monthly training nights is that the wealth of amenities are put to extremely good use.

At a time when budget cuts have placed a strain on all areas of defence, the value of an organisation that does not guarantee a recruitment boost

has been placed under increased scrutiny.

But for those who dedicate part of their military careers to providing students with what may be their first sample of Army life, the importance of the OTC system is huge.

Lt Col Tim Jenkins, commanding officer of Southampton University OTC, told *Soldier* that the organisation offers an important taste of what Regular or Reserve service is like.

"We have degrees of enthusiasm ranging from quite to extremely enthusiastic, but our cadets are always cheerful, motivated and keen to learn," the Territorial Army officer explained.

"By joining an OTC, people can have the opportunity to experience the culture, ethos and values of the military and see if it is something they want to. Even if they don't, it enables them to pick up different skills before they go on to do other things.

"The OTC nurtures those people with varying levels of interest in the military into the military."

"How many would follow that path without us is impossible to tell."

Although training nights are relatively infrequent, the scope of skills and drills that officer cadets at Southampton are exposed to is vast.

• By joining an OTC, people can have the opportunity to experience the culture, ethos and values of the military •

All-important weapon-handling procedures are taught by the OTC's Regular staff and cadets are able to fire for real using the four-lane on-site range.

Other military components including map reading and first aid are also taught to would-be officers to give them a solid grounding in Service basics.

Add regular camps, adventurous training and social and sporting opportunities into the mix and it is easy to see why OTCs churn out consistently high-calibre young people.

Brig Neil Baverstock, commander of 145 (South) Brigade which includes Southampton OTC, made his first foray into the military at Tayforth OTC in Scotland and explained that as well as developing cadets' leadership

skills, the system gives Britain's future industrial and political leaders a better understanding of the Armed Forces.

"There is importance in showing people what the Army's doing and giving them a chance to see whether it is something they could be interested in," he said.

"It allows them to test the waters in a way that does not have the commitment that the TA and Regular Army do. I would also point out that it is pretty successful as we have a high conversion rate."

Life lessons: With sessions covering everything from weapon handling to first aid and map reading, signing up to the Officer Training Corps familiarises students with a wide range of essential military skills and drills

"The other thing is that those people who do go on to a military career do so having been given a degree of military training."

For those passing through Southampton OTC's doors at present, being a cadet provides the chance to experience a wealth of activities that are well out of the reach of most undergraduates.

Second year applied geography student Christian Stevens said going on summer camp and completing a biathlon instructor course were among the highlights of his time with the unit.

"I would recommend it to anyone because otherwise they are missing out – students just don't get the chance to do this stuff," he explained.

Elizabeth Fox, who is reading law, added: "I like the fact that you have new experiences and do things you wouldn't otherwise do."

"I came along for an evening and decided to go for the selection weekend where I found myself becoming really competitive. I have loved it and have been on treks to Corsica and Cyprus."

The wealth of options opened up to cadets also enticed maritime business student Luther Kwisthout into the OTC fold.

"I came here halfway through my first year and joined up in the second," he said. "I originally applied to join the Royal Navy,

but because of this I am now more geared to joining the Army.

"It's a really good social environment where you meet new people and get to do different events."

Whatever decisions are made about the defence budget and the funding of OTCs, the hardworking staff and enthusiastic cadets currently at Southampton are testament to the system's value.

The units are an efficient recruiting tool as many students go on to join the Army, but even those who do not sign up leave the centres with a greater empathy for the military's aims and objectives which they carry with them into their future careers.

Brig Baverstock was quick to recognise the calibre of student that takes on the challenge of combining university with life as an officer cadet and told *Soldier* that they are a reflection of today's youth.

"The modern generation is truly great and has high levels of social responsibility," he concluded. "Generally speaking, we are very lucky with the young people we have got and the ones in the OTCs represent

the group brilliantly, as do those in the Army Cadet Force.

"Everyone you meet who comes away from one of these units is really inspired and dedicated and that shows how worthwhile both organisations are."

"I do recognise that the funding issues the MoD has been forced to set out for OTCs until April this year are very unfortunate and deeply regretted by everyone involved. Nothing can be promised, but I'm hopeful and we are planning on a full year of training." ■

University challenge

Student stereotype smashed by Officer Training Corps cadets



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HIGH TECHS

Tri-Service scheme trains future hands-on heroes

Report: Stephen Tyler

THE ever-evolving nature of combat in Afghanistan has placed an increasing demand on the skills of the Armed Forces' technical experts.

A proliferation of roadside bombs sits alongside regular small arms contacts at the top of the list of threats needing to be combated with equally cunning new kit.

Thankfully for those deployed in Helmand province, the British military employs scores of innovative men and women and a little-known project is ensuring that the conveyor belt of top-notch practical thinkers entering the Forces continues to tick over.

The Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS) pulls in the most promising hands-on students ahead of their university careers and churns out academically and professionally-polished young people ready to join each of the Armed Forces as well as the Civil Service.

DTUS has four squadrons covering students at six universities across the UK, including Thunderer Squadron, which is located in Southampton.

Based in a headquarters near to the city centre, Thunderer Squadron has 138 students on its books – 56 of them who have committed to join the Army after university – and five permanent military support staff.

Cdr Adrian Wheal (RN), Thunderer commanding officer, told *Soldier* that while those signed up for the DTUS experience do learn valuable military skills, the focus is more on personal development and leadership training than it is on digging shell scrapes.

And the CO believes that the nature of combat in Afghanistan makes the need for first-class technicians across all three Services more important than ever before.

"It is designed to make their transition to full military life that much easier," he said. "You need a technical grounding to be able to put together procedures to deal with the clever devices you face today and going into that kind of work would be extremely difficult without it."

"We work quite closely with the Officer

Training Corps (OTC) here – they have been doing personal weapon tests for our guys for example – but our mission statements are quite different.

"We are looking after people who are committed to the Services with the assumption that they will undertake a military career. That's quite different to an OTC which doesn't recruit people in to the separate Services."

DTUS detachments maintain a close relationship with the universities to ensure that the would-be officers enrolled on the scheme are up-to-date with their studies.

Southampton University is one of several on the south coast served by a dedicated military education committee which forms a

solid link between the students' academic and military endeavours.

Committee chairman Dr Neil Richardson said that the mix of military instruction, personal development and academic assistance helps to create well-rounded graduates who are a step ahead of their peers when it comes to starting

full-time Service training.

"I think the value for money that this system provides also needs to be emphasised," he added. "A lot of resources are being invested in these people but to subsidise what they do at such a small cost is remarkable."

"There is complete integration between the university and DTUS. The students' marks are consistently very high and the university is committed to supporting military engagement."

While the pressures on DTUS students are undoubtedly higher than those faced by their peers, the hard graft is certainly balanced out with some amazing perks.

Potential enrollees apply for the scheme before taking their A-Levels and attend the relevant Service's officer selection course. Successful applicants receive a £4,000 bursary each year at university and draw training pay and a bounty through attending weekly evening meetings at DTUS HQ.

Students hoping to pursue an Army career are sponsored by one of the four technical corps – the Royal Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps, Royal Electrical and

Mechanical Engineers and Royal Signals – and go on regular visits to relevant units.

A full programme of sport, adventurous training, battlefield tours and social events as well as deployments on exercises such as Medicine Man in Canada are also offered and OCdt Tom Murphy (pictured) said the variety made being part of DTUS exciting and worthwhile.

"Our friends realise it takes up a lot of our time, but equally they know we get a lot out of it," said the third year maths student. "In the summer when they're off getting jobs, I'm going away sailing or on exercise to Canada. It takes commitment, but there are definitely a lot of perks." ■

For more information on Thunderer Squadron and the DTUS scheme, visit www.thunderersquadron.mod.uk



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Booking in

Scheme launches barrack-room reads

Interview: Stephen Tyler

FINDING the time to sit down with a good book can be difficult for most people, but the problem is exacerbated for those in the military ranks.

The frantic pace of operations – whether it is training for them, serving on them or recovering afterwards – means that reading often has to take a back seat to more pressing matters.

The issue has been recognised by the Quick Reads scheme, a programme launched in 2005 to produce bite-size pieces of literature for people with busy lifestyles or low literacy levels.

Now celebrating its fifth anniversary, the initiative has enlisted the services of A-list authors including former squaddie Andy McNab to spread the word about the benefits of reading.

Speaking to *Soldier* ahead of the launch of this year's Quick Reads programme on World Book Day on March 4, McNab said that he hoped British soldiers would use the opportunity to brush up on their literacy skills.

"I think it's a good idea – anything that encourages reading has to be a positive move," he added. "There has always been an issue with literacy and the average reading age of Infantry recruits has historically been very low. That doesn't

mean these guys are thick, it's just that they are not educated. They are coming into the best place because the tri-Service educational set-up is the biggest one in Europe and it is getting these guys in and giving them a chance.

"I personally joined up with a low reading age, the same as lots of other recruits, and the educator said to me that although people might think I was thick, I wasn't. That's when it all changed for me."

McNab's contribution to Quick Reads' anniversary line-up is *Last Night Another Soldier...*, a compelling tale of one day in the life of a rifleman serving at a forward operating base (FOB) in Afghanistan.

Rather than drawing entirely on his personal experiences of active service, the author used a visit to Op Herrick as the inspiration for the book and said that the main character is loosely based on a soldier he met in theatre.

As well as doing wonders for literacy levels, McNab hopes his latest title will also dispel a few myths about soldiers being deployed with substandard kit.

"I was there with a rifle company that had one lad who was dyslexic and had the reading age of an eight-year-old," he explained. "The amazing thing was that he was trying to improve and would take his coursework out with him.

"The book is based on him and it's really trying to change the way that people outside the Army view things. It's a day-in-the-life of this guy in a FOB but it also tries to get across the fact that the kit is good and the morale is good. The idea that these guys' boots are falling off and it's all doom and gloom is a load of rubbish."

While McNab's book treads familiar ground for Service readers, the range of genres in the scheme's nine other titles means there is something for everyone.

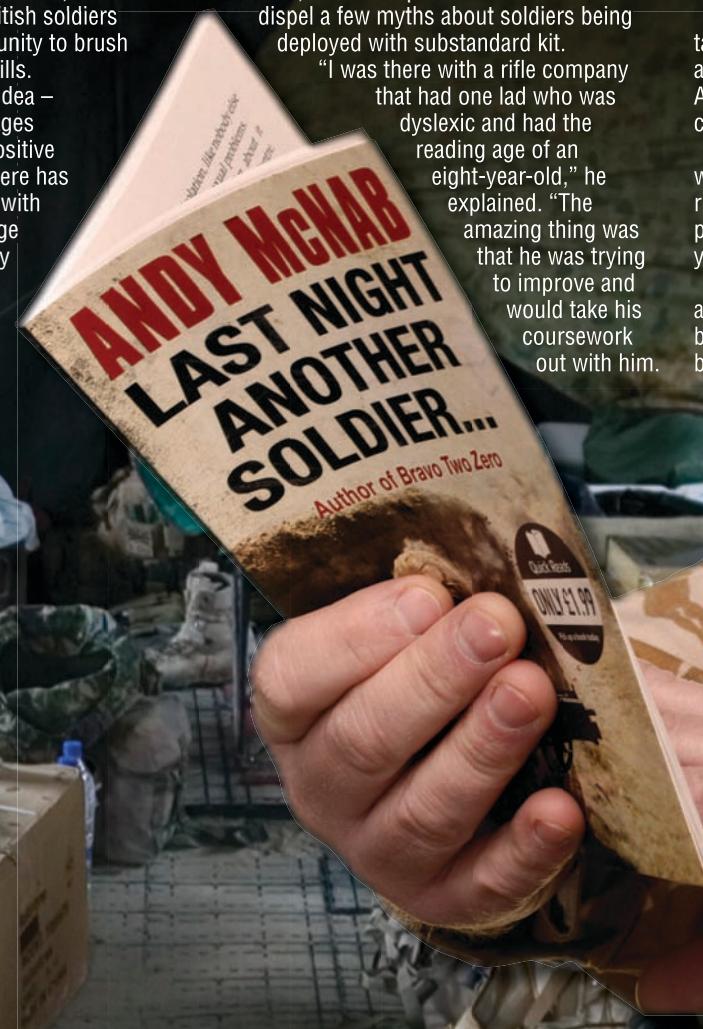
From romance to murder mystery and financial advice, McNab believes that the variety of Quick Reads publications will make the scheme an appealing proposition for regular and lapsed readers alike.

And the author, who is clearly proud of his own improved literacy levels, urged the current generation of Servicemen and women to ignore any stigma attached to having reading difficulties and make the most of one of the best educational set-ups anywhere in the world.

"I get invited up to Catterick a lot to give talks to recruits to encourage them to take advantage of the education facilities the Army has got. I say that if I can do it then so can anyone," he said.

"If people are getting ribbed for reading I would say don't listen to it because it's rubbish. You can be the best soldier on the planet but if you don't pass your education you will never get promoted."

"By reading you get a bigger vocabulary and you can communicate much better. That's part and parcel of being a soldier." ■



Lithe literature: Ten books, all costing just £1.99 each, are available through the Quick Reads scheme. For more information, visit www.quickreads.org.uk



Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN Sgt Terry Steel joined the Army 12 years ago, he could never have predicted the vast amount of experience he would rack up in such a short space of time.

Having signed up when Northern Ireland and Bosnia were still active theatres, he saw the world dramatically change after the 9/11 attacks when the battle against the global terror threat became the international community's urgent priority.

Since then, Sgt Steel has found himself at the forefront of the opening conflicts of the 21st Century. Serving with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment he has been at the sharp end of action in Afghanistan and Iraq.

After three tough tours, however, he is now fulfilling a new and vital role. Having engaged insurgents on the streets of Basra and escorted VIPs along Baghdad's notorious airport run, his first-hand experience is making him the perfect candidate to teach recruits

about the realities of war. And he has only just turned 34.

"I arrived at the Army Training Regiment Bassingbourn after having just completed Op Telic 12, which is good because my subject knowledge was bang up-to-date," he said as his recruits were put through their paces at Hyde Ranges in Kent. "It means that when I'm planning an exercise I'm able to put a realistic story behind it all. It brings the learning process to life.

"Occasionally you have to use your experience for shock tactics too – it is important for everyone to realise that they are all vulnerable in an environment such as Afghanistan. Out there getting the basics of fire and manoeuvre wrong could end up killing you."

Sgt Steel is one of a potent new breed of instructors who have a wealth of real-life combat experience to back up their impressive teaching credentials. Having served in the ranks during one of the busiest and most prolonged periods of fighting the Army has seen for 50 years, the knowledge of a seasoned soldier is a valuable commodity and contact with them means recruits are entering their military lives armed with a far greater awareness of the demands they will face.

This is key. In southern Afghanistan, where the enemy often mingles among the local population,

troops are frequently ambushed. Everyone, whatever their discipline, must be able to act as an infantryman and instinctively know what to do when they find themselves under fire.

The use of experienced instructors has been complemented by some subtle changes to the Phase One training package in the wake of the Op Herrick experience. Among them are new weapon handling procedures, with more emphasis on shooting from a variety of different postures to replicate the type of contacts

likely to be encountered in theatre, and much more IED awareness training.

"With all that is reported in the media, our recruits are kept very well informed about current events in theatre," emphasised Sgt Steel. "We have regular updates from Afghanistan too and as instructors we can help put it all into context. It does seem to spur them on. They want to get out and do their bit."

Afghanistan veteran Maj Mark Goode (REME), who has been overseeing the training at Bassingbourn, was in no doubt as to the value of the new generation of instructors, whose credentials quickly earn them the respect of the recruits under their command.

"My corporals and sergeants have all been on Herrick and Telic tours – they've been in difficult situations and know what it is like to be in a firefight," he added.

"They know too what it means to take and hold

ground and bring a great realism to training.

"This is important because we place a huge emphasis on the fundamentals such as fire and manoeuvre. The soldiers need to be able to do the basics well and we put a lot of time into ensuring that their weapon handling skills are up to scratch.

"As well as this, there is a focus on personal admin because personnel must increasingly look after themselves while they are away from their base for long periods. They have to be able to cook, keep themselves clean and operate in the extremes of cold and heat that you find in southern Afghanistan."

Putting the cornerstones in place is important. With the Army placed on a campaign footing for Op Herrick, and the Chief of the General Staff mandating that directing resources at this main effort is a priority, Phase One training has a crucial role to play in ensuring troops are preparing for theatre from day one.

But a new generation of instructors are rising to the challenge and ensuring recruits are ready for the rigours they will face in southern Afghanistan. Coupled with a syllabus that ensures they will have the specific skills they need, soldiers have never been better prepared for such an unconventional campaign. ■

Our recruits are kept very well informed about current events in theatre

Experience pays

Battle-hardened instructors ensure recruits are on strong war footing



A blurred background image of a woman with blonde hair wearing a purple dress, and a man in a dark suit and tie. They appear to be in an office environment with desks and papers visible.

Force for good

**Charity's internship programme gives
soldiers the chance to shine in class**

Life skills: Soldiers working with young people gain a great deal, whether they are heading back to the ranks or civvy street

Contact Lt Col Murdoch at
nicky.murdoch@skillforce.org
for further information

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Steve Dock

LIETENANT Colonel Nicky Murdoch is well aware of how devastating it can be for Forces personnel when they suffer long-term illness or injury – she has been there herself.

Just over two years ago the senior officer, who had amassed a wealth of command experience from three decades of service, was diagnosed with breast cancer. The news was a hammer blow to a career soldier who, as well as dealing with gruelling sessions of chemotherapy, was left feeling a huge sense of empathy for soldiers who were unable to be with their comrades at work.

"I had to leave my job and go through what was a very hard treatment programme," the member of the Adjutant General's Corps' Staff and Personnel Support branch recalled. "Having been in charge of sickness and absence management at HQ 4 Division in Aldershot, I had now become part of that very process."

After being pronounced clear of cancer, Lt Col Murdoch has found herself in a unique position. With a crucial understanding of the impact of long-term absence on troops, she is now playing the Army's part in a successful charity initiative aiming to help bring recovering soldiers back into the work place.

Skill Force has been drawing on the expertise of ex-Forces personnel to develop the confidence and abilities of less fortunate youngsters in schools and colleges. But under a new scheme known as the Internship Programme, the charity has teamed up with the military to help soldiers who have been off wounded or sick to try their hand at instructing with the organisation.

Lt Col Murdoch is the Armed Forces point of contact managing this initiative, which is open to troops who are either heading back to Service life or civvy street. Her objectives include preparing personnel with the classroom skills they need in three weeks of study at courses around the country before they embark on a placement with youngsters.

In return, soldiers have the chance to re-engage with employment and return to the rhythm of working life as part of the Army's recovery pathway.

"It's really important that we give the guys and girls the opportunity to see what they can do in the education environment," she said in an interview at her Aldershot base. "For some of the Service personnel on this programme, the experience with Skill Force can be completely life-changing.

"It is also worth noting that instructors with the charity have been delivering some brilliant results, particularly with children who have become

disengaged and excluded as well as those for whom English is not their first language."

Would-be instructors accepted on the Internship Programme should not expect an easy ride. Under the expert guidance of professionals including former teachers, they have to become proficient in the fundamentals of classroom management, lesson planning and, crucially, child protection issues.

Then, for up to six weeks or more, they could be working on the front line of some of the country's most testing education establishments, putting all they have learned into practise.

But of the two courses run as this issue went to press, all candidates had passed and picked up recognised civilian qualifications along the way.

Skill Force head of education Lucinda Elliott, who previously held a senior teaching position in a secondary school, believed the values and standards that Forces personnel learn in military life are an invaluable means of gaining respect.

"You very quickly recognise that it is not just teachers who have something to offer young people," she added. "Some of these guys have great life experience – they have some stories to tell and young people will relate to them.

"We had one person here who really took to the instructor role with Skill Force and looked at teaching as a career as soon as he left the Services."

For the soldiers taking on the demands of the classroom, having the opportunity to impart their skills and experience to young people is an enticing prospect. While accepting that the process is a steep learning curve, they emphasised that good preparation paid off.

Rfn Aaron Mason (4 Rifles), who suffered a heat injury in Iraq during Op Telic 10, said his experience had been rewarding. "I think this is a brilliant scheme for guys like me, even though the pupils that you work with can be a bit of a handful," he admitted.

"Lt Col Murdoch is also great – she is somebody that you can always go and talk to and ask any questions."

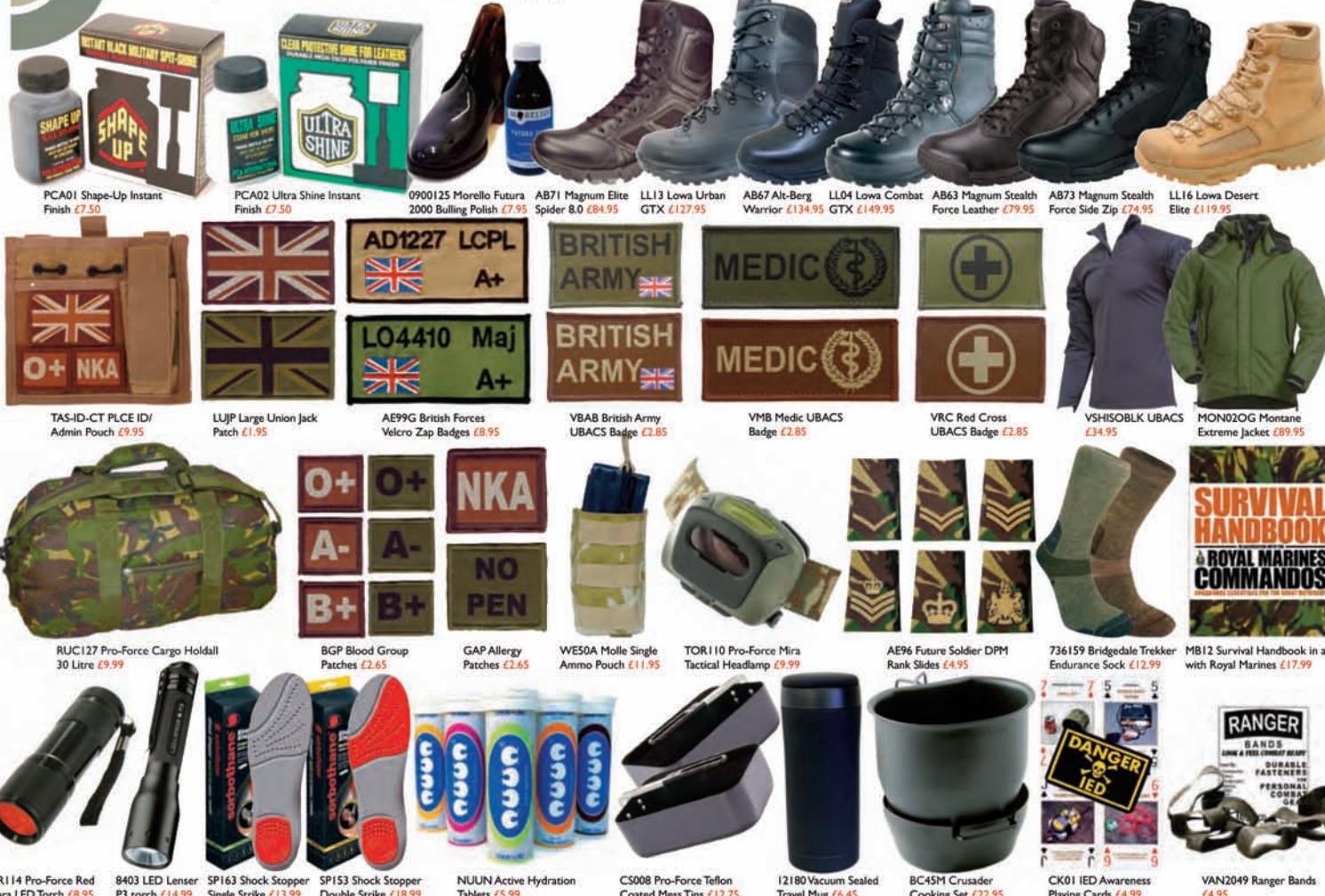
Sgt Lee Potter (4 Rifles) was equally enthusiastic. "I think this has to be a good thing for soldiers," he added. "When you have an injury you can feel very negative but the internship scheme gets you out of your normal working environment and gives you the opportunity to start feeling positive again."

Thinking positive is something soldiers do extremely well. From being the best in sports arenas to fighting a war in Afghanistan, troops are more than accustomed to difficult challenges.

Working as instructors, they are showing that the battle continues even when they are injured. They are imparting their life experience and knowledge to a new generation – and that is a huge and valuable gift. ■

It's really important that we give the guys and girls the opportunity to see what they can do in the education environment

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TOP GUNS

Updated Army arsenal gives soldiers an added edge in battle with insurgent forces

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE selection of weaponry being used in Afghanistan seems to be ever expanding as troops continue to take the fight to the Taliban.

With the new Sharpshooter rifle due to be shipped to theatre this year, Army crack shots will hope to gain an even greater advantage over their enemy.

The semi-automatic weapon will form a key part of the Service's impressive arsenal and with this in mind *Soldier* decided to take a closer look at the firearms and equipment now being used by Herrick troops.

A light weapons demonstration at London's Whitehall showcased these tools of the trade as well as highlighting some of the new developments and kit currently in the pipeline. >>



Combat shotgun

Ammunition: Seven rounds of 2.75in, with one in the chamber.

Weight: 3.82kg.

Range: Up to 40m with 00 buck ammunition and up to 140m with the solid slug.

The semi-automatic Bernelli shotgun is designed to suppress targets at close range. Purchased to meet the demands of the Green Zone, it was supplied as an Urgent Operational Requirement. It was supplied in February 2009 when 200 weapons were sent to theatre. "The soldiers think it is a fantastic piece of kit," explained individual weapons expert WO2 Ian Smith (REME).



Sharpshooter

Ammunition type: 7.62mm ball sniper L42A3 155 grain.

Weight: Approximately 6kg excluding night sights.

Range: Accurate out to 800m. This Urgent Operational Requirement weapon is the first new rifle introduced to the Army for 20 years. It is semi-automatic, fires 7.62mm rounds and is designed to enhance the accuracy of engaging targets at a longer range. Purchased with Afghanistan in mind, the Sharpshooter will be available to each Infantry section. Defence Equipment and Support are procuring 500 weapons for Op Herrick, with deliveries due this year. "It gives a fantastic field of view," WO2 Smith said.



Light support weapon (LSW)

Weight: 5.73kg when fitted with sights and a full magazine, 4.42kg weapon only.

An upgraded version of this ever-popular weapon is now on the cards. This new-look LSW boasts a quad rail picatinny hand guard that allows a variety of attachments, such as handgrips and laser lighting, to be fitted meaning it can be tailored to an individual soldier's needs. The old bipod, which was loose and often moved around while being carried, has been replaced with an upgraded design that is solid, lighter and can easily be stowed. WO2 Smith explained: "The soldiers do not like it in its current form, it has to be more desirable to the boys who are using it. Everyone I have shown this to likes it, the feedback has all been exceptional and very positive."



L115 A3 sniper rifle

Ammunition: 8.59mm bullet in a five-round magazine.

Weight: 6.8kg.

Range: Up to 1,100m.

This weapon forms part of the Sniper System Improvement Programme (SSIP) and comes fitted with state-of-the-art telescopic day and night all-weather sights to improve the user's effective range. It is designed to achieve a first-round hit at 600m and harassing fire out to 1,100m. It fires a 8.59mm bullet that is heavier than the 7.62mm round of the L96, which means it is less likely to be deflected over extremely long ranges. The rifle has a folding stock to reduce the length when it is in its backpack and has an adjustable cheek piece. Other key elements of the SSIP include a suite of night sights, spotting scopes, laser range finders and tripods.



Surveillance system and range finder (SSARF)

Replacing the Spyglass and Otis, the SSARF will be a welcome ally to those based in recce divisions and forward locations.

The kit comes fitted with its own GPS, thermal imaging and a day camera that can take and store as many as 100 images. With a range of up to five miles it allows soldiers to quickly establish the exact location and distance of enemy forces. Its design also means it can be hand-held making it far lighter and much less conspicuous than its predecessor. Karen Hawes, senior inventory manager for Defence Equipment and Support, told *Soldier*: "The SSARF is out in training now and will go to theatre for the first time in March with 4 Brigade. They will be used in recce divisions and you will probably find them in forward operating bases as surveillance systems."



General purpose machine gun (GPMG)



Ammunition: Standard Nato 7.62mm ball, tracer and blank fired from a metal disintegrating link belt.

Weight: 10.9kg.
Range: Maximum

tactical range of 1,800m.

The GPMG is a fully-automatic, belt-fed, gas and spring-operated weapon with an operational rate of fire in a ground role of between 25 and 100 rounds per minute. It can be fired on its bipod or mounted to the L4 A1 tripod for sustained fire use. Suppliers Heckler and Koch are now working on a lightweight version of the GPMG. The new-look design creates a 1.8kg weight reduction thanks to its shortened barrel, external flutes and titanium receiver. "This is a significant weight reduction and the cost penalty is minimal," explained Mike Thornton, managing director of Heckler and Koch.

M82A1 rifle 0.5in

Ammunition: Ball and armour piercing incendiary hardcore 0.5in (12.7mm) bullet in a ten-round magazine.

Weight: 13.6kg with a full magazine.

Range: Up to 1,830m.

The semi-automatic rifle comes in a fitted airtight and watertight carrying case that also has room for cleaning equipment. It provides accurate, long-range fire against individual targets up to 1,830m away and is capable of destroying or disabling equipment outside the range of capabilities of other weapons. In the support role it can engage individual light armoured vehicles and penetrate fortifications. As an explosive ordnance tool it is capable of engaging and disrupting several types of ammunition at ranges of 100m to 500m.



Underslung grenade launcher (UGL)

Ammunition: 40 x 46mm high explosive grenade.

Weight: 1.5kg.

Range: Effective to 350m.

Once attached, the single-shot UGL does not affect the accuracy of the rifle, as the barrel is still free to oscillate. To reload, a spring-loaded barrel opens sideways for a round to be inserted in the chamber. In combination with the rifle, aimed fire with the launcher is possible at ranges up to 350m.



Polymer magazines

Heckler and Koch have also developed a new polymer magazine for the SA80 that will reduce a soldier's weight burden

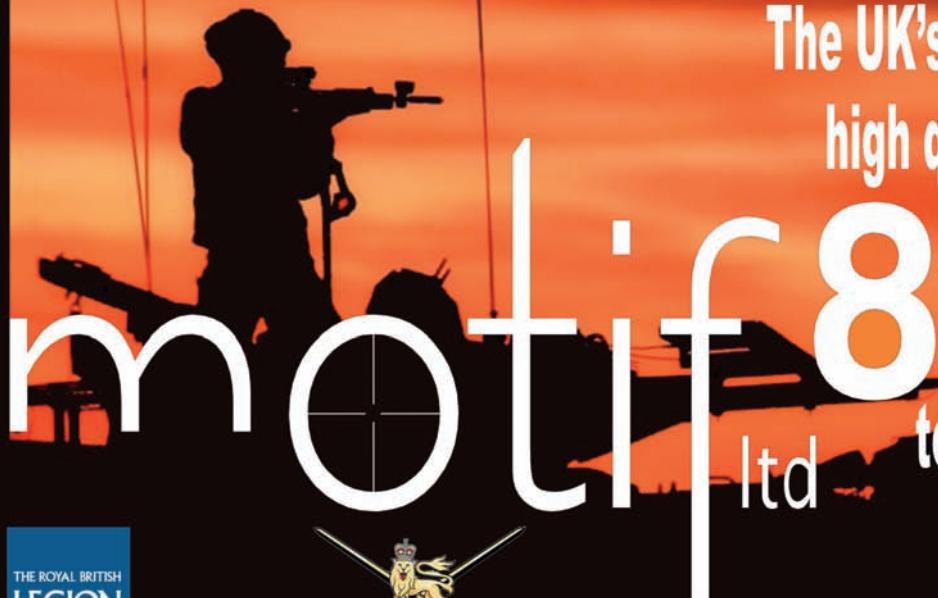
by 2kg. As well as being lighter, the magazines are

also see-through meaning troops will be able to monitor how many rounds they have remaining. It is hoped the new kit will be available by the end of 2010. "On average a soldier may carry eight to ten magazines," Mr Thornton said. "This gives a saving of 200g per magazine and everyone benefits from the weight reduction."

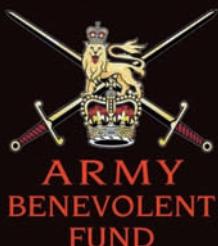


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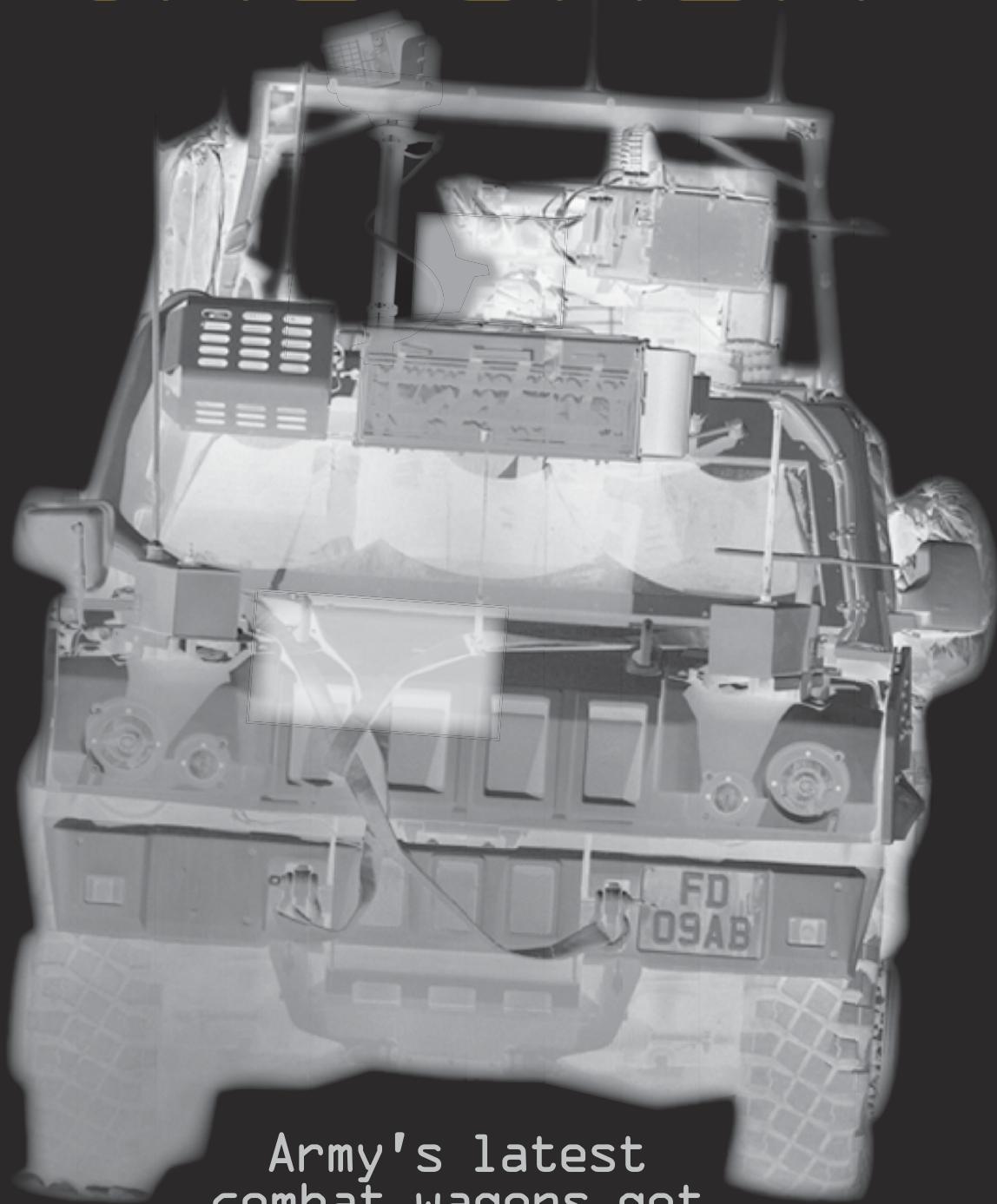
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Under the skin



Army's latest
combat wagons get
new electronics

Dressing down: New digital underpinnings will give armoured vehicles a potent edge on the battlefield

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Steve Dock

PLANS to give the Army's latest combat wagons new hi-tech electronic underpinnings are moving forward as defence contractors square up to the challenges of the 21st Century battlefield.

Scientists and technicians with leading companies have aligned themselves with the MoD Force Protection Working Group to cut the need for armoured workhorses such as the Mastiff and Warrior to be remodelled every time a new piece of kit is fitted.

The Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA) initiative – the rights to which would be owned by the Government – will allow troops to literally "plug in and play" with new systems as soon as they are available. The aim is to make any technologies easier to integrate.

Following hot on the heels of prototypes from the likes of General Dynamics and Thales

– both previewed by *Soldier* following the DSEI show last year – Finmeccanica Battlespace Solutions has been the latest contractor to demonstrate its prototype to Army experts.

In an event at the Long Valley proving ground in Aldershot, company representatives unveiled Panther and Pinzgauer command and surveillance vehicles fitted with a new electronic platform and sporting kit including the latest imaging and sniper detection technologies.

Any intelligence gathered from the wagons' on-board systems can be beamed at will between vehicles and individual crew stations so those at the sharp end of combat logistic convoy operations can tap into the bigger picture.

"The Army is changing its concept of operations to a more flexible approach and the defence industry is getting

into that mindset," Cliff Allum, business development executive with Finmeccanica and veteran of the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment, told *Soldier*. "Gen Sir David Richards, the

Chief of the General Staff, has said that this will be the way of the future and we are all now moving to provide that technology.

"In our case, the systems we have linked allow all crews in a combat logistic patrol to see exactly what the guys at the front end can see," he added.

"We're pleased with what we have achieved and have already

demonstrated it to the Armoured Trials and Development Unit and Director Royal Armoured Corps."

The integrated systems fitted to the two command and liaison vehicles are impressive. The kit features the latest

The Army is changing its concept of operations to a more flexible approach, and the defence industry is getting into that mindset,



Hawk camera, which gives troops a thermal-imaging and daylight capability. The all-seeing eye is mounted high above the convoy and is complemented by the Enforcer remote weapons station and the Boomerang sniper detection system.

Able to recognise the sound of gunfire, this sensitive piece of electronic wizardry relays the direction of a small-arms attack to the gunner, automatically slewing his turret in the direction of the threat and allowing him to return fire under armour. Linked with a host of other features, including global positioning system mapping and video recording, troops have a comprehensive situational awareness capability.

"Our mission is to create a generic architecture across all vehicles, with the aim to address the problem of having to have different solutions across the board," said Iain Duncan, chief engineer at Finmeccanica's Land Platform Solutions arm. "What we have done here could easily be fitted to other combat vehicles.

"Last summer, all the main players in the defence business were asked to produce

an example of what could be done," he added. "We have developed our ideas more and more and have increasingly installed new components."

With more off-the-shelf equipment being procured under Urgent Operational Requirement programmes, making sure vehicles have a single electronic platform to accommodate any new developments is an understandable priority for British defence chiefs.

While compatibility between new technologies is a key asset on a battlefield where good quality information is crucial to success, putting this kit in the hands of soldiers who have grown up with an instinctive understanding of how to link digital devices makes the GVA initiative an extremely potent, and even war-winning, prospect. Ultimately it has the potential to change tactical thinking as well as save money. ■

Take two:
A Pinzgauer mobile surveillance unit provided the second platform for Finmeccanica's GVA demonstration



Troops from the Combat Service Support Trials and Development Unit show GVA's potential during the demonstration at Long Valley, Aldershot

Background picture, Mud plugging: A Panther being put through its paces at the Army Training and Development Unit Bovington Picture: Graeme Main

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First steps

Wounded soldiers boosted by new recovery regime

Report: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Graeme Main

WITH Op Herrick's high tempo placing more demands on Servicemen and women, it is easy to see why Defence chiefs are concerned about the numbers of troops sidelined by injury and illness.

As this issue went to press, some ten per cent of personnel were unable to deploy on operations and a further 13 per cent had limitations on their abilities in the field. In an already-stretched Army, these figures make for unwelcome reading.

But the MoD has been taking action to address the issue and has announced a new scheme designed to return troops to full fitness as soon as possible, whether they are heading back into the ranks or moving onto a new life on civvy street.

Working in partnership with Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion and other Service charities, the department has set up the Army Recovery Capability, under which several separate medical services will be united under a single umbrella.

The £30 million scheme, which is being underpinned by the creation of new recovery centres staffed by health professionals, will focus on bringing individuals back to fighting fitness as quickly as possible with tailor-made exercise regimes.

Defence Under-Secretary Kevan Jones believes the new capability will further bolster standards of care for soldiers.

"This is another step in the ongoing improvements we have made to welfare support for Service personnel, their families and veterans," he said. "It underlines the Government's commitment, outlined in the 2008 Service Personnel Command Paper, to deliver world-class services for our Armed Forces."

Under the new blueprint, existing Army Absence Management Teams will be restructured, bolstered and moved from divisions to each of the regional brigades. These 12

new Personnel Recovery Units, which will be based throughout the UK, Northern Ireland and Germany, will be headed up by a lieutenant colonel.

In parallel, the new Personnel Recovery Centres, which will be built in partnership with Help for Heroes and maintained by The Royal British Legion and the MoD, are being created in key garrison areas. A trial centre is up-and-running in Edinburgh and others will follow in Colchester and Bulford.

Those in charge of the scheme also hope to create a specialist Battle Back centre, which will have staff and equipment available to provide adventurous training, while the newly-formed Army Personnel Recovery Branch will oversee the whole process.

According to an MoD spokesman, there will be a decision point in each recovery plan as to whether the soldier can continue their service or will face discharge.

"The earlier that this can be identified, the better it will be to deliver the right support," he said. "The decision will be informed by a medical board assessment.

"If the decision is to return to duty, then the recovery plan will be focused on that. Likewise if leaving the Army is the decision, then everything will be done to concentrate on delivering the support necessary to the individual and their family.

"The Personnel Recovery Branch will also track individuals throughout the process whether they are staying in the Army or leaving," he added.

The new capability should certainly give the military a more efficient way of assisting injured soldiers while bolstering numbers of troops available for duty.

And for those on the discharge list, there is now a more comprehensive package available to help them with their return to civilian life.

The recovery plan is also a potent tool in an increasingly-robust line-up of medical assets. With superb care available at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine in Birmingham and the world-class Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre in Surrey, injured personnel can be assured that they are in very good hands. ■



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Building clearance:
Cpl Robert Hamilton
(1 Scots) secures a
building at Copehill
Down during 4 Bde's
Exercise Pashtun Rat
Picture: Steve Dock

PLAIN preparation

Wiltshire training area transformed into
Helmand province as 4th Mechanized Brigade
tackle intense training for Op Herrick 12

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

A N URGENT call of "IED, IED" crackled over the radio while overhead the constant whirring of helicopter blades reaffirmed the amount of top cover being provided to the troops on the ground.

As an Afghan shura took place between British personnel and elders in the village of Towghi Keli, an EOD team moved in to safely dispose of the bomb, causing a deafening explosion but thankfully no casualties.

On this occasion the call signs and rapid efficiency with which the British and Afghan soldiers moved in to secure positions were all part of a final training exercise (FTX) on Salisbury Plain.

But the drills were the culmination of

18 months of preparation carried out by 4th Mechanized Brigade in readiness for deployment to Helmand province and the troops will soon be doing it for real on Operation Herrick 12.

The whole area of the Plain's green expanse had been transformed into a parallel Helmand for the training. For the shura, which was guarded by actual members of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Bowden Down Farm was known only as Towghi Keli.

Copehill Down represented the city of Sangin and, while on duty during the FTX and mission rehearsal exercise (MRX), the 3,500 soldiers were to work and sleep as if they were in theatre.

"This is Helmand," 4 Bde media ops officer Capt John Gilbody told *Soldier* at a military cordon. "We have just put it on Salisbury Plain.

"This exercise is as realistic as it's ever going to be – we've a lot of assets that you would not usually see in normal training."

On both sides of the road by the cordon, the IED-disposal teams were carrying out ground clearance while Jackal vehicles cruised across the difficult terrain.

The whole situation was being watched over by two Sea King helicopters.

"Air-to-land integration is very important in Afghanistan so it's crucial that we train with everything as it would be out there," said Capt Gilbody, who is set to be based in Lashkar Gah.

"The troops here will be exposed to everything that could happen to them in theatre – it's a huge spectrum of activity."

Headquarters 4 Bde is based in Catterick and its troops last deployed on operations to Iraq on Op Telic 11 in 2007-08.

Since September 2008, personnel



serving with the brigade have carried out manoeuvres in Canada, Kenya and the Czech Republic, but it was on Salisbury Plain where the all-important mission-specific training took place.

"There is no more general war training, it is focused directly on Afghanistan," explained Capt Gilbody.

An operations room mimicking Lashkar Gah has been set up on West Down Camp, with 250 troops working on computers – just like at the hub of information and intelligence found in theatre.

Capt Georgie Dunn, who serves with 204 Signal Squadron, will be working as an ops officer in Helmand province.

She said: "We are using real, up-to-date information from Afghanistan in training.

"To have the continuity is good because we've got soldiers who don't have to worry about having to change and adapt to the different environments."

There has also been a huge emphasis on training to counter the IED threat and to safely dispose of devices that are found.

On Herrick 12, 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) will be working to rid Helmand of the makeshift bombs, which have caused the majority of British fatalities in Afghanistan.

Maj Matt Davies, counter-IED specialist

with 33 Engr Regt (EOD), explained the role of his unit.

"We'll be working as a joint force with RLC high-threat operators. This was a good opportunity to come together as a task force and most importantly to work with the battlegroup."

Scenarios on the ground on the FTX and MRX prepare personnel for the deadly spectre of IEDs.

"There are devices which simulate the effects of an IED going off," said Maj Davies. "That tests the engineers whose counter-IED training has been increased."

Back in the ramshackle village, a gathering of Afghan nationals strode into the open-air settlement to attend a shura.

While the locals sat barefoot on mats, speaking in Dari about local issues, British Servicemen and women watched from seats. Their role was to observe and listen, not to take part – exactly the same as will happen in Afghanistan.

"We are not part of the shura, we have just enabled it to take place," said Lt Saf Greenwood (1 Mercian)

"For the purposes of training there are six members of the ANA

here, which adds real value."

Speaking to *Soldier* after the shura, Capt Khaliluraman Mangal, 3rd Battalion ANA, explained the significance of the training the British have been undergoing.

"It is important because Afghanistan is a Muslim country and the culture is totally different to here."

"It is good that the British are attending shuras and seeing the Afghan people – if they do not they will increase the problems in Helmand."

The Afghan officer added: "If foreign forces are not Muslim the locals think they are invaders, but when they see the British as supporters of our country it will make them realise they are there to help."

As with many of the Army's training facilities, Salisbury Plain has undergone massive changes to turn it into an area capable of recreating modern theatres of conflict.

But while the Helmand-style desert is notable only by its absence and the weather may be slightly colder, the skills and drills drummed into soon-to-deploy troops from 4 Brigade are as close to the real thing as it is possible to get.

No-one can predict what challenges Herrick 12 will bring, but the extensive knowledge of those serving on it means it should present few surprises. ■

Terrain domination: Troops from 4 Bde secure the ground at Copehill Down





1 Counter-attack

HAS your enemy force's ammunition supply been depleted? Are they becoming exhausted and having their number reduced by casualties? Yes? Then it's time you mounted a counter-attack. The sudden shock of this unexpected retaliation could send your enemy reeling and push them right back to their start line, perhaps even breaking their morale completely. Used from ancient China to the modern theatre of war, the counter-attack hands the initiative back to the defender and can cause serious problems for the attacking force. Logistics and intelligence gathering become difficult for the attackers while the counter-offensive allows the defending force to dominate operations again. A counter-attack can also have a psychological effect on an attacker, rendering any superiority in numbers and equipment irrelevant.

2 Surprise attack

AS any fan of the *A-Team* knows, an ambush carried out by just a handful of men can have a devastating result on an unsuspecting enemy. Those caught on the wrong side of a surprise attack will suffer a disproportionate physical and psychological blow through the use of an ambush as a "force multiplier", where a numerically-inferior force defeats a larger enemy. Springing an ambush does not come easy. Good intelligence is a prerequisite, as is reconnaissance and detailed planning. A rehearsal can capitalise on this, but to maintain the element of surprise, tight security – extending to troops and their civilian contacts – is essential. Clear communications and a simple plan are vital in making sure the attack is well executed. The force deployed must be overwhelming and backed up by high-quality training.

3 Dominating the terrain

CONCEALMENT using the features of the ground or the cover of prevailing weather conditions can allow an army or fleet to attack from a new or unexpected direction. This tactic is as old as the hills that armies use to hide behind. The Duke of Wellington was a keen exponent of this tactic, using the lie of the land to protect his troops from French artillery by secreting them at the rear of hills. Despite advances in satellite observation and battlefield surveillance, terrain is still used today to gain an advantage over the enemy. Valleys afford a level of protection to gun batteries and infantry still prefer to use reverse slopes to "silhouette" an attacker so weapons can be used to maximum effect from high ground. Whatever terrain or environment can be found, it is clear that any operations of this kind require well-trained troops.



7 Reconnaissance

THROUGHOUT history enemies have employed tactics from balloons to satellites in an effort to find out what the other is doing. Reconnaissance is the surveillance process by which crucial battlefield information is gathered on enemy strengths and dispositions. Intelligence operates at a more strategic level and extends from conditions relevant to a particular battlefield to information about an enemy's political, military or industrial intentions. Tactical intelligence can be gathered by small patrols or by interrogation. Deeper behind enemy lines, operatives engage in espionage or sabotage and information is also gleaned through the interception of enemy communications. It's hard to say what the latest developments are in the shady world of intelligence but advances are being made all the time.

8 Insurgency

UNDER the right circumstances guerilla forces have achieved dramatic success. Contributing factors include terrain, the attitude of the civilian population, the will of the government being challenged and the determination and skill of the fighters. Guerilla warfare can be likened to terrorism in that it is evidence of a lack of manpower, equipment or support to defeat an enemy in conventional fighting. Raids are launched to weaken an enemy's ability to wage war while casualties inflicted demoralise the opposing force. Often the group will be supported by an outside source that sympathise with their aims. The enemy can adopt a "hit-and-run" approach and then conceal themselves within elements of the operational environment such as the civilian population, making things difficult for opposing forces.

9 Counter-insurgency

COUNTER-insurgency – security measures set out as a coherent and integrated strategy against guerillas has often relied on the overwhelming power of the state to crush the enemy. But it has often been recognised that when fighting the "long war" against a force that is hard to categorise, one of the most effective strategies of counter-insurgency is to win the "hearts and minds" of the wider population. In June 1948, Communist Terrorists (CTs) in Malaya began an insurgency to further their aim of seizing power. It became a murderous campaign. The British-led counter-insurgency realised that a heavy-handed response would be politically counter-productive so measures were used to isolate the CTs and get the population on-side by cultivating the "hearts and minds" ethos.



4 Shock action

AT the critical moment of battle, the shock action of a charge or the brief increase in the intensity of fire can be enough to break an enemy force. Some groundwork must be done in order for the shock action to succeed. The enemy must have its firepower suppressed sufficiently to allow an attack and not sustain casualties en route. This is the fate that befell the infamous Light Brigade, whose hastily-ordered charge during the Crimean War was right into the teeth of Russian gun batteries only too happy to inflict devastating casualties. It should have been made in a different area to capitalise on an earlier attack made by the Heavy Brigade. Shock actions in modern warfare have seen the likes of air strikes, artillery bombardments or conventional and nuclear munitions replace infantry and cavalry.

Taken from *How To Win on the Battlefield: The 25 Key Tactics of All Time* by Rob Johnson, Michael Whitby and John France. This book offers case studies of the strategies that have achieved victory on battlefields throughout time. Backed up by real-life examples from around the globe, it demonstrates how certain tactical concepts have stood the test of time. Published by Thames & Hudson and priced at £16.95, it will be released on April 19.



10 Psychological warfare

WITH terror so prevalent in the news since 9/11 it would be easy to think this tactic is a relatively modern innovation. But in various forms it has been used throughout history to break an enemy's will to resist and frighten them from engaging in further activity. Terrorism combines physical assaults with an attempt to break the mind of the enemy or at the very least to play out the drama of one's cause on the grand stage of world opinion. Advances in weaponry made during the mid-19th Century such as reliable lightweight explosives, mercury detonators and long-range firearms permitted terrorism to be carried out by small cells of dedicated activists. The Palestinians have used terror since the 1920s and 1930s when the immigration of Jews from Europe conflicted with existing Arab interests.

5 Concentration of force

THIS tactic really does do what it says on the tin. In order to break an enemy physically and psychologically, maximum combat power should be retained in one place with detachment of troops kept to an absolute minimum. This concentrated force should then be unleashed at the critical location or moment in an ongoing battle that first must be correctly identified by a commander in the field. While it can bear fruit, this tactic is also not without its drawbacks. The requirement to man depots or occupy territory can remove soldiers from the nucleus of the force, while such a mass of troops could easily lead to disease and make an easy target for enemy air power. These factors could significantly reduce the speed and power of an offensive. They can also be decisive during conflict.

6 Seizing the initiative

IT is a fundamental principle for a commander to seize and retain the initiative in battle. Keeping one step ahead of the enemy's decision making by reading the situation, issuing orders and effecting changes before the enemy can react can enable a force to dominate a battle or campaign. Upping the tempo of operations and forcing the enemy to respond to a rapid series of manoeuvres can have the same effect. Once gained, retaining the initiative is crucial to maintaining the upper hand. If an enemy is given respite, they can reorganise, mount an effective defence or counter-attack and the initiative is lost. Forcing an enemy to react to unexpected attacks against their logistics, command or the very fabric of their society can completely alter their strategy or ability to fight effectively on the battlefield.



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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) 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.



Help for housing: The Army has proposed a £6,500 increase to the value of Long Service Advance of Pay, a move which would assist those Service personnel wishing to get a foot on the property ladder

Army's long service payout and property prices are streets apart

WHEN applying for an advance of pay why is £8,500 the maximum figure on offer? This sum is nowhere near the amount needed by a soldier looking to buy a house.

I believe that the current limit is at least 17 years out of date and fails to acknowledge the significant hike in property prices. In 1993 the average house price stood at around £40,000, but today the figure is closer to £155,000.

I found a house on the market I liked for £127,000, but could only muster a ten per cent deposit and was duly denied a mortgage for the remainder.

Next year I will reach my 22-year point and be in line for a £33,000 payment, but getting this money when I leave the Army is too late. A friend of mine left the Service as a warrant officer and received a lump sum of approximately £55,000 but was still refused a mortgage on the grounds that he had not been in his new employment long enough.

If the Forces are trying as hard as they say they are to assist Service personnel in the massive transition from being in uniform to civvy street, why hasn't Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP) been revised and increased? – LCpl A McKinney.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: The three Services have for some time wished to increase the value of LSAP for all the reasons you have described.

It is a measure that has been proposed to the MoD with a view to seeking an increase to £15,000. Whether it will be successful in the current financial climate is another matter entirely.

You may not be aware that LSAP is not the only scheme available to Service



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● **SOLDIER** can't stretch to a deposit for a house, but thanks to our pals at Pontin's we can offer LCpl McKinney a prize break for a family of four. As the author of this month's prize letter, he can ponder any potential move into the property market at leisure during a three- or four-night break in Pontin's Self-Catering Classic accommodation at a choice of four coastal Holiday Parks: Brean Sands in Somerset; Camber Sands in East Sussex; Prestatyn Sands in North Wales and Southport in the North West.

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personnel wishing to purchase a house.

Following the publication of the Service Personnel Command Paper on what could be done across all Government departments to help Service personnel, you may now qualify for the pilot Affordable Housing Scheme or for access to the Key Worker Living programmes. If you have not already done so it would be worthwhile seeking further information about these schemes.

Bootneck blues

I AM currently serving alongside the Royal Marines in Plymouth, but am coming to the end of a three-year posting and my next job will take me away from the area.

It is my understanding that if I was in the Marines I could keep my existing quarter – allowing my wife and child to stay in the town – and commute back to my "home port" from my place of work at weekends.

However, as a soldier I have been told that I will have to give up my quarter. Having worked with the Marines for so long, surely I should be entitled to the same privileges as my Navy colleagues. We are supposed to be a tri-Service organisation after all.

My wife and child have a good life in Plymouth and are fed up with moving all the time, and for this reason I am seriously considering transferring to the Royal Marines. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Service Families Accommodation (SFA) is provided as housing for families at the Serviceman or woman's duty station in order to support operational effectiveness, rather than just to provide accommodation anywhere a Service family may wish to live.

It is for this reason that the SFA must be vacated on assignment to a new duty station; retention of a property is not permitted except for compassionate, welfare or educational reasons.

This is indeed one of the drawbacks of Service life, for which we receive the X Factor. Because you are settled in and like an area is not sufficient justification to retain SFA there.

Furthermore, given the wide variety of stations, SFA in the more popular ones would quickly become unavailable, thus disadvantaging those posted in.

As you are aware, an exception has been made to this rule for Royal Navy personnel under the Naval Port Area scheme, which allows those posted to the Portsmouth, Plymouth and Clyde areas to retain their SFA.

This measure was introduced because, unlike the other two Services who are widely assigned, RN personnel are normally only posted to their home port or are at sea and, if not, are only likely to move to one of the other two areas.

This is to minimise unnecessary disruption to the families and you may be interested to know that a similar measure has recently been introduced for the four Foot Guards battalions who only rotate between London, Windsor and Aldershot. However, if assigned elsewhere SFA must be vacated as normal.

AS a second-hand reader of your magazine (my son is at Sandhurst), I thought your readers may be interested in the contents of a report which appeared in a professional gemmology magazine I received from America.

The story detailed how members of the US military were being scammed into purchases of precious stones in foreign countries – including Afghanistan. One individual bought a selection of rubies and sapphires back from theatre which, when examined, turned out to be a combination of synthetics and glass-filled material. The stones had very little value, yet the soldier had paid hundreds of dollars for them having been told that they would fetch a much higher price in the States.

As a gemmologist, I would endorse this warning. By all means buy a memento of your time serving abroad, but do not waste money thinking it will be an investment.

I have also seen these imitation and treated stones first-hand having been shown them by UK personnel returning from Afghanistan. Uncut stones are increasingly being offered, but I would advise that the cost of cutting these rough stones would be more than the stone's actual value.

All of the retail jewellers that I speak to fully support our Service personnel and production of Service identification will usually gain a discount on purchases within this country. – [Mr G Jones, Rudell the Jewellers, Wolverhampton](#).

Picture: Graeme Main

PS . . .

BEING in a recession and at war, it's no surprise that the MoD is short of money.

I understand that operational commitments take their toll on the department's budget and that the influx of new life-saving equipment, vehicles and weapons, as well as ammunition, must take priority.

Consequently, we are being told wherever possible to save money, be it using train warrants instead of hire cars when attending courses or trying to repair kit instead of exchanging it.

But as many pennies as these measures will save, it is nothing compared to the amount of money the MoD wastes on civilian contractors. Day-after-day civvy trucks can be seen entering British Army camps the world over, delivering goods which could have easily been collected by the unit in need of them.

The MoD also hires in plumbers, builders and electricians – all trades employed in the Army. Why pay a contractor to complete work that soldiers are more than capable of doing?

Let us do the work we joined up to do and only bring in the outside agencies when soldiers are away on operations. – [L Cpl J Sharp, 8 Regiment RLC](#).

I WRITE in response to the “frustrated adjutant” (*Talkback*, January) who referred to the input of “an incompetent clerk” when suggesting MPs should be made to use the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system.

I would like to think that the comment was written tongue-in-cheek, as I’m sure that no self-respecting adjutant would degrade any of their administrators in this way.

Equally, any adjutant worth their salt would be able to use the very user-friendly self-service guides within JPA.

The days when scores of clerks made cups of tea and filled in your claims for you have long gone. Personal administration on JPA is exactly that – your responsibility.

I suggest that rather than writing to *Soldier* the adjutant uses his time more constructively and becomes proficient on JPA. – [A competent RAWO](#).



Ski break put on ice: Soldiers who lose money on a holiday as a result of deploying into an operational theatre early may be entitled to claim a refund of their costs [Piste of the action – Pages 100-101](#)

Picture: Richard Watt

Cold, hard costs of going off-piste

On my return from Op Herrick 10 I was informed by staff at the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre (RTMC) that I owed almost £1,700 in Northern Ireland Residence Supplement (NIRS), which was paid during a 13-month period of home mobilisation.

Apparently I should never have been in receipt of the allowance and consequently the money will be deducted from my final month's salary.

This financial setback follows missing out on last year's bounty (as a result of going from home mobilised duty to operational mobilisation) and losing a £320 ski trip deposit as a consequence of deploying into theatre early.

With almost £2,000 lost and a further £1,700 to pay back, going to Afghanistan has cost me dearly and I will no longer consider further operational deployments.

Is RTMC right in saying that I should have to pay back NIRS? If so, is there anything that can be done to recover last year's bounty or my holiday expenses? – [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes:
Taking the matter of NIRS first, this is an allowance that is designed to compensate for the additional pressures and restrictions placed on Regular Service personnel and their accompanying

families on permanent assignment in Northern Ireland.

While this allowance may also be paid to mobilised personnel, it may not be paid to anyone who has been recruited locally from within Northern Ireland.

Consequently, RTMC is correct in stating that you have been overpaid this allowance and that it must be repaid.

You state that you paid a deposit for a ski trip, which you lost by deploying into theatre early. If this is the case then you may be entitled to claim a refund of your costs under the rules governing Nugatory Holiday Expenses.

You will need to present all the relevant documentation to your parent unit administration office.

You ask also about your entitlement to a bounty for the training year 08/09. You mobilised on March 14, 2008 and were demobilised on September 22, 2009. As such you spent the whole of the qualifying period on mobilised service and were therefore unable to meet the mandatory one-day's non-continuous training with your parent unit.

However, during your service in theatre you will have been in receipt of several other payments, including Operational Allowance and Longer Separation Allowance, that would have more than offset the loss of the bounty.

PS...

THE letter from Lt Col R Jones bemoaning being issued with a weapon you can only fire right-handed, "Left-hander was right about Army's rifle" (February), brought back a few memories of my own.

For more than 60 years the standard Army rifle was the Lee-Enfield 303 (albeit in a number of different guises) and for left-handers it was very difficult to work the weapon's bolt mechanism.

Left-handers were their own and every musketry instructors' worst nightmare!

I write having been a marksman (sixpence a day extra pay) throughout my National Service with the REME (1948-1951) and during my stint as a TA bombardier (1951-1955). — Paul North, Newport Park, Exeter.

IN reply to a question asking why the Army does not supply left-handed SA80 rifles, Maj Jim Mowie [COS Equipment Directorate HQLF] said that tests had shown that a sample of left-handed soldiers did better with "right-handed" SA80 rifles than right-handed soldiers. He therefore considered there was no reason to pursue the matter further.

On the contrary, there are at least two conjectures worth pursuing.

One is that the trials conducted suggest that the features that cause these rifles to be designated right-handed are actually more help to left-handed soldiers than to their right-handed colleagues.

Therefore, the British Army should conduct further tests in which left-handed SA80s are given to right-handed soldiers to see if they perform better than with the standard rifle. It could lead to a useful reappraisal of the design of the SA80 A2.

Another point worth noting is that society encourages left-handed people to use their right hand more than it encourages right-handed people to use their left hand.

Consequently, left-handed people are likely to be closer to ambidextrous than right-handed people and this may explain their superior performance in the trials.

With this in mind, the Army should consider devising exercises to improve the dexterity of the left hand of its right-handed soldiers. — Robert Steel, LF-E2 Pers Ops & Plans, HQLF.



Right of reply: In January's *Talkback* Maj Jim Mowie, chief of staff of HQ Land Forces' Equipment Directorate, acknowledged that while other rifles can be converted to be fired from either shoulder, the accuracy of these weapons does not match that of the British Army's SA80 A2

Picture: Graeme Main

Ambidextrous assault

In response to a letter enquiring about the possibility of the British Army procuring a left-handed rifle, "Left-field rifle request" (January), Maj Jim Mowie of HQ Land Forces' Equipment Directorate argued that no such weapon was required on the grounds that left-handed firers adapt successfully to firing from the right shoulder.

I was serving when the SA80 was being trialled (in 4.85mm calibre) and was introduced to the rifle at Bisley, where I was told that a small toolkit issued to unit armourers would allow for the configuration of the weapon to be changed from right- to left-handed in about ten minutes.

Clearly this feature did not survive the trials process and only a right-handed version of the SA80 entered service.

The point that Maj Mowie misses is that a weapon should be able to be shot from either shoulder, depending on the piece of cover that the soldier wishes to fire from.

At all stages of my training with the SLR [Self-Loading Rifle] and during operational training for Northern Ireland, I was taught to fire off both shoulders. As a left-hander I was able to move along the left-hand side

of a street and cover my front man, who in turn could cover me with his weapon on his right shoulder. The two men at the rear of the patrol could swap shoulders at will and one would always be covering to the rear.

With the SA80 such a formation is not possible and soldiers have had to adapt to the weapon instead of the other way round. In contrast, both the general purpose machine gun and light machine gun can be fired from both shoulders giving the firer greater flexibility.

The M16/C7 series of ArmaLite derivatives together with the AK47 family can be fired from both shoulders and those two weapon systems dominate the world of long-barreled small arms.

How many countries use the SA80? Very few. Of the other successful "bulldog" designs, how many are right-handed only? The French FAMAS and Austrian Steyr can both be adapted for left-hand use and the FN P90 and the new Kel-Tec RFB are fully ambidextrous. In other words it is only the British Army's weapon which restricts the firer to one shoulder. — Maj P Cook, HQ Theatre Troops, Netheravon.



Picture: Steve Dock

I READ with interest the article on the new Sharpshooter rifle in February's issue and couldn't help but notice the weapon's remarkable resemblance (from the outside at least) to the 7.62mm AR10 version of the M16.

While the AR10 is a weapon that received considerable praise when it was designed in the 1950s it would seem odd to pay more than £3,000 per rifle for them in the 21st Century. I am sure that National Match accurised M14s would be available from Springfield or the American Government for a much better deal and

would provide much the same performance.

Even the humble SLR or heavy barrel FN might be readily available in large numbers and, equipped with the undoubtedly improved sighting system, would do the job required. Perhaps *Soldier* could provide a bit more technical detail on the new rifle. — Erik Blakeley, Curator, Staffordshire Regiment Museum.

The editor, pondering on an excuse to get out of polishing his own guns, writes: The Sharpshooter is featured on Page 44 of this issue.

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Trouble and strife of being an Army wife

AM getting married to a serving soldier next month and my future husband and I have been allocated a quarter which, as per the regulations, we can move into two weeks before our wedding.

However, this house is currently standing empty and will remain so until we take up occupancy. As we have never lived together previously we have a lot to sort out ahead of the wedding and so asked if we could move in a week or two earlier.

The answer given was no on the grounds that "the rules don't allow it".

Why is the Army making our life more difficult than it needs to be?

Getting married is stressful enough without having to move house and set-up home at the same time.

The run up to our wedding, which should be a happy and exciting time, is going to be overshadowed by packing, unpacking and buying and arranging the delivery of furniture and goods.

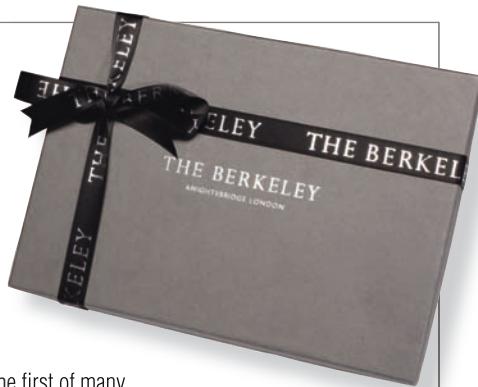
We are constantly told that sustaining marriage is a high priority for the Army and that rules governing welfare support are intended to tackle issues which lead to the higher than average divorce rates within the serving community. That is not



● **SOLDIER** has teamed up with The Berkeley – which combines cossetting five-star luxury in Knightsbridge, contemporary elegance and celebrity buzz, with sublime service and state-of-the-art facilities – to provide the soon-to-be married couple with a lavish wedding gift.

The perfect antidote to any stress experienced in the run-up to the big day, The Berkeley is inviting the bride and her soldier to begin married life in style with a one night weekend stay in one of the hotel's deluxe guest rooms and a complimentary English breakfast.

The staff at *Soldier* HQ hope that the break is the first of many treasured memories Miss Robson will have as an Army wife.



www.the-berkeley.co.uk

my experience, I am not even married yet and Army bureaucracy is already placing obstacles in my way.

What a welcome into the Service. If this is how it starts, I can't wait to see what other treasures lie in store for me as an Army wife. – **Miss Joanna Robson.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: I am sorry that your initial impression of Army life is so unfortunate and not entirely accurate.

Service divorce rates are actually below those of our civilian contemporaries, and a significant amount of effort and resources are devoted to supporting our families which we view, in turn,

as key to supporting our soldiers.

As regards the specific issue you raise, it is the policy across all three Services that occupation of Service Families Accommodation (SFA) by unmarried couples is forbidden.

Nevertheless, as you are aware there is the concession that couples may take over allocated SFA up to two weeks before their wedding to allow them to move their possessions in. This is felt to be sufficient for most couples.

I am sure you will understand that, when SFA is in such short supply, there is also a practical limit to how far in advance of occupation a house can be allocated to personnel.

Your future home may be empty but many others will not be and we must set a limit somewhere that is likely to be fairer to all.

Wedding dress woe

I AM honoured to have been asked to be best man at a close friend's wedding. The groom and I are serving Territorial Army soldiers and have both been on active service in Afghanistan and Iraq.

My friend requested that he be allowed to get married in No 1 dress uniform and, having been given permission to do so, began the tortuous mission of collecting the correct items. Told that our regiment did not hold any in stock, we bought two sets of uniforms, complete with the necessary medals, buttons and insignia.

We are also in the process of buying drill hats at a cost of £120 each, drill boots for £80 and lanyards for £15. Does this great Army of ours really not have two spare hats and pairs of boots?

Would someone serving in a Regular battalion be expected to buy their own uniform? What happened to the "One Army" we keep being told we are serving in? – **CSgt P Martin, 5 Div Offr Trg.**

Maj Allan Law, SO2 Mat Sp, Log Sp Branch HQLF, responds: Entitlements and eligibility to wear No 1 dress uniform are contained in *Army Dress Regulations* and *Clothing Scales for the Army* and your unit should have access to these documents.

Ceremonial and parade wear items are expensive and therefore are not an individual issue to Regular or TA soldiers and officers except where authorised in the clothing scales.

In order to manage these items efficiently they can, subject to availability, be issued as a temporary loan and applications should be made through the parent unit. These applications are then passed through the logistic support chain for action.

Boots, hats and other regimental accoutrements such as badges are either on personal issue or can be obtained under regimental or corps



"Very fetching Harry, but it hardly reflects your job as a mess waiter... make sure the RSM doesn't get a peek at the photos."

arrangements. It's unfortunate that you resorted to spending a considerable amount of money when some of the items you required were readily available. Had your unit sought advice from the parent HQ Logistic Support Branch this could have been avoided.

IN January's *Talkback*, Sgt Rowlands stated that he believes generals, both serving and retired, should not comment publicly on political issues. The correspondent was entirely right in his assertion that we are servants of the crown and the subsequent implication that the Armed Forces should be apolitical.

However, I believe he has misunderstood the situation somewhat.

The generals were not expressing an opinion on behalf of all Service personnel with regards to the British National Party (BNP). They were distancing our Armed Forces from a cynical attempt by the BNP to ally themselves with the Forces in order to curry favour with the voters.

The BNP has been guilty of using images of Winston Churchill and wartime insignia to assist with their campaign in the European elections. Indeed, a recent domestic pamphlet drop contained images of a guardsman in uniform and images purporting to be of a typical elderly English couple.

Neither of the images were authorised and the couple in question later turned out to be Italian. In both cases the images had been lifted from an internet search and those concerned were unaware that their pictures had been used for political ends.

Putting aside concerns over misrepresentation by the generals on behalf of the members of the Armed Forces, one must consider the question of corporate identity. It is vital that our Services protect theirs.

We don't ally ourselves to any particular well-known brands, so why should we allow ourselves to be presented as allied to any particular political party, nefarious or otherwise? To that end I would say that the generals were doing precisely what Sgt Rowlands demanded of them in his letter and were "keeping the Army out of politics".

— LCpl Dunphy, HC&C Band.



"A novel suggestion, Sir, but I think you'll find we already offer third class travel... it just happens to be at second class prices."

IN the welter of activities designed to reduce travel and subsistence costs, the MoD appears to have missed the opportunity to persuade the railway companies to reintroduce third class travel. — *The Fat Controller (Retd.)*



Picture: LA(phot) Gaz Faulker

Taxing conditions: The Operational Allowance recognises the "significantly increased and enduring nature of danger" encountered by British troops in theatres such as Afghanistan and is not a tax rebate

Time for tax-free tours?

I HAVE just finished an operational tour in Iraq and duly received my operational bonus. Looking back on my previous tours with the British Army it is noticeable that the organisation has come on leaps and bounds when it comes to pay.

That said, I understood the operational payment to be a tax rebate for the six-month deployment and, having done the maths, I am sure it falls short of the sum I have paid out. Would a simpler solution not be to follow the lead of our American and Australian cousins and for British soldiers to stop paying tax when they deploy? — *Name and address supplied.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I agree with you that much has been done in recent years to improve financial recognition given to members of the Armed

● RECENT newspaper reports stated that soldiers on "operational tours" are entitled to a "tax-free bounty". Does Cyprus qualify for this payment?

As TA soldiers, my colleagues and I would also normally qualify for a bounty on completion of our Military Annual Training Tests (MATTs). On our return from Cyprus in October 2010, will we automatically qualify for our bounty in April 2011 or will we still need to complete additional duties?

We are also due to be downsized to a squadron at the end of the tour and a number of our members will be transferring to other units. Will those on the move still qualify for their bounty or will they have to make arrangements with their new units to complete the required number of training days? — *LCpl N Gribben, 40 Sig Regt.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Newspapers do not always use the correct terms for Service allowances and the "tax-free bounty" you are referring to is the OA, which is outlined in my response above. Those serving on Op Tosca are not eligible for this allowance.

Bounty qualification while on operations is specified in Joint Service Publication

Forces and I assume that the "operational bonus" that you refer to in your letter is the Operational Allowance (OA).

This payment is often mistaken as a tax rebate for time spent on operations, probably because the original rate was based on the tax paid over six months by a private soldier with five years' service.

However, OA is not and never has been a tax rebate. It is an allowance designed to recognise the significantly increased and enduring nature of danger in specified operational locations over and above that compensated for by X Factor.

The allowance is paid as a lump sum (at the daily rate of £13.08) at the end of a qualifying tour. It is paid equally to all ranks at a rate which is reviewed annually and is set by the Treasury in consultation with the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

754 (chapter 4, section 5), which states that entitlement to any bounty will be suspended when a Reservist is called out for permanent service except when such duty is authorised to count in lieu of obligatory training.

However, it is recognised that your pre-deployment training covers many aspects of your training year. It is anticipated that your Op Tosca mobilisation will last for approximately 30 weeks, which means that you should be entitled to a reduction of seven out-of-camp training days to qualify for bounty. If you did not attend any out-of-camp training days prior to mobilisation you will have an obligation to train for five days out of camp in order to qualify.

Personnel who move after their unit reduces to squadron-strength should take their current MATTs and bounty-earning qualifications with them. If elements of training have been undertaken by the new unit before they were taken on strength, the CO has the ability to extend the training year to April 30 in order to give time for training for bounty to take place. In certain circumstances the CO may apply to the regional brigade for a further extension to June 30.

Short hair, chinos and brogues – Sandhurst style does not suit all

In December's issue of *Soldier* a "frustrated soldier" wrote in querying "why we need to be groomed in a 1950s' style", asserting the truism that "a hairstyle doesn't dictate the combat effectiveness of a soldier".

A useful answer from the chain of command would have identified the standards required, the rationale for them and any argument for amending them, and perhaps protected soldiers by cautioning over-zealous SNCOS against imposing their own interpretation of the rules.

Instead, Brig Griffiths's reply was notable only in its singular failure to address the substance of the complaint, and the patronising manner in which it did so.

Queen's Regulations (QR) for the Army state: "The hair of the head is to be kept well cut and trimmed – style and colour (if not natural) is not to be of an exaggerated nature." This does not justify the lobotomised company sergeant major mentality to which the complainant's letter alludes in which soldiers' hair has to be shorn "needlessly short", as if to remove any semblance of individuality.

While traditional in Phase One training, treating soldiers thereafter as children (or sheep) is, I believe, condescending and archaic and, in less economically depressed times, detrimental to retention.

As a direct entry officer I was thoroughly institutionalised by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst ten years ago and while I am quite happy to embrace 1950s' chic in the form of short hair, beige chinos and brown brogues, I do not impose my archaic fashion shortcomings upon my subordinates – nor should others.

To quote the *British Army Review* in 2006: "No other organisation in the UK

controls its people as closely as does the Army (not even the RN or RAF. We have rules for everything). The social circumstances of Britain have changed as have the expectations and behaviour of individuals within the Army.

"Soldiers are less willing to be told what to do, especially in their private lives. More separation between Service life and private life is desirable and may be essential to recruit and retain."

More recently the same author [Col (Retd) John Wilson, Editor, *British Army Review*] commented that "the Army is still the recognisable post-National Service army of 1960, but that is fast changing". Not fast enough apparently. – *Disappointed officer, name and address supplied.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
Thank you for reproducing the section from the QR on haircuts, to which I would add the final piece "sideburns are not to descend below the mid-point of the ear and are to be trimmed horizontally". These are the standards expected of a male soldier, which gives adequate scope to be presentable and even fashionable (with a bit of wax or gel to help it along).

With something like hair you need to be precise or anarchy will prevail as each soldier sets his own standards – that is after all why we recruit people who push the envelope.

But let me be quite clear; no senior officer has given direction that could interpret a shaven head as the expected standard for a haircut.

Your letter misses the point that officers are essential to the process of interpreting orders and giving SNCOS clear direction so that the standards laid down in the QR

and by the chain of command are enacted. If the SNCOS in the original letter are enforcing an over-zealous interpretation of the guidelines then the officers' role, your role, is to mitigate this.

As an officer of some ten years seniority you are probably a major, perhaps in a command appointment with the responsibility of maintaining and in some cases interpreting the standards expected of you and your soldiers. Hair, dress, equipment carriage, battlefield discipline all fall to you and your SNCOS to enforce. It is not for us to question which ones to impose, when and why. If so, why have any standards at all?

Hair, like medals, is a contentious issue. We have clear standards and until the Chief of the General Staff decides a change is needed then we must abide by them.

Right, Model soldier:
On April 1, 2005 *Soldier* broke the "news" that Sandhurst cadets were to be given lessons in style after fashionistas criticised would-be officers' unofficial civvy uniform – a wardrobe consisting of "brogues, mustard cords, red jeans, blazers and slacks, and tweed and wax jackets"

PS...

I WRITE in reply to a comment made by an anonymous contributor under the heading "Dress debate wearing thin" (Talkback, February). As a guardsman and the current Academy Adjutant at Sandhurst I would of course have a view on smartness of turn out.

Equally, however, I have a view based on Herrick 10 where I was deployed as the second in command of a battlegroup. Your contributor should be aware that on that deployment we were very much concerned with our soldiers' appearance despite all that took place around us. This, along with other basic skills, were considered important by the chain of command and key to battlefield discipline and therefore the success of the mission. – *Maj Andrew Speed, Academy Adjutant, RMAS.*



"Your offer to deploy on Operation Herrick as a dog handler is admirable, Cpl Harrison... but experience of 'hot dogs' doesn't quite match the qualifying criteria."

MY Territorial Army regiment is preparing to deploy to Afghanistan and has asked for volunteers, but I have been told that as a class three chef I am not required. Are there any other regiments on Herrick in need of my culinary skills? – *Name and address supplied.*

Col Tony Duncan, AD CSS Ops, HQLF, replies: The commitment that the TA provides to ops is highly valued and there is great appreciation of those who volunteer for operations.

While many RLC trade groups are heavily committed, the number of chefs required on Op Herrick is relatively low, as a large proportion of the catering support is contracted. Unfortunately, you are therefore unlikely to have the opportunity to deploy in this role. That said, HQ RLC TA is keen to hear from soldiers who are prepared to deploy in a secondary role. If this interests you, contact the HQ through your chain of command.





Picture: Courtesy of Empire

Theatre of war: Kathryn Bigelow's tale of a US bomb disposal team in Iraq, *The Hurt Locker*, is among the favourites to scoop best picture at this month's Academy Awards and is nominated for eight other Oscars

'Celluloid cold shoulder'

OVER the last 70 years all of the world's major conflicts have found their way on to the silver screen and none more so than the Second World War.

John Wayne and his American friends have held back the Teutonic hordes and the sons of Japan on many an occasion, and they did so – if Hollywood is to be believed – single-handedly.

The Korean War, Suez Crisis, Malaya, Vietnam, Falklands and two Gulf Wars have also had their turn on the red carpet.

But while these life-and-death struggles were being acted out, be it on the battlefield or on a film set, quietly and without fuss I and many others held back the mighty Russian bear behind its post-war borders.

From the Baltic to the Adriatic, the soldiers and airmen of Nato stood their ground with stoic determination and solid resolve in the hope that we could repel any Russian invasion.

Not one film producer or director has documented the efforts of the 100,000 plus men and women who held back the Red menace. Nor have I seen any mention in the international press of the months spent in the field on exercise in all weathers – from the snowy wastes of Norway to the semi-

deserts of Sardinia.

I am just one of many who, on leaving the Army, has gone without recognition because I did not fire a shot in anger or receive a medal.

Now that the demise of the Warsaw Pact is consigned to history, it is time our story is told.

We did our bit and the world should know how we helped, in no small way, to bring down the Berlin Wall. – **Tony Levy**, ex-R Signals, *Wolverhampton*.

The editor, setting down his bag of Butterkist and carton of Kia-Ora to pause *The Hunt for Red October*, replies: Not wishing to be a pedant, but the Cold War has not gone without its share of cinematic salutes.

Top Gun, Ice Station Zebra, The Package, The Big Lift, The Missiles of October, Thirteen Days, Red Dawn and Dr Strangelove – to name but a few – all owe their plots to the 45-year game of brinkmanship between East and West.

That none of the above focus on the actions of those who served in the British Army of the Rhine is a case for Hollywood to answer.

● WITH a salvo of salted popcorn flying at Soldier HQ over what is the greatest war movie of all time, last month we enlisted Nev Pierce – Editor-At-Large for *Empire*, the world's biggest movie magazine – to the ranks in a bid to bring an end to hostilities.

In February's *Ranked* our silver screen specialist revealed his definitive top ten war films to be: 1, *Platoon*; 2, *The Hurt Locker*; 3, *Full Metal Jacket*; 4, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*; 5, *Three Kings*; 6, *Lawrence of Arabia*; 7, *The Big Red One*; 8, *Attack!*; 9, *Zulu*; 10, *Apocalypse Now*.

Ahead of revealing Pierce's picks in print, we invited Soldier's Facebook fans to countdown their own conflict classics.

Among those who answered our cinematic call-to-arms was **Corey C Jordan**, who defended his inclusion of mini-series *Band of Brothers* on the grounds that its accuracy, cinematography and storyline are of the highest order. Corey chose: 1, *Band of Brothers* – "without peer in depicting Second World War infantry combat"; 2, *Black Hawk Down* – "supremely accurate, a modern classic"; 3, *The Longest Day* – "vast scope, multi-faceted portrayal"; 4, *Battle of Britain* – "the finest air combat film ever"; 5, *Glory* – "one of the few American Civil War films to accurately depict combat"; 6, *The Birth of a Nation* – "the grandad of them all despite its overt racism"; 7, *Sink the Bismarck* – "still the finest of its genre"; 8, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* – "excellent effort at depicting a very complex event"; 9, *All Quiet on the Western Front* – "a classic Second World War film"; 10, *Saving Private Ryan* – "set a new standard for accurate portrayal of infantry combat".

Advising not to watch his top ten in one sitting, **Darren Mann** plumped for *Downfall*, *Stalingrad*, *Come and See*, *Hell in the Pacific*, *The Dirty Dozen* and *Das Boot* among his contenders for the crown.

Tony Sweeney added *To Hell and Back*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *Midway*, *The Bridge At Remagen*, *The Desert Rats* and *Patton* to the movie mix, while **Liam McLaughlin** volunteered *Jarhead*, *Zulu* and *Battle for Haditha*.

Other offerings included **Lana Snell**'s "I love G.I. Jane", *Tigerland* and *We Were Soldiers* from **Kyle Neil**, *A Bridge Too Far* from **Freddy Hugill**, *Kelly's Heroes* from **Cath Sambells**, *Harry's Game* from **Stephen Grogan-Jarvis**, *The Odd Angry Shot* from **Jan Scarff**, *Letters from Iwo Jima* from **Connor Trivett** and *Hamburger Hill* from **Karen Henderson**.

Michael Goldsmith, perplexed at the omission of *Sands of Iwo Jima* from others' lists, was of the opinion that *"The Bridge on the River Kwai"* should be disregarded as it so full of inaccuracies that it is more theatre than true to events". And bemoaning the lack of "classics" being proposed, **Sandra Banks** suggested *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Dam Busters* and *633 Squadron*.

However, a year's subscription of *Empire* goes to **Melodie Anne Ripley**, who correctly predicted four of our film buff's favourite features.





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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Getting ready: A soldier heading out on operations signs out his equipment allocation at the Reserves Mobilisation and Training Centre, Chilwell – but Julie McCarthy is adamant that equipping a family for life on the home front while a spouse is away on overseas manoeuvres is equally important Picture: Graeme Main

Squaring up to the reality of pre-deployment practicality

ABOUT a week ago my husband made an announcement that was all-too-familiar as he walked in the door from work. "I've volunteered for a six-month tour," he quipped.

Feigning disinterest I nodded and went back to making dinner; after all he's volunteered countless times before and nothing has ever come of it so why should I get excited now?

Ironically, this time was different. His request was granted and he managed to get himself selected.

The husband was pleased of course. It is obviously what he joined the Army for and, unlike some of our friends, he has not been away for a while. "Brilliant" and "great" were the superlatives he used when taking the call confirming his wish had been accepted by his superiors.

Perhaps understandably they were not the words going through my head as I listened to one half of the conversation. When he hung up I smiled supportively before sniffling forlornly into my tissue. "Are you worried about me being on ops or feeling sorry for yourself?" he asked. I thought for a moment. "Three kids, a full-time job and the school holidays midway

into the tour – of course I'm feeling sorry for myself," came the all-too-truthful reply.

My practical side kicked in the following day. I started mentally making a list of the jobs the other half needs to do before he leaves in May – the bloke stuff of making sure the garage is tidy and that there are new tyres on the car – and also working out how to tell the children. The first and second sons are old enough to understand, but the third is a lot younger and I didn't really know what to say. I'll explain that daddy's going away and that he will phone and write. To be honest though, while he'll notice that daddy isn't here and will miss him, being five years old means he can also be very easily distracted.

Another potential difficulty where the children are concerned is the fact that the hubby is going away as an individual augmentee, which means they won't be able to see others of the same age going through what they are experiencing. I'm really not sure how they'll cope with it, but as long as I talk to them about what their father is doing I'm hoping they'll be fine.

On the upside, I have told a couple of

friends that the other half is going away and they have been wonderfully supportive in true Forces' wives style. One of them – a Royal Navy spouse who has spent the majority of her married life on her own – was keen to point out the positives of having some quality time alone. These included having the bed to yourself, watching whatever you want on TV (and not having to explain the plot of *Midsomer*

Murders when your husband joins you halfway through) as well as having time to visit friends without having to de-conflict with the rugby.

Maybe I'll be able to stick to my diet. I'm determined to be a svelte size eight when he comes back. And maybe I'll manage to save some money, his habit of spending too much time on eBay having been curtailed.

I have to try and be positive; after all 9,500 other families are in the same position as me and are managing to cope. Some go through it all too regularly. At least now when I get asked in the line of my work what it's like for families when their soldier is on ops, I will very much be speaking from the heart. ■

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NO. 820

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TEN details have been changed on this photograph of a Husky protected patrol vehicle, pictured during an exercise at Copehill Down, Salisbury Plain. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the panel to **HOAY 820, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by March 31.

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

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

December competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Mrs S A Holness**, Leros TAC, Canterbury. Runners-up **CsGt M Crossley**, 4 Yorks, TAC, Huddersfield and **Mrs S Amison**, UK ASOC, Netheravon, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: SA80 bayonet; tunic button; button on garter; collar badge; coat of arms above door; wall lamp; shoulder epaulette; regimental cap badge; RHF badge; crown on flag staff.



YOU certainly have to salute our *Freeze Frame* mainstay Bob "The Boss" Ainsworth for his willingness to travel.

Over the past few months the Defence Secretary has very much been an MP in motion, donning his trademark dark suit and shades to jet around the world.

But our January issue saw the MoD's frontman firmly planted back on home soil and meeting soldiers returning from the sharp end of operational theatres.

This month's postbag of captions very much reflected the bayonet sported by the young fusilier in the picture (right) and the strange little red dot that seems to have appeared above Mr Ainsworth's head. The witty efforts included: "I bet you can't shoot this apple off my head at 100 yards" from Jane Clarke of Taunton.

But the winner came from Ian Goodwin-Reeves of 150 Recovery Company REME in Redhill, Surrey, who decided to use the



Sizing up new kit meant Lord Paul "the racer" Drayson had to keep his finger in many pies

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by March 31.

The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *The Great Boer War*, an account of British actions in South Africa by Byron Farwell.

equipment debate for inspiration when he penned: "**This is the new combat letter opener,' proclaimed the proud SPS clerk**". A highly worthy effort, which wins him a copy of *Immediate Response*, a Chinook pilot's account of operations in Afghanistan by Maj Mark Hammond.



Picture: Cpl Steve Blaize, RLC

Picture: Stuart Bingham, MoD

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Army Welfare Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gtnet.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

Until January 2011: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

Until April 11. From War to Windrush.

Commemorating the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the *MV Empire Windrush* in Britain in 1948. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel 0207 416 5000. Open daily 1000-1800.

March 26: Alex Attewell Scutari and the Lessons Learnt Lecture. Chelsea College of Art, Millbank, London SW1P 4JU. (Old RAMC Millbank College).

June 9 & 10: Beating Retreat. Floodlit music spectacular on Horse Guards, Whitehall, London. Starts at 2100. Massed bands of the Household Division. Tickets available from www.ticketmaster.co.uk or 0844 847 2435.

June 12: Trooping the Colour. Queen's Birthday Parade. Horseguards, London.

Until June 13: War Photographs Exhibition by Don McCullin. Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. www.iwm.org.uk

June 16, 23 & 30: Royal Military School of Music Concerts in the Park. Three or more bands at every concert. Bring your own blankets, chairs, picnics and wine. Refreshments available on site. Gates open at 1800, concert starts at 1950. Adult tickets £10, concessions (under 16s, OAPs, students, MoD 90 holders and TW2 residents) £8. Season, group and family tickets available. Payment in advance by credit or debit card or on the gate. Cheques payable to the Accounting Officer MoD, Concert Secretary, Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex. Tel: 0208 744 8633.

July 7, 14, 21 & 28: Royal Military School of Music Concerts in the Park. Details as above.

SEARCHLINE

Mike O'Brien is searching for ex-Royal Engineers who served with him at Hameln (11 Engineer Brigade) during the 1960s, especially **Bob Cummings, Dave Trotter and Ken Pope (ex ACC)**. Contact Mike by phone on 0151 4744759 or at 12 Cowdray Road, South Liverpool L21 7GB.

Maria and Barry Codd have lost touch with **SSgt Gordon Anderson RMP** and his family. They were serving together in Hohne in 2003 and Osnabruck in 2004-2006. SSgt Anderson was posted to Aldershot in Spring 2007. Gordon please get in contact or if anyone knows of his whereabouts please contact Barry Codd by email barrycodd@yahoo.co.uk or write to WO1 Codd, 47 RA Workshop, Thorney Island, Emsworth PO10 8DH.

Tracey Metters is looking for her birth father **23878797 WO2 Roy Wilson, Royal Signals**, who was based in Catterick from 1965-1966. In 1984 he was a SSgt. Roy retired in 1986 and would now be in his early 60s. Contact Tracey by email at tracey.metters@ntlworld.com

Author Wendy Donnelly is offering free copies of her book *The Black Hole* to Service personnel. Please contact her by writing to Mrs Wendy Donnelly, Flat 57, Homefort House, 82 Stoke Road, Gosport PO12 1QQ.

A daughter is searching for her father **Jim Green** who served with 24 Field Ambulance Squadron in the 1980s and was a signals instructor based at Gaza Barracks, Catterick from 1984-1987. He also served at Moscow Barracks in 1982. Contact Clare Kiepe by email at clarekiepe@hotmail.com

My father is desperate to contact **Spr Richard Teasdale Churchill**, who was demobbed in Ripon and lived in and around County Durham. Contact Melanie Cassidy by email at melaniecassidy@hotmail.com

A researcher is seeking information regarding his father's exploits during his time with the RAMC Airborne. **23115313 Pte Roy Cook** served from August 13, 1936 until February 2, 1965. Attached to the Royal Scots, he went ashore with the second wave of Commandos and worked in the Casino Palace Hotel field hospital. He flew to Cyprus and boarded the *Theseus* for Suez. Contact Kevin Cook by email at kevin.cook@ntlworld.com or phone 01642 276774.

Clifford John Longhurst is trying to trace **Donald K Router** who served in the Royal Engineers in Gibraltar from 1952-1954 and ended his service as a lance corporal. Donald came from Luton. He also had a brother who was commissioned into the Royal Engineers. Contact Fiona Longhurst by email at fionalonghurst@aol.com

Heike Loacker's mother's friend Ingrid Dickbauer (nee Kabusch), born March 23, 1946 in Eberndorf Corinthia, Austria is searching for her father or possible relatives. Ingrid's mother Aloisia Kabusch met **Sgt John Sullivan** between July-October 1945 when he was stationed in Eberndorf with a cavalry regiment. John either lived in Birmingham or was born there. Contact Heike Loacker by email at Heike.Loacker@hilti.com or write to Frau Heike Loacker, Weppach 1d, A-6850 Dornbirn, Austria.

Where are you **Brian Francis Keats**, born in South Africa to English parents? Brian did National Service in the late 1950s and early 1960s and served in Germany. He married a German lady and returned to the UK in 1963. He is aged between 71 and 73 years old. Any information would be useful. Contact Patrick Osborne by email at paddyosborne@hotmail.com

REUNIONS

Q/HQ (Sanna's Post) Bty, 5th Regiment RA:

Reunion on March 20 at Marne Barracks, Catterick. Past and present members and their families are invited. Please let us know your contact details for future events. Contact Maj Youlten by email qsannaspostbty@hotmail.co.uk or by phone 01748 875698.

Glosters. WOs' and Sgts' reunion April 3, at 1 Rifles, Beechley Camp, Chepstow. Details from Capt Godden by email timmy.godden@virgin.net

410 Independent Plant Troop RE: Second reunion to be held during April 2010 in Blackpool. For further details, contact Mick (Scouse) Ramsay on 0151 648 2896 or email mick@rommel.plus.com

Veterans in Prison Association: National conference "Dealing with the Demons" will be held on April 16, at the London Voluntary Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA. Contact Mark Leech, Events21 Ltd, 175 Hill Lane, Manchester M9 6RL or email mark.leech@events21.com

76th Artillery Clerks: Reunion and dinner April 23-25 at Larkhill. Full details from secretary Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regiment RA, Bhurtpore

Barracks, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7AS, telephone 01980 656550 or send an email to ian.constantine758@mod.uk

Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland: First reunion to take place in May. Seeking missing dog handlers who worked with **Wagtails, Groundhogs and Snappers**. Contact Robert Shevill, 99 Carnarv Crescent, Inverness IV3 8SJ or email pressliaison@armydogunit-ni.co.uk

Army Medical Services WOs' & Sgts' Mess: Past and present dinner club will take place on May 8 at Fort Blockhouse. Contact WO1 (Corps RSM) L Hall on 01276 412759 or Mrs R Thomas on 01276 412789 or email AMS-RHQ-EventsandFunctions@mod.uk

11 Hussars PAO: Regimental reunion at the Park Inn in Telford, Shropshire on May 14-16. For further details, contact chairman Lawson Kent, on 07854 973602 or send an email to lawsontheferryman@hotmail.co.uk

RAMC Open Day: To be held at Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale, Aldershot, Hants GU12 5RQ on June 19. All enquiries to RAMC RHQ on 01276 412789 or email RHQ_AMS@hotmail.com or AMS-RHQ-EventsandFunctions@mod.uk

747 Squadron (1960) RM: Sixth reunion and 50th anniversary of joining the Royal Marines takes place at Exmouth and Lympstone, Devon on July 9 and 10. Further details from Harry Briggs by email at hbriggs747_rm@hotmail.com

COMPETITIONS

Spine Lines winner: Mrs J Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison.

Blood & Bone winners: Cpl M Atkinson-Evans, 11 GS Sqn, Abingdon, Oxfordshire; D Gilbert, Elstree, Hertfordshire; Mrs P Griffith, Manchester; Mrs L Pullman, Preston, Lancs; G Crandles, Edinburgh.

Powermonkey winner: Sgt J R Lannie, 40 Signal Regiment.

Table Tennis Pro winner: Lt Col H Timothy, RTMC, Chilwell.

Funny People winners: WO2 O'Leary, HQ ISAF, BFPO 764; Ms K Scammell, Gloucestershire; T Fitzpatrick, Gillingham, Kent; G Webster, Hull; J Rutland, Oldham, Lancs.

Bayonetta winners: WO2 P Yates, Gibraltar Bks, Surrey; P Rendall, 39 Signal Regiment.

Assassin's Creed winner: Cpl R Hood, 4 MI Bn; WO1 P Storrs, JEDTC, Shrivenham.

Shotz winners: Ms G Goold, Great Massingham; L Matthews, Basildon; WO2 P Pritchard, BFPO 806; Sgt T Watkins, BFPO 806; SSgt C Holcombe, HQ 4 Div, Aldershot.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and question-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

March: 1, Lincoln; 2, Norwich; 3, Peterborough. **April:** 22, Portsmouth; 28, Andover; 29, Bicester. **May:** 12, Hastings; 13, Margate; 18, Leatherhead. Bournemouth, Trowbridge and Torquay dates tbc.

GADGET GIVEAWAY



Gardening angels

HORTICULTURE can be hard work at the best of times.

With numerous tasks requiring the attention of green-fingered enthusiasts you can spend hours in the garden without even scratching the surface of the long list of jobs to complete.

But hardware specialists Black and Decker have help at hand courtesy of their wide range of power tools and outdoor equipment that can turn lengthy chores into challenges conquered within a matter of minutes.

Trees and shrubs can easily grow out of control if neglected but with the 600w Alligator lopper (pictured above) there is no excuse for letting your plants and greenery run wild.

This tough tool cuts like a chainsaw but is lighter and easier to use. Its rugged jaws offer the ultimate in controlled cutting while the metal guards cover the teeth to protect you from the chain and immediately cover the blades once the cut is complete.

The scissor action allows for fast, easy cutting and is great for pruning trees and shrubs. It is also ideal for cutting downed logs and branches.

With a four-inch cut capacity, the Alligator is capable of cutting heavy branches that are too big for manual loppers and its clamping jaws can grab and slice in one easy motion.

Stormy weather also brings

about the inevitable falling of leaves onto your lawn.

But instead of spending hours raking, the Black and Decker Variable Speed Blowervac will do the work for you.

The 3,000w kit offers both blow and vacuum options with controllable speed settings.

It is also fitted with high-impact shredding blades to significantly reduce volume, meaning the 35-litre bag has the capacity to collect up to 350 litres of leaves.

The bag is easy to empty and this high-performance tool can deal with wet and dry leaves.

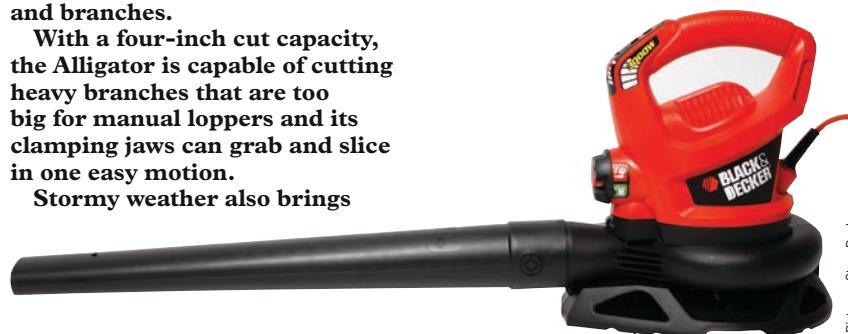
Soldier has teamed up with Black and Decker to offer up an Alligator and Blowervac prize pack for two lucky readers.

To stand a chance of winning, answer this question:

What is the cut-capacity of the Alligator lopper?

Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by March 31.

For more information on the Black and Decker range visit www.blackanddecker.com ■



Pictures: Steve Dolk

Soldier's army of worldwide readers can catch up with their award-winning magazine online by visiting the free-to-view digital edition via our homepage at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

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www.armylibraries.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

www.forceshomes.co.uk

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

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website with news, features and information on all aspects of Army work and life.

www.baff.org.uk

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

www.armedforces.co.uk

Over 2,000 pages of Defence information, including defence projects and equipment, technology information, military books and defence supplier's details.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

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

www.stff.mod.uk

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

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.youtube.com/britisharmy

The Army's official video channel with lots of videos ranging from training to equipment.

www.hmforces.co.uk

New unofficial online HQ for the British Army. Free - featuring active forums, benefit updates, military news and videos. Plus civilian jobs by Monster.co.uk

www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equitation. Here you will be able to find the information & links you need to keep you up to date with what's going on.

www.nfassociation.org

The "Not Forgotten" Association for disabled ex-Service personnel aims to provide entertainment and recreation for war-wounded personnel to alleviate the tedium of their lives and give them something they can look forward to.

www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the Army.

www.facebook.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Facebook fan page

www.twitter.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Twitter channel for the distribution of news and information

www.squaddiewives.co.uk

Squaddie wives, British Army wives and girlfriends site for women only.

www.bitecard.co.uk

Get a BITE card and enjoy 20 per cent off food and drink everytime you travel. Register online and save 20 per cent off Upper Crust, Burger King, Millie's Cookies and Caffe Ritazza in stations across UK.

www.armycadets.com

We offer fun, exciting and challenging activities on a military theme to 12-18 year olds. Pass on your skills and knowledge to the next generation. Go online to find your nearest detachment and request an information pack.

www.facebook.com/armycadetforce

The Army Cadet Force's official Facebook page.

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MOD LINKS

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website, carrying information ranging from corps and regiments, news, features, operations and deployment to kit, welfare and training.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to? Are you Doing Alright?

www.hive-bfg.co.uk

HIVE Information centres for the Tri-service communities.

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Support available to Army personnel and their families is given through the Army Welfare Service (AWS).

www.armyaviation.co.uk

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

HELPING HANDS

www.wrvs.org.uk

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www.tnauk.org.uk

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www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service Community since 1916.

www.erskine.org.uk

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

www.oswaldstoll.org.uk

Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation provides appropriate housing with support to vulnerable and disabled ex-service personnel, including those who have been homeless.

www.blesma.org

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

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families

www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

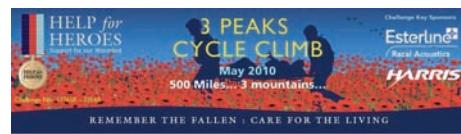
The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

www.remmuseum.org.uk

Royal Engineers Museum, Library & Archive The explosive history of the Royal Engineers is on display for all the family to enjoy.



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www.helpforheroes.org.uk



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Email: hshekyls@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**All pen pal adverts must be prepaid
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Floss, 5'3", dark blonde hair, blue eyes and medium build. Enjoys travelling, reading, listening to music, having nights in, cooking, walking, writing letters, football and rugby. Seeking pen pals, 28 - 42, although any age, all letters will be answered. P009

Lucie, (24), single mum who enjoys the cinema, DVDs, nice meals out, cars, music and relaxing. Quiet homely person who loves cooking and baking. Seeking male soldier pen pals, friends and relationships, any age group. P010

Julie, 5'5", (45), blonde hair, blue eyes, fair skin, some freckles (but not many) and cuddly (but not overweight). Enjoys sports, winter and summer, cooking and loads more hobbies. Divorced nurse who would like pen pals to write to, 46 - 47. P011

Gaynor a very young 50-year-old, slim brunette with a lively personality, genuine and would like to correspond with soldier pen pals, older age group. P012

Pen Pal replies

To reply to a pen pal, write a letter and send it to: **Soldier Magazine, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU**

* The box number must be clearly written in the top left corner of all your replies.

* Replies should consist only of letter and photograph if requested.

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British Army badges 41 page

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Make your Mothers Day memorable with a Heart Shaped sky lantern a truly unique gift for your mum. Tel: 07769780099 or Web: www.afterdarkskylanterns.co.uk

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www.dip.mod.uk

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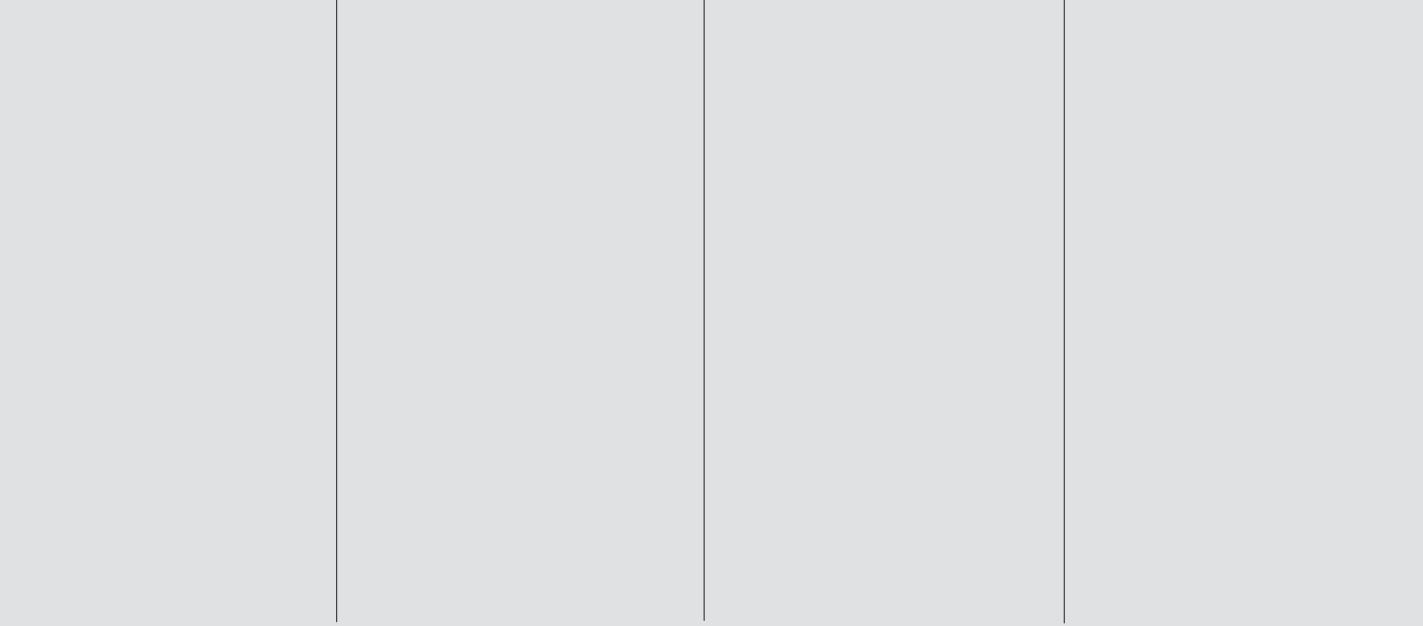
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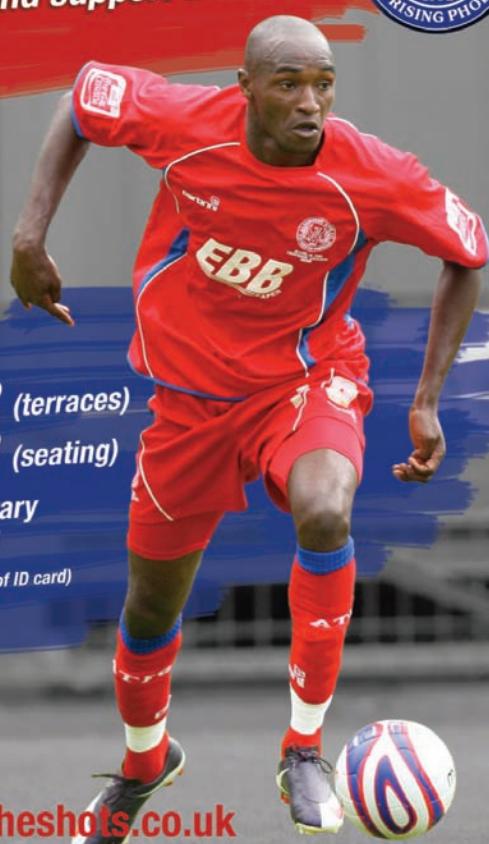
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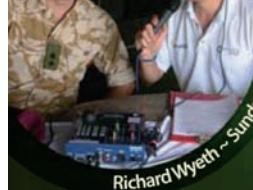
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Determined: Sam Fisher is out for revenge in *Splinter Cell Conviction*, the latest game in the popular Tom Clancy series

MARCH'S YOUNG PRETENDERS

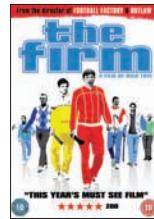
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Colourful lives: Bright clothing and even brighter language are common themes running through Nick Love's *The Firm*

Soccer scrappers

Comedy and carnage sit side-by-side in Nick Love's 1980s hooligan movie

Interview: Joe Clapson

BRUTAL violence and genuine comedy might seem unlikely bedfellows, but when the subject is real life the end result is quite simply stunning.

Nick Love's *The Firm*, a remake of Alan Clarke's football hooligan film, is a superbly-crafted snapshot of organised fighting in the 1980s, depicting sharp-witted, fashion-conscious East End characters embroiled in a barbaric "game".

The tone of the film is set when Soft Cell's *Tainted Love* thumps out as a figure in an immaculate blue Adidas tracksuit is seen strutting through a dirty East End council estate.

The loose adaptation, set to a rousing 80s soundtrack, focuses on Dom (Calum McNab), a teenager awe-struck by the effortlessly cool Bex, the firm's "top boy".

The wide-eyed-but-streetwise youngster is soon accepted into Bex's crew and gets stuck into some savage street battles against rival football gangs. There is no hiding place for Dom and the edgy filming doesn't pull any punches – you feel amongst it and you'll check yourself for injuries.

Banter with the boys, the latest clothes and running with London's finest. It is what Dom dreamed of. But once in, he's not allowed out.

Speaking exclusively to *Soldier*, Love said that the idea behind *The Firm* had been in the pipeline since before he directed *Goodbye Charlie Bright*.

"I have always wanted to make a film about growing up in the 80s," said the 40-year-old.

"As a 14 or 15-year-old, life on the estates was really exciting and I wanted to draw on that."

"Without wanting to sound like a pretentious film producer, this is all about the juxtaposition of comedy and violence."

London slapstick humour – grabbing a man's attention so that he walks into a lamppost – and the harsh but hilarious verbal baiting of friends provide the respite from the blood-thirsty weekly "meets" but there is no real escape from the graphically-violent episodes.

The blasé manner in which the intense Bex – an estate agent – operates sets him apart from the crowd. He sets the trend in his Adidas trainers and Sergio tracksuit and he leads his men with the air of a military commander.

Love said: "I work to find characters that are credible and who are believable."

"Too often I watch films and think 'that's an

actor playing a part' and that's not what I want."

"I want the audience to believe the characters are real."

From Dom's perspective we see that Bex is more committed to the cause than the rest of his army. Bex is relaxed when his toddler son slashes his face with his Stanley knife – other members might have been devastated.

"There's not actually much football violence in the film, it's more a documentation of what went on in that era," said Love.

Bex begins to believe his own hype and ends up coming unstuck in a fight involving hatchets and hammers.

Love, an Army Cadet who had ambitions of joining The Parachute Regiment, can see many parallels with the genre of *The Firm* and the life of a soldier.

"Like in the Army, youngsters join up and are immediately faced with a strict hierarchy and they want to be like those in charge," he said.

"The man at the top might be a maniac, like Bex, but everyone wants to be his pal or impress them – but then they realise the reality."

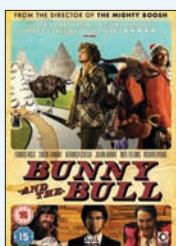
This on-the-money film portrays hardcore fans, all with a love of football – a love that, as it turns out, is indeed tainted. ■

From an obsessive-compulsive to a deadly ninja, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Bunny and The Bull

out on DVD Mar 29
THE Mighty Boosh director **Paul King** transfers his talents to the silver screen in this interesting tale. Billed as a road movie set entirely inside a flat, the film follows obsessive-compulsive Stephen Turnbull as he recalls an ill-fated trip he took to Europe with best friend Bunny the previous year. Switching between genres – there are certainly funny sections, but the comedy is countered by some darker moments relating to love and friendship – *Bunny and The Bull* is not quite as clever as it thinks it is. That said, it is an entertaining journey and the handcrafted, part-animated backdrops make it good eye candy.

Stephen Tyler, Soldier



Kisses

out to own on DVD from March 15
 THIS bitesize Irish film may only clock in at 72 minutes, but *Kisses* packs an awful lot into its running time. Two children – Kylie and Dylan – run away from their respective abusive families in Dublin's suburban housing estates and jump onto a canal barge to reach the city and look for Dylan's runaway older brother. They encounter a mixture of fascinating and frightening sights on their journey and the sense of just how imposing the urban environment is to children is well-captured, largely thanks to the superb acting of the two leads. At times overly-sentimental, *Kisses* is still a riveting watch.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



Ninja

out on DVD and Blu-Ray March 15
 MARTIAL arts films are notorious for their flimsy plots, cringeworthy dialogue and wooden acting and, in varying degrees, *Ninja* is guilty of all three. Following westerner Casey (**Scott Adkins**) as an adopted Ninjutsu expert in Japan tasked with protecting an armoured chest containing the weapons of the last Koga Ninja in New York (you were warned), the movie doesn't require much thought to follow. The good news is that the plot is just a conduit for some great fight scenes. The mixture of live action and CGI set pieces are expertly choreographed and almost – but not quite – make up for *Ninja*'s deficiencies.



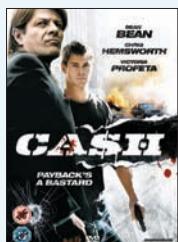
Richard Long, Soldier



Retro release: Nick Love's *The Firm*, which follows the hedonistic highs and bloody lows of a hooligan firm, unfolds on a 1980s' London estate

Win: Ca\$h on DVD

SEAN BEAN stars as the strange and sinister Pyke Kubic in *Ca\$h*, a psychological thriller that explores the mysterious power money can wield over people. When a married couple face a life-changing decision, Kubic arrives on their doorstep and leads them on an adventure through Chicago, where they are pulled into a spiral of deception. *Soldier* has teamed up with Momentum Pictures to give away five copies of the film on DVD. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer this question: In which US city is *Ca\$h* set? Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: March 31

Win: Attack on Leningrad on DVD

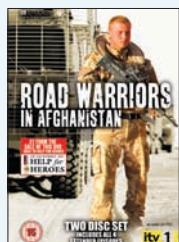
A SOARING, action-packed tale of heroism and sacrifice, this movie follows a journalist's desperate fight to uncover the horrors buried within the infamous Nazi siege of Leningrad in the savage winter of 1941. With the enemy's grip closing on the war-ravaged city, a makeshift band of survivors must battle to stay alive and fight for their freedom. The kind people at Metrodome have offered up five copies of the film to anyone who can answer this question: Which Oscar winner stars in *Attack on Leningrad*? Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: March 31

Win: Road Warriors in Afghanistan

THE treacherous journeys undertaken by Army logistics experts serving on Op Herrick are well-appreciated by those in theatre and now their heroics have been brought to DVD in *Road Warriors in Afghanistan*, which is out on March 8. Filmed in Helmand in summer 2009, the two-disc set follows the soldiers on the dangerous convoys. *Soldier* has teamed up with ITV Studios Home Entertainment to offer five readers the chance to win one of the DVDs. To enter, tell us in which year the documentary was filmed. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: March 31



On the war path: America's leading black ops agent goes up against his previous employers in his latest console outing

Soldier of conviction

Sam Fisher goes feral to find his daughter's killer in latest *Splinter Cell* adventure

Preview: Cliff Caswell

THE enigmatic and shadowy agent Sam Fisher has become something of a personality in his own right since the first *Splinter Cell* title appeared nearly a decade ago.

Back in 2002, he was a man who worked for a decent state salary with a mission to take down bad guys who threatened the Western way of life. Fast forward to the present, however, and circumstances have transformed him into a very different beast.

In fact, it is difficult to recognise Fisher, either physically or from his personality, in his latest outing. In *Splinter Cell Conviction*, released on Xbox 360 in April, he is a man on the loose, hunted by the very forces who once hired him – and he is out to get what he wants through any means at his disposal.

Briefly, the plot begins with the former agent seeing red after an investigation into his only daughter's death in an apparent hit-and-run accident reveals that a former colleague may have murdered her. As he probes deeper, he discovers the tip of a terror plan that threatens the world.

While the story might sound fairly par-for-the-course, ten minutes of gameplay will make you realise that this is like no other title in the series. From the very outset – when you must interrogate a suspect in a washroom by deploying some Krav Maga combat moves – you will see that this is an altogether more brutal affair.

"Although Fisher has been an agent in a black operations outfit, he is usually mostly professional in what he does," said Matt Benson, brand manager for the game at publisher Ubisoft. "But he is completely off the leash in *Conviction*, and is not afraid to break a few bones to get the answers he needs."

"And he has the tools to get what he wants – as an ex-US Navy Seal, who served during the first Gulf War and in other places around the world, he has plenty of skill and knowledge, including how to use Krav Maga in the best possible way."

There has certainly been a great deal of work to create a dynamic combat system for *Conviction*. The production team used experts in the Israeli hand-to-hand self-defence techniques as models to recreate the moves used in the game while firearms action is fast and furious and requires the use of manoeuvre skills to best effect.

As well as the game's slick action sequences,

the personality given to the renegade central character by Hollywood hardman Michael Ironside is also superb. The actor – of *Top Gun* and *Total Recall* fame – gives Fisher his uncompromising and cynical edge through a series of well-delivered one-liners.

"Michael Ironside is an absolutely awesome guy, and the storyline of *Conviction* helped him build on the character of Fisher," said Benson. "He ad-libbed a fair bit with some of the lines in the dialogue and it fits in perfectly."

From what *Soldier* saw of the late-build preview, *Conviction* certainly looks as if it will break the mould of previous *Splinter Cell* titles, which relied heavily on total stealth and had a knack of pushing players' patience to the limit.

Now there is a more open-world approach, where there is no single way of carrying out missions – players are given the toolkit they need and left to their own devices. Whether you choose to stay in the shadows or break out into a shooting match is up to you.

It all adds up to one of the most promising Fisher episodes we have seen in a while. Even if you are not a fan of the earlier games, this one is worth a look for the change of pace and direction that have reinvented the playing experience. ■

From monkey bubbles to radioactive wastelands, *Soldier* sifts the latest glut of video game releases...

Stalker: Call of Pripyat for PC

THE deadly Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion is once again the backdrop for the third instalment in the *Stalker* series. Ukrainian security agent Alexander Degtyarev is sent to investigate the disappearance of five military helicopters in the contaminated area known as "the zone", where he encounters a vast array of mutants and lethal enemies. This merging of the role-play and shooter platforms offers hours of entertainment but the pace is lacking at times, especially when you find yourself aimlessly wandering around. Hardened fans will take delight in this release but newcomers could find it rather tiresome.



Out now

Vancouver 2010 for Xbox 360 & PS3

ANOTHER Olympic Games and yet another inevitable gaming spin-off. *Vancouver 2010* is billed as offering all the adrenalin and danger of the world's greatest winter sports event but the evidence of an hour's toil suggests otherwise. When the actual sport unfolds the play is reasonable, rather than exceptional, but interest is soon lost in the eternity it takes for the different events to load. When you finally take to the slopes you find yourself immersed in a medal race and the action is often over in the blink of an eyelid. This frustratingly begs the question was it worth the wait? The answer is an emphatic no.



Out now

Halo Reach for Xbox 360

MANKIND'S epic battle with the mysterious alien alliance known as the Covenant reaches a new and desperate stage in the latest chapter of Microsoft's cult sci-fi saga. Little has been disclosed about the plot, save to say that it is centred around the planet Reach, where Earth's elite soldiers are trained. But rumour suggests that the aliens have gained the upper hand, which promises some furious first-person shooter action. The *Halo* series has been running for nearly a decade, with the original title *Combat Evolved* introduced as a launch title for the Xbox in 2002. Release dates for *Reach* have yet to be confirmed.



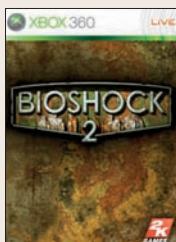
Out this year



Gleaning info: Fisher puts his distinctly unethical interrogation methods to the test as he loses his rag during a dust up with a crime boss

Bioshock 2 for Xbox 360

SOLDIER missed out on the original *Bioshock* title, which achieved wide critical acclaim, including Game of the Year 2007. We were however pleased to find that this sequel lives up to the reputation of its predecessor, sporting some beautiful graphics, lavishly-detailed environments and plenty of first-person shooter action. Set a decade after the events of the original game, the plot sees players return to the ruined undersea city of Rapture, where they have to confront an enemy who has been snatching kids. The single-player campaign is impressive, but the multiplayer option looks superb. Definitely one for the collection.



Out now

Bad Company 2 for Xbox 360, PS3 & PC

The first instalment of the *Battlefield Bad Company* series was a curious yet highly-entertaining offering about a group of renegade soldiers-turned-mercenaries who manage to re-ignite the Cold War. The sequel promises more of the same with the errant squad of hapless troops, this time fighting their way across landscapes including mountains, jungles and dusty villages. *Soldier* was hugely impressed with the original game for its slick delivery, strong single-player campaign and relentless squaddie humour. It will be interesting to see whether the sequel lives up to the promise of its predecessor.



Out this month

Super Monkeyball Step & Roll for Wii

CAST very much in the mould of the mid-1980s' arcade classic *Marble Madness*, the latest game in the *Monkeyball* series provides the additional opportunity to use the Wii Balance Board to meet your goals. The aim of the game is simple if somewhat surreal – to roll a monkey encased in a bubble around a series of progressively difficult obstacle courses, collecting bonus bunches of bananas along the way. *Monkeyball* is decent family fun and is carried off with considerable slickness, particularly graphically, with some fantastic three-dimensional environments. It is a good bet, either for kids or some mess night group entertainment.



Out now



Grim location: The virtual quartet that make up Gorillaz are living on a deeply depressing island in their latest recording

Apes back in swing

Gorillaz return with a capable collection of collaborations with top music acts

Review: Cliff Caswell

FANS of Gorillaz might have had to endure a five-year wait for the release of a new album to succeed *Demon Days* – but the cartoon quartet appear to have broken their silence with some style.

Storming out of the shadows with the latest offering *Plastic Beach*, they are showing no signs of going stale, producing a recording that is packed with raw energy, powerful melodies and a track listing that refuses to be pigeon-holed into any one genre.

Once again masterminded by Blur frontman Damon Albarn, the project features a series of diverse collaborations with acts ranging from rap outfits De La Soul and Snoop Dog to Lou Reed, Bobby Womack and the Lebanese National Orchestra for Oriental Arab Music.

In true Gorillaz style, however, there are some dark and gritty overtones to the record and more than an occasional hint of social commentary throughout the CD.

Inspiration for *Plastic Beach* is drawn from the fictional setting for the recording of the album.

According to the blurb, the foursome that form the band – made up of virtual vocalist and keyboardist 2D, bass guitarist Murdoc, Russel Hobbs who plays the drums and guitarist Noodle – have retreated to a forlorn corner of the South Pacific called Point Nemo – the remotest island from any land mass – to play their set.

The first track *Orchestral Intro*, featuring sinfonia VIVA, opens the album with a pleasant string arrangement before you are into the rollercoaster of different styles.

Of particular interest is the single *Stylo*, which features performances by Bobby Womack and Mos Def.

The throbbing bass lines, electro-beats and dark lyrics give the track a definite presence and hard edge.

Albarn apparently drew inspiration for *Plastic Beach* after seeing the contrasting communities – both human and animal – that seemed to have sprung up around landfill sites both in the UK and Africa.

But in media interviews, Albarn had originally said that the project that spawned the album – codenamed *Carousel* – was never intended to be a Gorillaz record.

In an interview with Paul Morley in *The*

Guardian, Albarn also admitted that *Plastic Beach* would be “the most pop record I’ve ever made in many ways”. Despite this claim, however, the embracing of different musical styles and artists takes the album beyond a bog-standard pop offering and gives it a definite uniqueness.

The run up to the release of *Plastic Beach*, which goes on sale on March 8, has seen a number of “pirate” radio broadcasts from Murdoc via the Gorillaz website, which provide tantalising sound bites about the inspiration behind the new recording juxtaposed with some suitably impressive accompanying music from the likes of Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys. The broadcasts are slightly off-the-wall but amusing and well worth checking out.

Although *Soldier* was somewhat dubious about *Demon Days* when it crossed our desk in late 2005 – aside from the likes of *Dirty Harry* the other tracks were somewhat mediocre and forgettable – from what we have heard of *Plastic Beach*, there is a lot more for the casual listener as well as hardened fans.

It all adds up to an album that holds considerable promise. The quartet of singing apes look as if they could not be finished with the music scene just yet. ■

From Massive Attack's triumphant return to a Kings of Leon-sponsored debut, we fire up the latest CDs...

Ursa Major by Third Eye Blind

SAN Francisco's premier alternative rock band **Third Eye Blind** return with *Ursa Major*, an album that apparently features some of the band's “most intense music”. Upon listening I was unconvinced about the claim, instead finding the record to be well played and produced, yet rather bland. Highlights were *About to Break* and *Summer Town*, but I still wouldn't consider these songs catchy and found myself irritated at the wasp-in-a-jam-jar guitar tone. Slow paced, slightly clinical in construction and with no hooks to leave you humming, this is an album for fans of the band only. For more memorable fare, check out some of Third Eye Blind's earlier albums for songs like *Jumper* and *Semi-Charmed Life*.



Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)

Saturday by Ocean Colour Scene

THEY were massive throughout the 1990s and now **Ocean Colour Scene** stride back into the limelight with their latest offering – *Saturday*. The upbeat opener *100* *Floors of Perception* gives hope that the band have decided to experiment with a new, rockier sound. However, as this album unfolds it starts to hark back to the *Moseley Shoals* era. While this is undoubtedly not a bad thing as it will appeal to existing fans, it lacks the impact to pull in new listeners. As a live band, OCS are a worthy attraction and it would be nice for some of the hard edge they provide on stage to be transferred to their studio output. A good effort though and worth checking out.



Steve King, MoD

One Life Stand by Hot Chip

HOT CHIP's fourth studio album *One Life Stand* is a full-on collection of high-quality indie electro-pop songs that are centered on the theme of love. Certainly not for everyone's taste, this album is at the edge of creativity with wild electronics, rhythms and beats and plenty of experimental sounds that Hot Chip has perfected on a very consistent album. Most of the songs are about long-lasting love, relationships, commitment and friendships, including the importance of male connections and spiritual enlightenment. The lyrics are high quality and the electronic sounds will gradually grow on you. A funky album from a niche genre that will appeal to 80s electro-pop fanatics.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



Monkey business: *Plastic Beach* is the third Gorillaz album and offers plenty of musical diversity care of numerous well-known guest artists

Heligoland by Massive Attack

AFTER a seven-year absence it was always going to be difficult to predict how the return of **Massive Attack** would be received. With the 2003 release of *100th Window*



greeted by modest reviews at best, *Heligoland* could have gone one of two ways. Thankfully this sits comfortably alongside the group's defining works *Blue Lines* and *Mezzanine* and marks a triumphant return to form by the Bristol-based duo. Collaborators **Guy Garvey** and **Damon Albarn** make impressive contributions on *Flat of the Blade* and *Saturday Come Slow* while the best is saved for last in the form of *Atlas Air*. It is an early shout, but this could be one of the albums of 2010.

Richard Long, Soldier

A Little Faster by There For Tomorrow

EXPLODING out of Florida, **There for Tomorrow** are about to hit the UK with their debut album *A Little Faster*. The four-piece have been together since 2003 and, although young, have put their time in as a touring band with the likes of **All Time Low** and **Taking Back Sunday**. Instantly you get a sucker punch with their first two tracks *The Remedy* and *A Little Faster*. The rest of the album stays sharp with the same epic tempo. In a lot of ways this reminds me of early **Lost Prophets** with a twist of **You and Me At Six**. For that reason, I'd say there is nothing truly ground-breaking here. Having said that, it's a great start for this band. If nothing else it is a good album to listen to in the gym.

Sgt Matt McLeish, R Signals

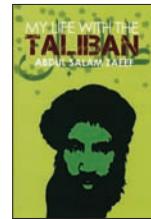
Some Kind of Salvation by The Features

AFTER an all-conquering 2009 **Kings of Leon** have turned their attention to giving new bands the chance to shine via their label Serpents and Snakes. Tennessee brethren



The Features lead the charge in this new initiative and it is easy to see why they struck an immediate chord with the ever-popular festival headliners. *Some Kind of Salvation* bears more than a passing resemblance to tracks from the Kings' early albums *Aha Shake Heartbreak* and *Youth and Young Manhood* and has a clear blues and white-boy soul feel. While being far from electrifying due to its lack of a hard rock edge this is a solid enough debut, even if there is a sense of sameness as the album progresses.

Richard Long, Soldier



Pashto perspective: *My Life With The Taliban* provides a factual account of the social and cultural factors that shaped the group's formation

Inside information

Taliban tale aims to bridge knowledge gap on both sides of Operation Herrick divide

Review: Stephen Tyler

THEIR frequent attacks on coalition troops and Afghan civilians may have propelled them into the Western public consciousness, but there are few people who can claim to truly understand the Taliban.

The organisation's deadly handiwork is all too often visible in Afghanistan, but the hierarchy and goals of the group are less well known.

With the same few sources being plundered time and time again by academics seeking to throw a spotlight onto the inner mechanics of the Taliban, the West found itself in need of a new subject matter expert.

And thanks to the efforts of two researchers, that voice appears to have been uncovered. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn were working as media monitors in Kandahar when they came across the Pashto memoirs of Abdul Salam Zaeef.

Born in 1968, Zaeef took part in the anti-Soviet jihad in 1983, was a key figure in the formation of the Taliban in the mid-90s and was a civil servant and minister in the group until 2002 when he was

handed over to American forces and imprisoned for four-and-a-half-years, including a stretch in Guantanamo Bay. His amazing story forms the basis of *My Life With The Taliban* and the insights he offers into Afghanistan's past present a fresh perspective on the country's future.

"I have been coming to Afghanistan since 2003 and we have been involved in media monitoring and information services," Alex told *Soldier*. "We translate Afghan media into English because international policy makers don't have access to the local voices."

"I came across an article about Zaeef's time in Guantanamo and was interested in translating it, but it was not that simple a task. He published the text for an Afghan audience and it was full of cultural and historical references. We worked with him extensively doing interviews and rewrites in Kabul to present the book in a way that would be readable by an international audience."

While the title follows Zaeef's life chronologically from his poverty-stricken upbringing through to his ultimate imprisonment, its value lies in the truths that the former jihadist's experiences lay bare. The traumatic nature of Zaeef's childhood – both parents died at an early age – and his exile to Pakistan when the Soviets

invaded in 1979 give readers a rare insight into the factors that cause young men to take up arms against foreign forces.

By no means a drum-beating propaganda vehicle for the Taliban, the book instead provides a factual recollection of the social and cultural factors that shaped the group's formation, make-up and ambitions. Alex told *Soldier* that he believes Zaeef's account will help fill a knowledge gap on both sides of the Herrick divide.

"One message you read time and time again throughout the book is that the West don't understand Afghanistan and that the Taliban don't understand the West and their goals," he said. "This is the first time you have a human face attached to the message and the ideas of the Taliban communicated through the story of someone's life."

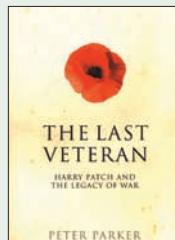
Alex and Felix's dedication to telling untold stories has led them to move permanently to Kandahar where, as the only Westerners living outside the wire, they are working on an oral history of the Taliban from the 1970s to the present.

"Everything you read about Afghanistan is based on a limited number of sources, so we try to do the field research to add something new to the discussion," Alex concluded. ■

From a first defeat for Hitler to the last British Tommy, a flick through this month's literary releases...

The Last Veteran by Peter Parker

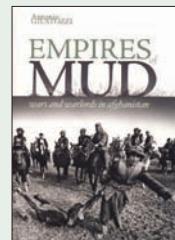
HARRY Patch, who was conscripted into the Army in 1916 and fought at Passchendaele, was the last veteran of the First World War. However, this book is not a biography. It is a social history and explores the way the Great War has been thought about and commemorated and how it has affected its own and later generations. The author makes the point that the war was fought not by soldiers of a professional army, but by ordinary civilians and takes the reader from the guns falling silent on November 11, 1918 to the death of Patch on July 25, 2009. An extraordinary and moving book which has been written from the heart.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Empires of Mud by Antonio Giustozzi

THE ubiquitous mud of Afghanistan shown on this book's dust jacket comes and goes, as does the rule of warlords. **Giustozzi**, based in London, is among the most perceptive commentators on recent Afghan events. His inquiry into the West's attempts at state building is an important study, with relevance both specifically to Afghanistan and more generally. This is not easy reading: no quick introduction to the subject. However if, as the author believes, the West's bid to establish a viable state is handicapped by an inability to analyse Afghan politics, this is a very useful contribution to overcoming that failure.



Dr Rodney Atwood

The Counterterrorist Manual

CHRONICLING the evolution of terrorism since the massacre at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and the development of counter-terrorism measures, **Leroy Thompson** delves deeply into the recruiting, training and weapons used by anti-terrorist operators and their units' equipment, weapons and tactics. As the author of 38 related titles, Thompson provides sound analysis of the major terrorist actions of the past 35 years. This is definitely a book aimed at the non-military reader, however, those who are fans of **Andy McNab** and company may find *The Counterterrorist Manual* a little too matter-of-fact and unexciting.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



Know thy enemy: Alex Strick van Linschoten believes *My Life With The Taliban* is a must-read for troops deploying to Afghanistan

Picture: Rfn Mike Hubbard

Real Heroes

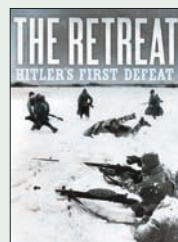
PUBLISHED on behalf of Help for Heroes and contributed to by **Jeremy Clarkson** and **Ross Kemp**, *Real Heroes* is a comic book-styled hardback celebrating the UK Armed Forces. The title alternates between cartoon strip accounts of epic Afghan conflicts such as the Battle of Jugroom Fort and the subsequent recovery of LCpl Matthew Ford (RM), to detailed looks at kit and equipment such as the Javelin and AH64 Apache. More of a tribute than a holiday read, *Real Heroes* is nonetheless a great book for those with little knowledge of Britain's Armed Forces and is raising funds for a great cause.



Cpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps

The Retreat by Michael Jones

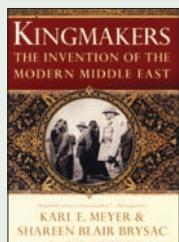
DESPITE a wealth of illuminating personal accounts, this is a somewhat unsatisfying read on Hitler's failed bid to topple Moscow in the winter of 1941/42. Throughout the book **Jones** provides a repetitive comparison with Napoleon's own struggle on Soviet soil more than one hundred years earlier. What *The Retreat: Hitler's First Defeat* lacks is some solid analysis that gets to the heart of both defeats. Weather, logistics, mutual savagery and Hitler's interventions are well known, but Jones does not present any new perspectives. Worth a read but do not expect any original insights into the battle.



Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

Kingmakers by K Meyer and S B Brysac

THIS is a terrific insight into the characters who have moulded the Middle East since the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. These politicians, soldiers and spies, whose personal whims and follies sowed much of the whirlwind the region reaps today, are analysed in a vivid and gripping fashion. Each chapter is devoted to a "kingmaker", ranging from the very famous to the little known. From Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion to Kermit Roosevelt overthrowing the democratic government of Iran in 1953, it is a tale of short-term opportunism punctuated by some heroic and devoted service to the people of the region.



Capt Quentin Hicks, KRH



Best of both worlds

BMW X5 adds style to Land Rover's substance to move into 4x4 market's top spot

Review: John Hogan

SINCE I left the Army, I've come to appreciate what makes a good 4x4 for completely different reasons to when I was serving.

Let's set the record straight from the start so as not to give the wrong impression – the Land Rover is God's gift to going anywhere.

My approach to a Land Rover was largely the same as my approach to the Gerber on my belt or a tool in a box. I had a job to do and the vehicle was the most capable tool to hand, so it was used. What makes them so good is their ability to paper over the tiny cracks in their DNA with a reliable level of overall competence.

So if they are so good, why don't you see scores of them running the kids to school, filling Sainsbury's car park on a weekend or cruising down the motorway? Because civvy street simply isn't a demanding-enough environment to require a grumbly, outdated and uncomfortable set of wheels like a Land Rover.

Also, let's not kid ourselves – brand new 4x4s are expensive so if you're going to spend £35k minimum, you're allowed to expect a lot for your

money, least of all comfort and no sign of tinnitus before you hit 30mph. This is where the BMW X5 takes one step forward.

When it appeared in 1999, the X5 was an instant hit. The driving dynamic was unparalleled by any other production 4x4. In simple terms, it handled like a car rather than threatening to tip you over every time you turned the wheel. It also stopped properly and accelerated well.

Eleven years later and the X5 is still the benchmark premium 4x4. Sure Audi, Volkswagen and even Porsche all have appealing offerings, but for this road tester nothing has the same road presence as the BMW.

The German's 235bhp is a lot, but so too is 2,150kg so don't jump in and expect mind-warping levels of shove. Stomping the trademark floor-hinged go pedal delivers a sustained rate of acceleration rather than a detonation.

The 3.0d SE as tested will rattle 60 in eight seconds and peaks at 130mph. You don't have to be particularly skilled to achieve this as the X5 has a superb six-speed, semi-automatic gearbox that delivers perfect doses of torque and power.

I didn't get the chance to test the BMW off-road and, let's face it, not many owners do. What I did do though was use it in the worst

snow and ice conditions this country has seen in decades. A trip to visit the in-laws saw the BMW accommodate everyone and everything with ease.

Trundling down the M20 in almost white-out conditions with the heated seats heating and the sat nav pointing the way, the X5 played the role of protector perfectly. We didn't laugh each time we saw another car had crashed up the embankment, but I was definitely feeling a bit smug.

Once onto a decent (snow free) A-road we got the chance to explore the other side to the X5. It handles unbelievably well for a car carrying so much weight. Intuitive and rewarding though it may be, I was all too aware of the amount of electronic counter measures the X5 deployed.

The BMW comes with a host of driver aids with acronyms that would keep any soldier happy – ADB-X (Automatic Differential Brake), ASC-X (Automatic Stability Control), CBC (Cornering Brake Control) and DBC (Dynamic Brake Control) to name only a few.

The X5 deals with icy roads completely differently to a Land Rover. With one you get a real feeling of mechanical grip while with the other you have to recalibrate your driving style. Yes this is expensive, but I believe everyone should aspire to owning something amazing eventually. ■

From modern marvels to old-school classics, we select the cream of the Chelsea tractor crop...

Jeep Grand Cherokee from £5,000

DESIGNED with lardier passengers in mind, the US-spec Cherokee has loads of room inside. As comfortable as it is capable, the Jeep represents excellent value for money if you opt for the diesel variant. Unless you have a spare key for the POL [petroleum, oils, lubricants] point, the petrol V8 is best avoided – expect 8mpg and no real performance benefit. The interior doesn't feel as plush as European-spec 4x4s but the quality is in there somewhere. Don't be afraid to get stuck in as the Jeep is up to the off-road job. Excellent dealer network and fairly cheap parts make owning a premium 4x4 achievable no matter where you're based.



www.jeep.co.uk/cherokee

Land Rover Discovery TD5 from £4,000

YOU'LL instantly feel at home in a TD5 as a lot of the bits you can't see are used on a Truck Utility Medium. What you get in a TD5 is comfort, near-silent running and a brilliant Harman Kardon stereo. Keep an eye out for leaking sunroof seals, ignore manual gearboxes and go for the lowest-mileage version you can afford and you'll bag a bargain. Head into cities to buy one as it will have all the extras you're looking for but won't have spent its life towing horseboxes. The Discovery offers true seven-seater motoring, with the kind of ageless class that no other car on this page can match. Pick of the bunch would be an automatic TD5 ES.



www.landrover.co.uk/discovery

Suzuki SJ410 from £700

DON'T be fooled by the diminutive nature of the Suzuki. The Japanese clearly forgot to think about the need for repeat custom, generating profit from selling spares or making money having their cars serviced as the SJ will run forever. The only thing it needs is fuel and pointing in the right direction. Even the steering bit is optional as they are capable of going pretty much anywhere. Lightweight and easy to drive, the Suzuki will leave bigger 4x4s floundering when the going gets tough. If you are looking to dip a toe into off-roading you could do a lot worse than getting behind the wheel of one of these.



www.suzuki.co.uk



Line in luxury: With off-road ability not far from that of the legendary Land Rover, BMW's imposing X5 also boasts a glut of driver-friendly technology

Fiat Panda 4x4 from less than £1,000

THE plucky Fiat is an absolute gem. If getting dirty on the cheap is what you're after, pick up one of these as you'll learn



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Boxers fully prepared ahead of Services showdown



Warriors: LCpl Martin Stead (RLC, back) and team captain Spr Adam Whitfield (RE) will spearhead the Army's defence of its Combined Services crown

Picture: Graeme Main



Emerging engineer: Cpl Lucy Read (RE) tests her ring skills at Aldershot's Maida Gymnasium during the selection camp for the Army women's boxing team

Women fighters show bags of talent

Interviews: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

WHEN it comes to Army boxing the sport has been a strictly male-dominated arena.

With 26 consecutive Combined Services titles behind them the men's team has set an impressive benchmark.

Their female counterparts now hope to follow suit and with women's boxing making the cut for the London Olympics in 2012 the Service's new breed of fighters are setting their sights on the very top.

Around 20 athletes attended a recent selection camp in Aldershot, proving there is strong interest in an Army sport that is very much in its infancy.

"In terms of commitment and skill levels I have been really impressed,"

newly-appointed coach Cpl Kris Lang (RLC) told *SoldierSport*.

"This is only our second year as a full team. Women's boxing is getting much bigger and we have had some terrific backing from the units and regiments.

"We have one girl, Pte Alana Murphy (RLC), who has represented Northern Ireland. We also have a lot of novice fighters, most of who are under five bouts, so there is a massive mix."

The camp, along with further training sessions this month, will form the basis of selection for the Army team at the Amateur Boxing Association championships but Lang has stressed that those who miss out will have the chance to impress in the future.

'In terms of commitment and skill levels I have been really impressed'

"The door is still open for people to come back," he said.

"There will be further opportunities next year at training camps and trials. We will welcome anyone who does not meet the standard this year. It is a tough sport but they are all fully committed."

Lang's ring pedigree saw him represent both the Royal Logistic Corps and the Army and he is revelling in the transition from fighter to coach.

"It is something I have enjoyed a lot more than I thought I would," he explained.

"I think it is more nerve-racking than fighting. When I was boxing I only had myself to worry about, now I have an entire team."

Davis aims for title 27

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY boxers return to action in the ring this month for the showpiece event of their season – the Combined Services championships.

The Reds will be looking to build on a proud run of 26 consecutive titles and coach Sgt Tony Davis (APTC) has been going all out to ensure his fighters are at the peak of their powers prior to the big night.

Despite mixed results this season the team boss has been pleased with the performance of his boxers ahead of the Services showdown.

Gdsm Steve Sweeney (1 IG) and Sig Nikki Gittus (R Signals, pictured right) have both represented England at international level while LCpl Martin Stead (RLC) fought his way to a silver medal on his Great Britain debut at the Tammer Tournament in Finland.

In a busy month of preparation for the Combined Services the squad travelled to Sheffield for a training camp with Team GB.

The fighters also fine-tuned their ring skills with clashes against select teams from London and Ulster as well as challenging the Police and Community Boxing Association.

“Training with Team GB is something that has not been done before,” Davis told *SoldierSport*.

“We will not get any better preparation for the Combined Services challenge. Our aim is to retain that trophy.”

The March 18 showdown will be Davis’ first Combined Services as coach and he is determined to maintain the Army’s winning streak.

“The Navy also has a new coach this year and we both want to make our mark,” he said.

“The team is coming together very well. We still have one or two weight categories up for grabs and that makes it very

interesting from my point of view.

“There are some fighters who feel they may have a place but there are others who are snapping at their heels. It is great to have such competition.”

● The Combined Services championships will be held at Aldershot’s Maida Gymnasium. For more information call the Army Boxing Association on 94222 3581. ■

“My ambition is to get these girls winning ABA titles and, looking ahead to the 2012 Olympics, I think one or two have a real chance as long as they stay focused and carry on training.”

One of those hoping to catch the eye is LBdr Lorna Redfern (RA).

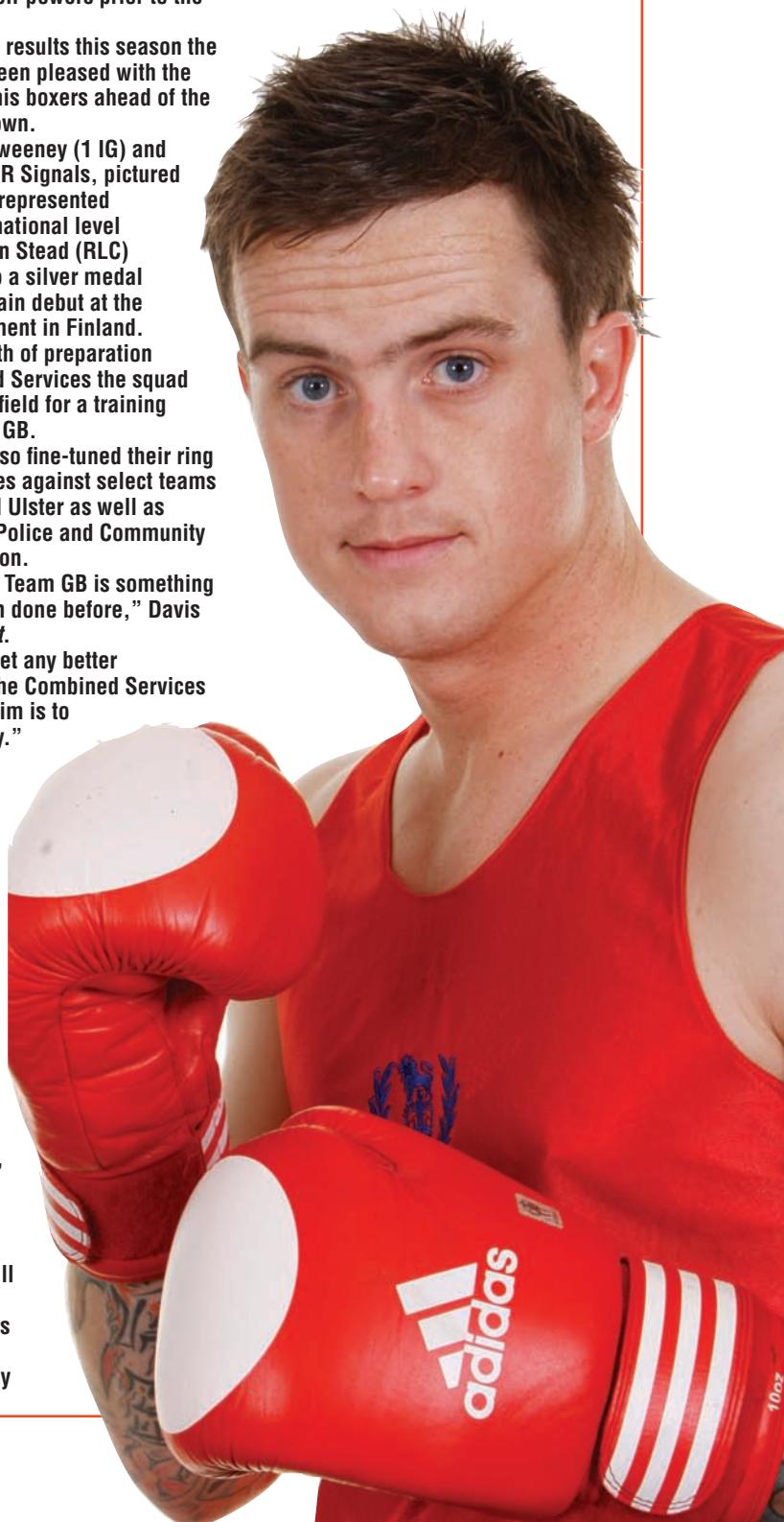
The fighter has strong links to the sport through her father Laurence, who runs a club in Scotland and recently celebrated 50 years in boxing.

“I used to help in the corner as a 12-year-old,” Redfern said.

“My dad always wanted me to have this kind of opportunity. This is a pure delight for me. I knew the men’s team was training here and I always wondered if it would happen for the women as well.

“I want to make the team for the ABAs and have a shot at the Olympics. The training has been great, spirits are high and we all hope the team continues to move forward.”

● For more information on women’s boxing and future training camps email lydiar@armymail.mod.uk ■





Sharpshooter: Flying winger Cfn Jason Silver (REME) fires a shot across Camberley Town's bows in the Under-23 clash at Aldershot's Military Stadium

Young guns take aim

Interviews: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR the majority of teenage boys the ultimate dream is for a career as a professional footballer.

But for every star in the making there are dozens of players who are released from academy and youth teams after being told they are not good enough to make the grade.

After years of living and breathing football, these young men face the daunting prospect of having to find an alternative career and often struggle for the right direction.

The Army has seen a steady flow of such players joining its ranks in recent years and *SoldierSport* visited the next generation of Service footballers to learn more about this transition.

Maj Dave Manners (AGC), chairman of the Under-23 side, said that while the Army does not have any direct links

with professional clubs, every effort is made to identify top players when they sign up.

"When they go to Phase One training there is a talent-spotting regime," he explained. "One of the questions they are asked is if they play sport at a decent level.

"The recruiters talk about what interests they have and tell them they can play at a good standard while serving in the military.

"The forms go back to the Army Sport Control Board and we go down to look for footballers."

He added: "We are trying to develop players for Army football and to raise standards across the units.

"They are good players but they are also good soldiers, we will not keep them in the team if they are not performing in the regiment.

"We have a very easy-going set-up but discipline is key."

The Under-23s are aiming for a third consecutive Inter-Services title this season and were in fine form against Camberley Town, coming from two goals down to record a 5-2 victory.

Cfn Jason Silver (REME) gave a scintillating performance and Manners is hopeful that he and a number of others will progress to the senior side.

"The transition from the Under-23s to the first team has not been as good as I would have liked," he said.

"There is a new regime with the seniors this year and I'm hoping there will be more of a pull through."

"We have seen three or four progress over the last few seasons but I thought we had more to offer. The senior side is now a bit younger and they have done a lot of talent-spotting."

"I am very impressed with the talent we have and I will be disappointed if we do not make it three Inter-Service titles in a row." ■

Spr Daniel Hounsell

Age: 18 **Position:** Right back **Corps:** RE

HOUNSELL started his career with Aldershot Town before spells with Reading, Oxford United and Brentford, where he was released after being told he was too small.

"I was devastated, it is horrible when someone tells you that you cannot do the one thing you wanted to do for the rest of your life," the determined 18-year-old defender told *SoldierSport*.

"I was hoping to get picked up, I was playing at district level and there were always scouts there.

"I had to make a decision. I turned down a contract with Aldershot, I had the opportunity but I couldn't see it as a long-term move as they do not bring many young players through."

Hounsell's father is also a serving soldier so the path to the military was an obvious option.

"My dad said there might be a chance to break through with the Army," the fullback said. "I've already played for the Under-23s and I'm still training and doing my trade course.

"I've only played for the regiment twice and I haven't played for my corps yet, so it is the other way round for me."

Hounsell is making big waves in the youth ranks but has a clear vision for the coming years.

"I want to keep going for the Under-23s. In the long term, you want to be going for the Army's senior side and play in the Inter-Services," he added.



Pte Joseph Samual



Age: 19 **Position:** Midfield **Corps:** RLC

SAMUAL is a product of the Pepsi Academy in Nigeria.

Having represented his country at different youth levels, the skilful winger travelled to England for trials at the Lewisham College Football Academy with a view to making a name for himself in the professional game.

After being unable to afford the fees he had a brief spell with Sidford Football Club, in Exeter, before joining the Army in 2007.

"I did not get a proper team so I decided to join the Army as I thought they could give me a good opportunity to play football," the 19-year-old said.

"I joined the Under-23s last season and won the Inter-Services

championship. I played against the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force and have now started playing for Sandhurst.

"I hope to win that title again this year and, if possible, go for a trial with the senior team."

Despite not making it as a professional, Samual has remained positive about his sporting possibilities and is delighted with the new career he is forging in the Armed Forces.

"My dream was to play football but I am not disappointed as through the Army I can still make it," he said.

"I will serve for four years to see how it goes but I am enjoying it at the moment and I can see me carrying on for another eight years."

Cfn Jason Silver

Age: 20 **Position:** Winger **Corps:** REME

SILVER played for his local side Havant and Waterlooville as a schoolboy.

At the age of 15 he left to play for Hampshire and the Portsmouth Football Club academy side but returned two years later.

After a year of reserve team football, which included a handful of appearances in the senior side, the winger saw his hopes dashed by a change of management and a reorganisation of the youth and reserve teams.

"They wanted to start with fresh, younger lads and I was pushing the age limits," Silver explained.

"Joining the Army had been an ambition of mine since I was a young boy. I am very keen on sport and I knew

from friends that the Army gives a lot of time to such activities.

"I just thought I could be doing something better with my life, I could have carried on playing college football but it was not really going anywhere.

"Playing down south the options are limited. I live in Portsmouth and the only teams based in that area are Southampton and Portsmouth.

"I could have stayed with Havant and Waterlooville but the pay is pretty poor.

"I had a background in mechanics so I joined the REME and I am really enjoying it. I have always liked fixing broken vehicles and this is a really good test of my knowledge. If I leave the Army I also have qualifications and a trade."





Speed freak: 2nd Lt Will Locke (9/12 L) races down the challenging Super G course at the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships in the French Alps

Piste of the action

Report: Richard Long

THE Army's winter sports stars produced a series of stunning performances on the slopes of Meribel during a gruelling week of competition against their Forces rivals.

With operational commitments taking their toll, the squad recorded some exceptional wins in a number of disciplines at the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships.

WO2 Phil Maddox (APTC) led the charge in a thrilling telemark competition, with his success in the French Alps coming hot on the heels of a close-fought victory in the Army contest just weeks earlier.

Maj Andrew Clarke (RA) held the advantage after the giant slalom and sprint rounds but the officer suffered heartbreak in the classic race when he missed a gate and was disqualified from the event, therefore handing the title to his teammate.

But despite his individual setback Clarke's efforts on the slopes helped the Service to team wins in all three disciplines in what was a scintillating overall performance.

The impact of operations was particularly noticeable in the women's

snowboarding, with the Army's top two athletes both missing this year's action.

But Capt Rachel Beszant (RE) shone on her tournament debut and secured a deserved second place finish in an event that was dominated by competitors from the Royal Air Force.

Her efforts also saw her named the best snowboarding newcomer.

Cpl Kev Clark (REME) was crowned Inter-Services champion in the men's event thanks to consistent performances in all three disciplines.

Colleague Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) was in close contention throughout but a disappointing run in the slope style saw him finish second. However, their combined efforts saw the men finish as overall team champions.

In the alpine skiing Cpl Annabelle Franey (REME) tasted success in both the downhill and Super G in what was her last competitive event for the Army.

Second place finishes in the giant slalom and slalom ensured she signed off in style in what proved to be a keenly contested title.

A delighted Franey said: "Myself and Catherine Wroe of the RAF have

been fighting it out but, luckily, I just managed to beat her to the top spot."

Despite Franey's heroics the RAF narrowly beat the women in the race for the team crown.

The impressive Flt Lt Roger Cruickshank dominated the men's competition to ensure further RAF success but a second place finish from Capt Matt Shepherd (RLC) helped the Army men to team success.

LCpl Karen Abbott-Hull (RLC) was named best female newcomer in the alpine events and Lt Col Jonny Lowe (RLC) was presented with the Delany Trophy in recognition of his dedication to Combined Services snowboarding.

Speaking after a hectic week of competition Lt Col (Retd) Martyn Allen, secretary of the Army Winter Sports Association, told *SoldierSport*: "I am very pleased with the way in which we performed, especially when you consider the people we had missing.

"We saw some fantastic skiing and it was great decompression for those who have been away on operations.

"It was a really good event." ■

'We saw some fantastic skiing and it was great decompression'

Winter stars in Games debut

ARMY athlete LCpl Lee-Steve Jackson (2 Yorks) made history at the Winter Olympics by becoming the first Briton to compete in the biathlon pursuit.

The 29-year-old finished 56th in the 12.5km race at Whistler Park, where he hit two clear shooting rounds out of four in an impressive debut Olympic performance.

"I skied well," the NCO said. "I was disappointed with my first standing shoot but I picked it up at the end."

"Shooting zero twice in a race builds your confidence. It leaves me in a good position and with plenty of confidence going into my final race."

"I'm in a good position in my head and physically I feel great, so there's a lot to go for."

"If I get a clean shoot a top 15 or top 20 position in the next race could be possible and I'd be over the moon with that. It would be like a medal to me."

Jackson started the event in 55th position after a personal best finish in the 10km sprint just days earlier.

He was due to compete in the

'I'm in a good position in my head and physically I feel great'

20km individual event as this issue went to press.

The Army ace was named British biathlon's athlete of the year in 2009 and has set himself the target of a top 50 finish in Vancouver.

Bobsleigh star Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) was also named in the Great Britain squad for Canada and, like Jackson, was making her Olympic debut.

The 23-year-old rubbed shoulders with international sporting legends Sir Clive Woodward and Sir Steve Redgrave during the team launch at London's Somerset House and was in action on the track late last month.

Before flying out she spoke to *SoldierSport* about being selected to represent her country and her expectations for the Games.

"First of all I hope to enjoy it," she said. "But I have set myself the target of finishing in the top ten."

"As a novice, and with this being my first Olympics, it is going to be tough but if I can achieve that I will be delighted."

The GB2 driver secured her

place thanks to a thrilling run at a German World Cup event in December and she has been quick to praise the Service support she has received so far.

"The Army has been fabulous, they are right behind me," she said. "My colleagues have helped to cover my work and I really appreciate that, I am so grateful."

Walker was joined in Team GB by Capt Henry Nwume (RAMC), who was named in the squad for the four-man bobsleigh. Vancouver was also his first taste of Winter Olympic action.

The officer has a fine pedigree at elite level and has previously played Rugby Union for Wasps, making the bench at the Heineken Cup and Zurich Premiership finals. ■



LCpl Lee-Steve Jackson and Cpl Paula Walker

Cool customers

DISABLED skiers have enjoyed another terrific season on the slopes as they continue their charge toward Olympic glory.

The Combined Services Disabled Ski Team took on their able-bodied colleagues in a hectic winter programme.

Sgt Mick Brennan (R Signals), who lost both legs above the knee in a suicide bomb blast in Iraq, travelled to France for the



Divisional Alpine Championships.

Racing on mono skis he finished 66th in the individual Super G and was 73rd in the giant slalom, events which boasted a field of 124 competitors.

With the action moving to Serre Chevalier he was joined by Capt Martin Hewitt (Para, pictured) and Tpr Stevie Shine (RTR) for the Army Alpine Championships.

The team then travelled to the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships.

Hewitt, who was shot through the shoulder in Afghanistan in 2007, completed all the races he started in Meribel and was ranked 24th in the combination (Super G and slalom), from a field of 45 competitors.

Brennan finished 31st in the Super G and Shine, who lost his left leg while serving in Iraq in 2007, was 32nd.

Lt Col Mike Quaile, deputy chairman of the Combined Services Disabled Ski Team, said: "In order to race at their current level of competition they have had to push themselves to an extraordinary extent."

"They are all focused on representing their country in the 2014 Winter Olympics."

● www.battleback.mod.uk

SPORT SHORTS

THE south Moroccan desert awaits Maj Drew Craig (RE) when he takes part in April's Marathon Des Sables.

Held over six days, the endurance event challenges athletes to run 156 miles while carrying all their personal belongings and food in a backpack.

Craig hopes to raise £10,000 to be divided between Help for Heroes and The Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neurone Disease Research.

To sponsor him visit www.rocklore.co.uk/mds_index.htm

THE London District TA and Army Boxing Club raised more than £20,000 for a variety of Service charities at their annual dinner.

More than 300 guests, including ring legend Lloyd Honeyghan, attended the event at Whitehall Palace in London where Army fighters went head-to-head with competitors from the Fitzroy Lodge and Foley Boxing Clubs and gave some spirited performances in a 5-2 defeat.

For more exclusive British Army sports stories, including extended disabled skiing coverage, log on to www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/sport

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Gentleman Joe: The undefeated boxing world champion is hoping to raise half-a-million pounds for Service personnel by hosting a star-studded dinner

Calzaghe offers help for heroes

Interview: Joe Calzaghe

BRITAIN'S only undefeated world boxing champion is planning to raise £500,000 for Help for Heroes at his glitzy retirement dinner.

Joe Calzaghe hung up his gloves last February after 46 wins from as many professional fights and now wants to channel his energy into helping wounded troops.

Speaking exclusively to *Soldier*, the longest-reigning champion of the modern era explained his motivation.

"Last October I went to Headley Court to present them with a punch bag and I was touched by how brave these guys are," said the 37-year-old.

"Being a fighter I thought I was tough but bloody hell, these amazing people are incredible."

The Undefeated Gala Dinner, with the Stereophonics and Joss Stone on the bill, will be held on March 22 at London's Grosvenor House Hotel, with all profits going directly to charity.

"Just like in my career I'm aiming high and working to get what I want – hopefully we will raise something like half-a-million pounds," said Calzaghe. "It's going to be a great night."

From the age of nine when "The Italian Dragon" started working on his ringcraft with his father, Enzo, boxing at the top was his only dream.

"I never had any ambitions to join the Army or do anything other than become a world-class fighter," the Welsh southpaw explained.

"My teachers used to tell me to work harder and I just said 'I'm going to be world champion' and they would all laugh at me."

But once in the ring Calzaghe vowed to listen to everything that his coach told him, similar to soldiers taking orders from the chain of command.

"To be fair my dad was like a military leader, kicking me up the backside and getting me to train," said the 2007 BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

"He made me train like a pro and I was more than happy to do that."

Now the former Ring Magazine World Light-Heavyweight Champion, as well as former WBO, WBA, WBC, IBF, Ring Magazine and British super middleweight champion, is devoting himself to new projects.

"All I've ever done is fight and train so I can understand the mindset of career soldiers who suddenly find

themselves in civilian life," he said.

"That's why I'm throwing everything into organising this dinner."

On his boxing style, Calzaghe said he could see similarities with fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

"The way I fought was all about speed and my ability to switch styles, which is difficult to deal with," he said.

"Like in the Army, being able to act rapidly with intelligence makes life hard for the enemy."

"But what the soldiers are doing is a lot bloody tougher than what I did."

Continuing with his praise for the troops, the "pride of Wales" said he would like to get out to theatre to meet serving personnel.

"At the moment I am swamped with work for Help for Heroes but one day I hope to go out to Afghanistan."

"I will do whatever I can to raise as much money as possible to help the soldiers who need it."

● To purchase a table or individual tickets for Joe Calzaghe's Undefeated Gala Dinner, which is being held at London's Grosvenor House Hotel on March 22 in aid of Help for Heroes, log on to www.joecalzaghe.com ■



THE Army Under-23 side made the worst possible start to the defence of their Inter-Services football crown with a crushing defeat at the hands of the Royal Air Force. Playing at a rain-swept Aldershot Military Stadium, the below-par Reds crumbled to a 5-1 loss as the airmen ruthlessly punished the home team's defensive frailties. After a cagey opening period the RAF began to assert control and their mounting pressure was rewarded when SAC Gary Lowe fired home shortly after the half-hour mark. A stunning 20-yard free kick from midfielder SAC Lewis Brownhill doubled the visitor's advantage on the stroke of half time and when AC Ben Fitzmartin scored with a well-directed header midway through the second period the match was as good as over. Sloppy defending by the Army gifted AC Lee Seller an easy fourth before Sig Jay Macanespie (R Signals, pictured above) restored some pride with a tap-in. Seller completed the rout with another strike at the death. The Reds take on the Royal Navy at Portsmouth in their second fixture on March 2.

Reds target Services showdown

AN IN form Army men's team will look to continue their fine start to the football season when they lock horns with their Forces rivals in this month's Inter-Services Championship.

The Reds have recorded four straight victories in the Southern Counties Cup and sit top of the table with a 100 per cent record.

"I am very pleased with our performances so far," delighted manager Capt Lee Dyson (APTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"We have won four from four and we are scoring goals but, more importantly for me, we have only conceded once.

"That shows we are strong up front and at the back.

"I think we have a good chance in the Inter-Services. They are two one-off games; it's a bit like an FA

Cup tie where it is all about what happens on the day.

"All three Services will be in contention but I am confident we can go all the way."

A number of talented new players have come into the team this season with Sig Sam Agar (R Signals), Pte Sam Lake (Infantry) and Cfn Jonathan Green (REME) all making an immediate impression.

Agar has shown his class in front of goal with a series of memorable displays, most notably dispatching a double in his side's impressive 2-1 win against Sussex.

The Army travel to Uxbridge to take on the Royal Air Force on March 3 before a home clash with the Royal Navy on March 17.

Coca Cola League Two side Aldershot Town Football Club will host the match, with kick-off at 1900.

Admission is by donation, with proceeds going to Help for Heroes and the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice.

March also marks the start of the women's Inter-Services campaign.

The footballers will be going all out to sink the Navy when they meet at Aldershot Military Stadium on March 4 (kick-off 1400).

The side travels to Uxbridge the following week to take on the RAF in their final fixture.

Even though the season is still in its early stages the women's team is currently sitting pretty at the top of the South and West Counties League thanks to a draw and a win from their opening two matches.

● For more information on Army football, including fixture lists for all representative teams, log on to www.armyfa.com ■

Wizards break Army spell

Report: Richard Long

HOPES of a prolonged run for the Army in this season's Rugby League Challenge Cup were dashed by a stunning second-half performance from Conference National side Warrington Wizards.

The Reds built a commanding 14-0 interval lead in their second round clash at the Wilderspool Stadium, an effort that looked to have formed the foundations of a comfortable win.

But their experienced opponents ruthlessly exploited their home advantage to stage a remarkable fightback that saw them conjure a 28-20 victory from the jaws of defeat.

The Army started the match in fine defensive form with captain Pte Gareth Lodge (4 Para, pictured below on the ball) leading from the front with a ferocious tackle rate.

After missing a fifth-minute penalty the visitors opened the scoring when LCpl Mags Marangon (RE) collected a beautiful cross-field kick to crash over the line, leaving Cpl Rob Smart (RAMC) to add the extras with a superb kick from the touchline.

The score energised the Service stars and within minutes of the restart they were knocking at the host's door once again.

A fantastic drop-off carved the Warrington defence open and gave Lodge the opportunity to touch down.

After repelling a series of home attacks an excellent run by winger Pte Sam Speight (RA) created the Army's third try, which was scored by fullback Sgt Rob Martin (RA), but a missed

conversion left the score at 14-0.

Warrington emerged for the second period in a determined mood but Lodge drove his side forward from the kick-off only to fall agonisingly short.

Shaun Gilmour showed good pace to sprint in at the corner within five minutes of the restart to spark the Wizards' comeback and powerful forward Alan Reddecliff smashed his way over for a second score that was followed by a successful conversion.

Sgt Lee Coe (RE) momentarily stopped the rot when he did well to battle over the line following excellent play from Marangon.

Smart kicked the extras and the Army looked in control once more.

The game turned on a controversial decision from the touch judge.

Speight charged through to dive onto a loose ball in the goal area only to be told it had not been grounded correctly.

Martin was then sin-binned following a succession of poor penalty decisions and Reddecliff made the most of the numerical advantage to score his second try.

With a vocal home crowd providing the extra impetus, Warrington bossed a crucial final ten minutes.

Second row Nick Braide crossed to level the match and the subsequent conversion saw the Wizards leading for the first time.

Substitute Tom Wilde delivered the hammer blow to secure a third round tie against Swinton.

The next Army fixture is the All Gold Cup Cheltenham Nines tournament on Saturday, April 24. ■

ENDURANCE athletes Capt Tony Ireland (RLC) and SSgt Phil Marland (MPGS) will travel to South Africa this month to pit their wits against the Cape Epic mountain bike race.

The 800km off-road challenge will see the duo cycling across the country's outback to raise money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity and Help for Heroes.

To sponsor them visit www.justgiving.com/the_epic_ride_abf or www.justgiving.com/the_epic_ride_h4h

PREMIERSHIP giants Chelsea are donating 50 free tickets to serving personnel ahead of their Champions League clash with Inter Milan.

The match on March 16 will mark the return of former manager Jose Mourinho to Stamford Bridge as the two teams battle it out for a place in the quarter-finals of Europe's premier club football competition.

Chelsea is making the offer as part of the Tickets for Troops initiative, which is providing serving soldiers with free entry to a range of sports and entertainment events across the UK.

For more information visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

NOVICE and intermediate windsurfers are being invited to a week-long training course at Thorney Island next month.

The sessions include skill-based coaching clinics, a look at race coaching techniques and help with equipment tuning and will run from April 12 to 14.

For more information call Jon Metcalfe on 07768 988258 or email asawsm@btconnect.com

INJURED soldier Pte Danny Hallsworth (5 Scots) had the honour of presenting the man of the match award at last month's Six Nations showdown between Scotland and France.

Forward Imanol Harinordoquy received the accolade after inspiring the French to an 18-9 win at Murrayfield stadium.

Hallsworth, who was injured in Afghanistan and is currently based at the Personnel Recovery Centre in Edinburgh, said: "I was really honoured to present the medal even though it was a Frenchman that eventually won it."

"But I agree with the decision, he was the best player on the day."

THE Combined Services Powerlifting Championships will be held at Sir John Moore Barracks in Folkestone on March 31.

Novices and first-time competitors are welcome to take part and the closing date for entries is March 25.

For more information about the event, contact Steve Maden on 01303 225503 or 07968 805650.



Picture: Eileen Bright

final word



We asked troops from 4 Brigade how their pre-deployment training had gone and for their thoughts on the influx of new kit and equipment

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Cpl Emma Hamnett (RMP)

In Afghanistan I will be embedded with C Company, 1 Mercian. I'll be on the ground to assist with stop and search duties and although I am anxious about going, I feel ready after all the training I've had. The final training exercise has been a test for the hierarchy to see how the running of things up and down the chain works. It has gone very well and bodes well for the real thing.



Cpl Colin Crowden (Int Corps)

I'll be working with the Afghan National Army (ANA) as part of the 1 Scots Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT). I'm very much looking forward to going out as it's my second deployment and I want to go back. The kit I've been issued is 100 times better than what I had the first time and I'm absolutely happy with the equipment and training – I'm ready to go now.



LCpl Christopher Burns (1 Scots)

I'm due to deploy this month and I'm looking forward to it although I am a bit anxious. I've served in Iraq, Bosnia and Northern Ireland but it's my first time to Afghanistan. Training has been good and we've learned a lot but now I just want to get out and get the job done. I haven't got any issues with the kit and the lighter body armour and day sacks will make life a lot easier.



Maj Mark Suddaby (1 Scots)

I think it will be a challenging tour especially with a lot of change happening in Helmand at the moment. We're looking to partner the ANA which is the long-term goal. Preparation has been hard and there's been a lot of investment in training for Afghans. Kit and equipment is something we are not short of – the media idea that we are ill-equipped is an absolute load of rubbish.



Sig Alexander Eley (R Signals)

It's my first operational tour to Afghanistan and something I am looking forward to. Training has been exciting and I'm feeling prepared. I've been pleased with the work on linking with the infantry in the field. However, mentally I am nervous and I know it's going to be a tough experience. We are getting brand new kit so on that front I've got no worries at all.



Cpl Tony Shanly (1 Mercian)

I don't really know what to expect as it's my first time in Afghanistan. All the drills and exercises have shown that it's going to be a different type of conflict to those in the past and I feel well-prepared. Also, I am very happy with the issued kit. There are still things we are going to receive which are theatre-specific but I have no problems yet.



Lt Saf Greenwood (1 Mercian)

I am the unit press officer so I'm looking forward to getting good news stories back home for the soldiers' families to read. Training has gone really well and the exercises have been getting bigger which makes things realistic. It's been really good to work with Afghan interpreters as it has allowed us to practise attending shuras in a real environment.



Capt John Young (1 Scots)

I'll be in the role of OMLT commander and I'm pleased with how training has gone. We've done specific Afghan training for about six months, lots of language training and cultural awareness. Equipment is really good – there may have been issues with kit a few years ago but it's genuinely good stuff now and it's getting much lighter to carry.



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