

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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MAY 2026

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS
THIS MONTH...



**CPL LUKE O'NEILL,
RIFLES**

IF YOU want to know what it takes to be crowned the best junior NCO in the British Army, turn to **page 26** to find out. From skills in the field to drone-craft and saving Christmas, this award winner will make you proud.



**SGT CHEZ NHELL,
RAPTC**

HIS team might have looked unbeatable on paper, but army boxing's head coach admits that last month's Inter-Services defeat has been a "tough pill to swallow". Find out why on **page 64**.



COL GARY SULLIVAN

THIS reservist business exec lifts the lid on the Staff Corps - a little known unit that plugs the army into a range of civvy street expertise to help troops get the job done on ops. Prepare to be amazed from **page 50**...

In memory of a true leader

THIS magazine is dedicated to our Managing Editor, Steve Muncey, who died on March 28.

You can read more about this brilliant man - who oversaw this title for 12 years - on page 10, but there is something the boss did in his final days that I wanted to pay tribute to here.

Knowing he had very little time left to live amid a short and cruel illness, Steve wrote our team a goodbye letter. In it, he gave us one final pep talk about the job we do and his pride in us all.

Right to the end, courage and compassion marked him out. And the thing about compassionate leadership is that not only does it make life better for the team, but it gets the job done better too.

In a world where bluster and bravado are so often the default, Steve chose a route of honesty and transparency. And when you lead honestly, you inspire others to do the same; to be themselves. When people can be themselves at work, that's when the magic happens: solving problems, getting creative, speaking out... the benefits are endless. You mould teams that are friendly and hardworking. No ego, just everyone pulling together - their contribution valued - to get stuff done.

That's what Steve taught me. "Every person needs managing differently," he would say.

Producing *Soldier* each month is a privilege - with more inspiration on how to conduct yourself and live well, per column inch, than I think you could find anywhere. Steve never took the oath of allegiance, but he most definitely inspired us alongside our readers. So it seems entirely fitting we march him out of *Soldier* in the same issue the army celebrates its very best (page 26).

Working with the military didn't turn Steve into a good guy - he was that all along - but his place in this world of impeccable values and standards made total sense. And it is a presence that will be sorely missed.

Sarah Goldthorpe • **Editor**

'Steve chose a
route of honesty'





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ARMY
BE THE BEST

Picture: Sgt Adam Wakefield, RLC



FIGHTING FORM

Command changes make HQ war ready

ARMY and Field Army headquarters have been merged to form a single HQ that includes a Land Forces Command, in the first of several changes designed to boost fighting power and meet Nato commitments.

A flag-raising ceremony at the Andover site last month marked the reorganisation, which bosses say will help the service adjust to new global threats.

Field Army is gone in name, with command of 1st (UK) Division and 3rd (UK) Division – the army’s two main deployable formations – and corps troops to be moved to HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, which will be led by Lt Gen Mike Elviss.

Commander Field Army will now be retitled Commander Land Forces, with Lt Gen Zac Stenning appointed to that three-star role with responsibility for directing ops, training and warfare development.

“Together, we will deliver the most capable land forces wherever our nation needs its army,”

the officer commented.

Lt Gen Simon Hamilton has also been appointed deputy chief of the general staff as part of the reshuffle.

The plan essentially restructures the army around Nato, with operational forces arranged into three tactical groups – the Strategic Reserve Corps, Forward Land Forces and the Land Special Operations Force.

Bosses say it will result in an Army HQ ready to wage war, a fully enabled corps braced to fight, and a Standing Joint Command prepared to defend the homeland and mobilise armies.

It is part of wider changes across UK defence aimed at making the MoD war ready with clearer roles, simpler processes and more joined up working.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the overhaul represented “the deepest reforms in 50 years”, adding that “we are in a new era of threat and defence must transform to meet the challenges of the future”.

ALLIES HONOURED

BRITISH troops stood shoulder-to-shoulder with comrades from Australia and New Zealand as the two allied countries marked the sacrifice of those who have fallen in conflict.

A wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph and service at Westminster Abbey topped the UK programme for Anzac Day on April 25. The annual event coincides with the anniversary of the First World War Gallipoli campaign in which both nations suffered dreadful losses.

Today, various personnel from Australia and New Zealand are serving in the UK, including on Op Interflex.

IN NUMBERS

70,630

THE full-time trade-trained strength of the British Army as of January, according to recent government figures – a decrease of around 500 on the previous year. Find this and other stats by searching ‘quarterly service personnel statistics 2026’ online.

ANOTHER FEMALE FIRST

VICE Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Dame Sharon Nesmith, made history at the first Sovereign’s Parade of 2026.

Representing King Charles III at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, it was the first time the sovereign’s representative had been a serving female officer, and she became only the third non-royal female to perform the role. Others have been prime ministers.

Gen Nesmith inspected the senior intake and presented the prize winners’ awards including the coveted Sword of Honour to Senior Under Officer Ben Melling, who is commissioning into The King’s Royal Hussars.



Picture: Graeme Main

WHERE TO FIND SOLDIER



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1 CANADA

Cold comfort

A TOUGH army nursing duo remained icy cool working their medical magic in North America's arctic conditions.

Capt Emily Howe and Cpl Abi Arnold (both RAMS) hit the wilds for a cold weather operators' course with troops from 1 Canadian Field Hospital.

They took the snow and sub-zero temperatures of Petawawa, Ottawa in their stride as they faced a syllabus combining basic survival with treating casualties.

Normally working in more comfortable NHS surroundings in their day jobs with the Defence Medical Services Joint Hospital Group, the soldiers undertook both classroom sessions and extreme, in-field training during the fortnight-long package.

Cpl Arnold (shown below learning to ice fish) said the duo had returned to the UK with new knowledge and skills. "It was a massive learning curve but the Canadians were incredibly welcoming," she added.



2 UKRAINE

Reclaiming the skies

ADDITIONAL cash to help the Eastern European country's forces defend against ongoing Russian air attacks has been pledged by the British government.

Senior ministers confirmed that £100 million would be urgently committed in addition to a £500-million package agreed at the beginning of the year.

Thousands of extra missiles and artillery rounds are also being delivered to the state.



A TASTE OF ARMY ACTIVITY ACROSS THE WORLD

GLOBAL SITREP

3 USA

Taking aim

ELITE marksmen from the USA, Holland, Poland, Italy, Ireland and Guatemala were providing a stern test for British personnel at the Armed Forces Skill at Arms Meeting as this issue went to press.

Members of the British Army Reserve operational shooting team completed their preparations at Stoney Castle Range in Pirbright last month before deploying to Little Rock for the 35th staging of the international competition.

"The team is fully prepared and ready to perform at the highest standard," said Maj Ady Kyle (SASC) on the eve of departure.

"Their presence on the firing line showcases not only individual proficiency but also the collective strength and cohesion of the wider reserve shooting community."



4 GERMANY

Shipping out

MORE than 1,400 soldiers from 7th Light Mechanised Brigade made waves as they boarded a ferry for the first leg of their journey to Exercise Rhino Storm in Germany.

In the first time the army has chartered an entire civvy seafaring service for two decades, the Desert Rats proved that they could use all means of transport necessary to rapidly deploy to Europe. They completed the onward journey by rail after landing in Holland.

The ability to use mass transit systems would be vital if the alliance was ever called to collective defence.

As this issue went to press, the Brits were set to work with French allies in a live-firing package



Pictures: Cpl Vincent Price, RLC



5 LITHUANIA

On point in Rukla

RESERVIST riflemen will spend two weeks honing their skills and drills alongside Baltic partners this month.

A short-term training team will see members of 6th Battalion, The Rifles – along with support elements from The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and 19th Light Brigade – deploy near to the town of Rukla as a light role infantry company attached to Lithuania's 14th Infantry Battalion.

Commanders say the stint will strengthen relations between the Nato countries, while allowing volunteers to improve their interoperability and get stuck into a conventional warfare setting in Eastern Europe.

6 INDIA

Landmark AT

A FORTNIGHT of memorable mountaineering was undertaken by troops from 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment in Goecha La in what is thought to be the British Army's first AT expedition to India in more than 30 years.

The challenging Himalayan terrain saw the sappers reach heights of more than 4,300m at the base of the world's third-highest peak, Mount Kanchenjunga.

They also got chance to visit the British High Commission New Delhi and the Gurkha welfare centre in Darjeeling.

Picture: WO2 Roshan Gurung, RGR



7 NEPAL

On top of the world

THE heights of Himalayas tested personnel from the Infantry Training Centre Catterick as they showed their mettle on a demanding adventurous training package.

A 14-strong group took on one of the country's most demanding and remote trails, with Exercise Northern Bayonet Warrior requiring strong teamwork skills throughout.

The outing culminated on the Indian border at the base camp of Mount Kanchenjunga – with troops notching up an altitude of 5,143 metres.

As well as deepening an understanding of Nepalese culture, the expedition, which was led by WO2 Roshan Gurung (RGR) and organised by Sgt Amir Chamling (QOGLR), also saw six members of the team qualify as summer mountain foundation leaders.



OVER YOUR HEAD OVERSEAS?

Troops reveal their tips for working with other nations – page 74



'The Greenlanders were great with laying on natural energy drinks!'

Nordic skier on what got him through the Arctic Circle race – page 18



GROUND VIEW

Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller gives his take on service life...

WHEN you speak to as many different people as I do, it doesn't take long to realise the high esteem in which the British NCO is held.

Not just in this country; travel to some far-flung places and you will hear the same. We have a hard-won reputation for soldiering skill and leadership acumen, and other nations ask for our non-commissioned officers to train their troops.

Since taking up this job I have wanted our young soldiers to get greater recognition – particularly those experiencing command for the first time. Last month, we presented the first Fitzgibbon Award at Sandhurst to recognise excellence at the junior end of the chain of command. Read more on page 26.

The response was tremendous. Many candidates were put forward and we created a shortlist of 15 from which we chose the eventual winner.

‘Junior commanders make a critical difference’

In parallel with this, I am introducing something called the NCO Creed – a document that all soldiers will receive when they become a substantive lance corporal. It bears a statement that underscores their importance as a leader and the expectations on them, as well as a pledge for how they will conduct themselves.

This will be presented in a frame, in the same way as WO2s are handed royal warrants and officers commissions.

The US Army has a similar initiative. It is a formal way of marking a new era in your career and I hope it helps new NCOs think about their achievements.

Soldiering is a demanding job. There are expectations upon us that most never have to shoulder, and not only on ops but in times of need, as we saw during Covid. In all cases, junior commanders make a critical difference. It's important we recognise them.

Finally, it is a given we should all make our voice heard when we think there's a problem of any kind. But doing it in the right way is important, so I have also introduced the Challenge Triangle – a decision-making model that shows how to speak up confidently and proportionately.

I'd like everyone to ensure they are comfortable using it. Read more on the Centre for Army Leadership page on the Army Knowledge Exchange.

WO1 Miller's month...

Visits

- Nato; Belgium; British Army Training Unit Kenya

Impressed with

- Response to Fitzgibbon Award

Area of focus

- Understanding how to challenge appropriately

Coming up next

- Korean War 75 commemorations; Rusi Land Warfare Conference



Left Steve interviews Gen Sir Nick Carter in 2015
Below On Salisbury Plain with troops last year



LOSS OF A CLASS ACT

Pictures: Graeme Main

SOLDIER is mourning the loss of our Managing Editor, Steve Muncey, who died at the end of March following a short period of illness.

Leading this title over the last 12 years, the 62-year-old was widely respected for his integrity, intelligence, compassionate management style and vast knowledge of the commercial magazine sector.

A gifted writer who loved all things tech – particularly drones – his previous roles included editing various leisure and golfing publications, as well as the establishment of travel firm Magic of Maldives with his beloved wife Paula.

During his time on *Soldier*, the journalist oversaw coverage of many memorable events including the end of the Afghanistan conflict, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the Covid-19

pandemic, this magazine's 80th birthday and the launch of our digital archive.

"Steve's ability to inspire loyalty in his team, promote quality in the writing, tackle challenging subjects and make print deadlines was unmatched," said colleague Col Bayard Barron.

"He served his country with distinction, but most of all he served those around him."

Days before his death, the leader sent his team at *Soldier* a goodbye letter. Uplifting and unflinching in the face of tragedy, he used the opportunity to inspire those he led one final time.

As well as wife Paula, Steve leaves behind two sons, Jake and Alex, parents Peggy and Doug, and sister Claire.

Donations can be made in his memory to the Princess Alice Hospice in Esher at pah.org.uk



READY TO GO

THE fighting power of 3rd (UK) Division was showcased to visitors at the latest Armoured Expo event on Salisbury Plain. Pictured here by Graeme Main are Challenger 2 main battle tanks during a breaching demo. Check out another shot from the day on page 54.



Picture: Graeme Main



LEADING LIGHTS

Awards celebrate training brilliance

THE first ever Army Individual Training Command (AITC) awards ceremony has been held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The event, called Recognising Our People, saw personnel honoured across various categories.

Winners included SSgt James

Topping (REME, near right), who was named NCO champion of the year for his efforts as a defence trainer supervisor at the School of Army Aeronautical Engineering.

His citation praised him for making a “lasting difference”.

It said: “He

has coached with care and rigour, delivering structured developmental feedback and establishing a monthly reflective leadership practice that has become routine across the school.

“His leadership style is quiet yet authoritative, focused on empowering others to develop confidence, competence and professional identity.”

Medic Cpl Jodie Newell (RAMS, below right) scooped the prize for outstanding contribution to training delivery, for her efforts to keep Sandhurst’s officer cadets safe on exercise.

Her citation said she was “professional, composed and

utterly reliable under pressure”.

It added: “She is a medic who commands confidence: clear in her assessments, decisive in her actions and relentless in her commitment.”

The NCO Academy was named team of the year for assisting the service’s 56,000 non-commissioned personnel.

With more than 40,000 subscribers, its digital set-up was praised for “consistently punching above its weight”.

“What began as a small team has become a central pillar in advancing NCO development, changing the conversation on how leadership, education and warfighting preparedness are delivered across a dispersed battlefield,” the citation said.

Maj Gen Nick Cowley, general officer commanding AITC, added: “Our instructors and teachers

are outstanding, and each deserves recognition for the impact they make every single day. It was therefore a privilege to recognise some of them on such a special occasion.”



MY TOP...

Soldier chats to
Cpl Joe Ramsden,
R Anglian

...COOKHOUSE

Bovington: They do steak there, and chips. That makes it stand out for me.

...TRAINING EXERCISE

There was one I did in Jordan back in 2010, a year or so after joining, which hasn't been topped yet. It was all low-level infantry stuff, working with the Jordanians in the desert, running through wadis and the like – amazing.



...MILITARY SLANG

I still use the old 'no dramas' a bit. And then there's gopping and gipping; they both mean the same thing so I'll happily use either depending on my mood.

...FOREIGN ARMY

The Americans are great – although they speak the same language, they are very different people to the Brits. I've enjoyed working with the French and Germans too.



...MUSIC

Nirvana are great – I'm 33 and showing my age in this choice!

...RATION PACK ITEM

Having been out in both Poland and Estonia on Op Cabrit, I've had the winter rations pack. The chocolate is decent from that; in



We caught up with the junior NCO on Op Cabrit in Poland

Pictures: Beth Prodder and Graeme Main

more normal conditions, though, the chicken with pasta shells is pretty good.

...TRAINING AREA

Kenya is my favourite; I'm a warm weather kind of a soldier.

...ARMY CLICHE FOR THE CHOP

I know this has been said a fair bit before but 'civvies would pay thousands for this'. No they wouldn't. You do this for the love of

the job and soldiering.

...BIT OF KIT

The cold weather clothing has been pretty good although my wife sent me out some Danish wool thermals, which were very welcome indeed given the sub-zero temperatures.

...ADVENTUROUS TRAINING

Clearly the environment always makes a difference, but for me you cannot beat kayaking in Cyprus.

KICKED OUT

THE following personnel were dismissed from His Majesty's Armed Forces after conviction at court martial between February and March 2026

Capt Thomas Davies (1st (UK) Armoured Division Headquarters), 30, found guilty of three counts of sexual assault. The Royal Logistic Corps officer denied all charges. Sentenced to 42 months in prison and told that he would forfeit his commission.

LCpl Michael Ward (9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps), 34, found guilty of fraud after subletting his SFA quarter in Catterick to a civilian friend. The court heard the father-of-three made just over £12,100 from the arrangement between June 2022 and April 2024 and had a lifestyle that included gambling and partying despite financial troubles. Sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, ordered to complete up to 15 rehabilitation activity days, 120 hours of unpaid work and handed a £6,000 fine.

Tpr Joeli Naikelekele Ratu (Household Cavalry Regiment), 29, found guilty of two counts of sexual assault. Sentenced to 11 months' service detention at the Military Corrective Training Centre Colchester and put on the sex offenders register for five years.



To read the full transcripts of the sentencing remarks in the above cases log on to www.gov.uk/government/publications/military-court-service-sentencing-remarks-2026



RUNNING RANKS

THE Endurance Army Educators have been celebrating a strong showing at the Marathon des Sables, where they finished 14th out of 44 teams.

Comprised of majors Dan Connolly and Greg Dove, along with captains Charley Rogerson, Jasmine Woodford and Logan Vinters – all from the Adjutant General’s Corps’ Educational and Training Services branch – the outfit tackled six stages in the punishing heat of the Sahara Desert, with each member completing the course’s full 271.5 kilometres.

Maj Dove (far left) also recorded the milestone of being the second British athlete to cross the finish line, coming 39th overall. “There really is no preparing

for the uncontrollable factors: sandstorms, torn gaiters, appetite versus fuel and medical issues while out on the ground,” said Capt Rogerson.

“The first few stages were relatively comfortable, but it was all a game of preservation. To sum up, this was an unbelievable experience and one which we, and our feet, will never forget.”

Elsewhere in the world of running, service personnel smashed the London Marathon, including SSgt Harley Smith (REME), who set a new world record for the fastest marathon wearing a pair of Crocs, in 2hr 47min 42sec, and Chaplain General Rev Michael Parker, who finished in 4hr 7min.

Read more on the army athletes’ results in June’s *SoldierSport*.



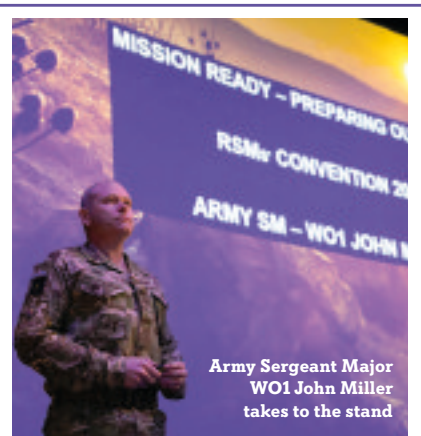
SPLASH OF COLOUR

THE Sikh festival Hola Mohalla was marked by defence personnel at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

A range of activities, contests and demos took place, culminating in the throwing of coloured powder that has become such a well recognised symbol of the event.



Picture: Chris Sturgess



Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller takes to the stand

BOSSES UNITE

REGIMENTAL sergeant majors from across the service were descending on the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as this issue went to press for their annual summit.

International partnership was the theme of this year’s event, which welcomed colleagues from across defence, Nato and the Five Eyes community – a group of five countries (the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) that work closely together and share intelligence.

The convention helped prepare RSMs for upcoming Nato missions, with briefs given on how Russia fights. It also included lessons from Ukraine and information on new kit and technology.



BIG PIC

A mortar team conducts live firing in Brecon during the latest Exercise Combined Warrior. Turn to page 30 to see who else was on the package.

Picture: Sgt Adam Wakefield, RLC



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diary dates

6

Growth plan

EFFORTS to expand the sport of netball continue with three days of action at the Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre. The run starts with the Inter-Unit Mixed Championships, which will be followed a day later by the Inter-Corps Men's Championships. Trials will then be held for the army men's and mixed teams.

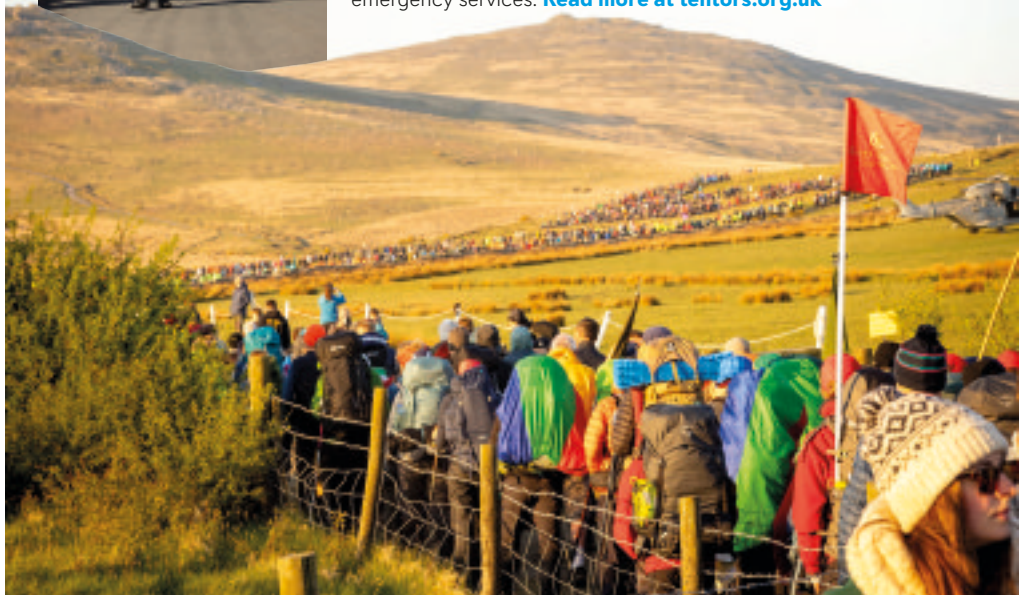


Picture: Graeme Main

8

Ten Tors

A WEEKEND of blister control awaits more than 2,000 teenagers at the annual Ten Tors event on Dartmoor. Starting and finishing at Okehampton Camp, the outdoor challenge sees participants dig deep to cover various routes of up to 55 miles under the supervision of Army Headquarters South West, with support from other forces and emergency services. [Read more at tentors.org.uk](http://tentors.org.uk)



Picture: Army Cadets

14

Mane event

ARMY riders will take centre stage at the Royal Windsor Horse Show, where some 55,000 visitors will see the Musical Drive of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery along with service showjumping action as personnel take on the police force and international military counterparts. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will also showcase its best troopers during the final of the Princess Elizabeth Cup, the annual prize recognising outstanding turnout and horsemanship. Pictured is last year's event. [Buy tickets via rwhs.co.uk](http://rwhs.co.uk)



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

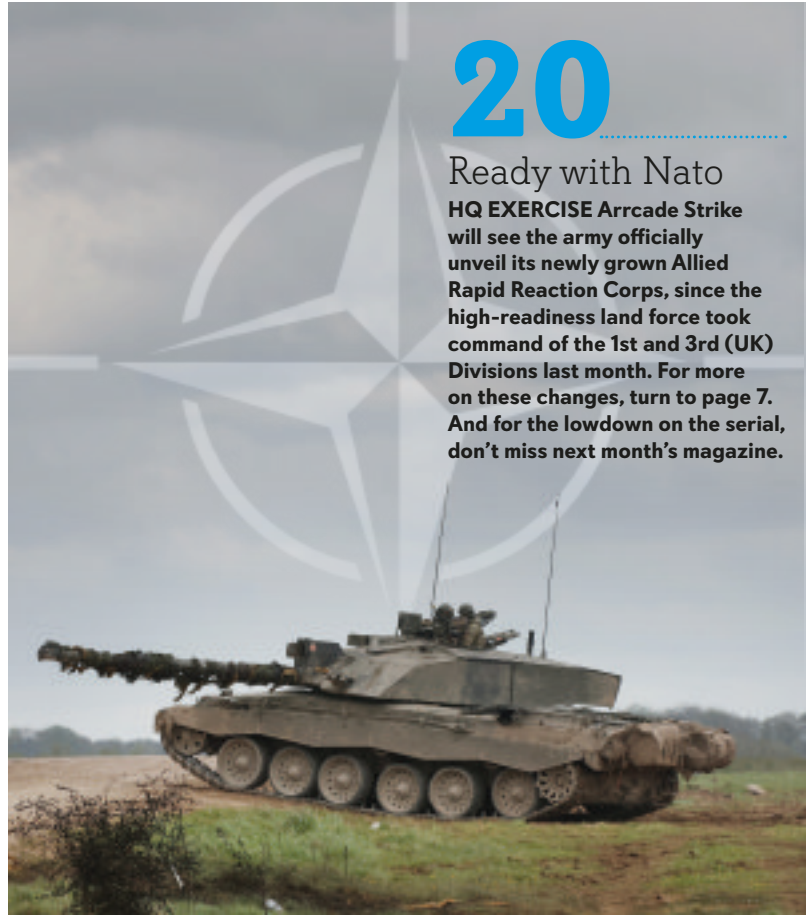


Picture: Andrew Fosker/Alligin Photography

16

Kingsholm calling

THE Inter-Services Rugby Union Championships reach their conclusion at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium as the army men's and women's senior teams lock horns with their Royal Air Force rivals. The matches follow the sides' clashes with the Royal Navy at Twickenham two weeks earlier. See armyrugbyunion.org for ticket details.



20

Ready with Nato

HQ EXERCISE Arrcade Strike will see the army officially unveil its newly grown Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, since the high-readiness land force took command of the 1st and 3rd (UK) Divisions last month. For more on these changes, turn to page 7. And for the lowdown on the serial, don't miss next month's magazine.

Picture: Graeme Main



26

Final flourish

THE showpiece fixture in the service football season, the 124th Army FA Cup final will be staged at the home of Winchester City (1900 kick-off). 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment (pictured) lifted the famous trophy last season, but this year's competing teams were still being decided as this issue went to press.



phys

Q&A

MY WORKOUT

NORDIC skier Capt Si Middleton (RA) recently completed the Arctic Circle race – a three-day, 100-mile trek across Greenland.

After hitting the wilderness with Capt Aled Smith (Ranger) in a field of 196 athletes, the officer revealed how he prepared for the taxing task despite the distinct lack of UK snow...

How often did you train?

I was out five times a week, with a mix of running and cycling and more intense training once a month.

So not much in the way of skiing?

No – obviously there is not much of an opportunity for Nordic skiing in the UK, but going for a run or getting on a bike replicates the discipline and prepares you well on all fronts. I actually hadn't been out on my skis for a few years.

Did you have any setbacks?

Not really – thankfully I didn't pick up any injuries during the build-up. I had a flu bug the week before arriving in Greenland but had recovered by the time we started. I think it is worth pointing out that while preparation is vital, it is very important that you don't overdo it either.

How do you overcome mental barriers when competing?

I think back on times in my military career when things have been tough and how I managed to get through them. In particular, the selection course for 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery was hard – I use that as a

benchmark to help when things get difficult.

How do you prep for a workout when you're not in the mood?

For me it is about keeping your goal in mind, in this case going to Greenland.

What do you wish you'd known about phys as a new recruit?

That it is important to build your base, and that you don't need to go out and hammer yourself in phys. This is definitely something I'd tell myself if I could go back. Sensible training and pushing through any injuries you get is key.

What's been your biggest barrier to better health and fitness?

The fact that life can get so busy with work and everything else.

Tell us about trek mealtimes

There was plenty of protein, pasta and porridge. During the event the Greenlanders were great with laying on natural energy drinks at checkpoints.

Any guilty pleasures?

It has to be ice cream.

What about conventional energy drinks?

No, they're not for me – just the natural products we were given during the race.

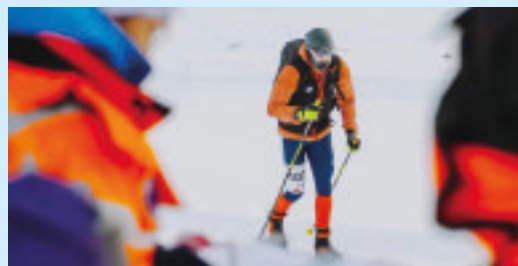
How many hours' sleep do you get a night?

I try to get eight, if I can.



Picture: Graeme Main

Fitness focus: Capt Si Middleton
Cap badge: Royal Artillery
Current unit: HQ Land SOF
Age: 32
Years in: 8
Ops and exercises: Various global activities including cold weather training in Norway
Height: 5ft 10in
Weight: 82kg



FUNDING FOR FITNESS

A TRIAL offering reservists cash towards their gym memberships has been extended until November.

Launched six months ago, the pilot is currently limited to Royal Armoured Corps units while bosses consider factors such as uptake and its impact on soldier conditioning assessment scores.

The funding is worth £100 per year and primarily targets troops who struggle to access military facilities.

Data will be gathered over the summer before a decision is made on a wider roll-out.

The incentive is part of the 'Too Good to Leave' scheme, a package of measures that also includes money towards driving lessons and education to encourage part-time personnel to stay in service.

Picture: Graeme Main



TROOPS CLUB TOGETHER...

MOVES to help troops stay in shape will be bolstered by an initiative to get them hitting their personal goals.

After a successful trial that has been running since 2024, an army-wide pilot of the new Soldier Conditioning Assessment (SCA) Club – which provides PTI expertise to boost health, wellbeing and performance – is now being rolled out.

Regulars and reservists will be able to set and work towards personal targets in a structured programme. Participants fit into one of four categories – bronze, silver, gold and top-tier SCA 100 Club – as an aid to pacing and measuring progress.

Staff behind the scheme, which is voluntary, say the phys is tailored to the gender and circumstances of the individual.

They have urged commanders to throw their weight behind the pilot, which is running until the end of March next year, by looking at resources from the army health policy and resource e-library and seeing how it could be implemented in their unit.

Maj Richard Windard (RAPTC), who has been helping to develop the programme, stressed that the club was being created as a “personal motivational” initiative, which would complement the army’s mandatory phys assessment.

“It does not supersede or replace it,” the Andover-based officer emphasised.

See ABN 020/2026 for more info.

Picture: Graeme Main

ARCTIC ENDURANCE

A FORMER Welsh Guardsman overcame a gruelling test of fitness and grit in aid of Combat Stress.

Terry Fade trekked 62 miles across Norway’s Hardangervidda plateau, wearing snowshoes and dragging a 40kg sled while sleeping on frozen tundra, lakes and mountains.

The six-day effort saw the ex-captain tick off a childhood dream while raising awareness of veterans’ mental health, along with £2,500 for the military charity.

“Taking on one of the subarctic’s most unforgiving environments was physically demanding, but incredibly rewarding,” he said.

“Sudden storms, white-outs that erase all navigation, deep cold and a vast, featureless landscape with no margin for error, took all my strength and judgement.”

The 55-year-old added that his own operational tours, especially to Afghanistan, had put troops’ invisible struggles firmly on his radar and compelled him to act.



career



TRADE CASH BOOST

ROLES IN LINE FOR UPLIFT:

- » Clerk of works (RE)
- » Foreman of signals (R Signals)
- » Yeoman of signals (R Signals)
- » Ammunition technician (RLC)
- » Driver air despatch (RLC)
- » Driver tank transporter op (RLC)
- » Photographer (RLC)
- » Supply chain operator (RLC)
- » Systems analyst (RLC)
- » Armourer (REME)
- » Artificer aviation/land (REME)
- » Metalsmith (REME)
- » Technical support specialist (REME)
- » Management accountant (ACG (SPS))
- » Military personnel admin (ACG (SPS))

For further information read ABN 019/2026

Picture: Duncan Campbell

Tiffies and clerks among those getting higher salaries

SOLDIERS working in several specialist jobs are poised to have more money in their pockets following a top-level evaluation of roles across defence.

Officers in the army remuneration policy team said 15 disciplines ranging from REME artificers to RLC air despatchers, photographers and ACG management accountants would be among those enjoying a salary uplift.

All 128 trades across the armed forces are examined every five years to see whether the

attributes and work demands have changed and if regular and reservist practitioners should be paid more.

The roles are graded into four supplements with the highest attracting most cash. The 15 selected (see panel) have all moved up a level since the last review in 2021.

The reappraisal affects trades from the main pay tables, and not those on bespoke spines, such as pilots and nurses. Roles earmarked for hikes should see an average 2.5 per cent increase, although exactly how much depends on rank and job.

For example, a corporal who is a regular RLC photographer, tank transporter driver or supply chain operator will jump from £40,593 to £41,735.

Meanwhile, sergeants in the same roles will receive an increase of more than four per cent,

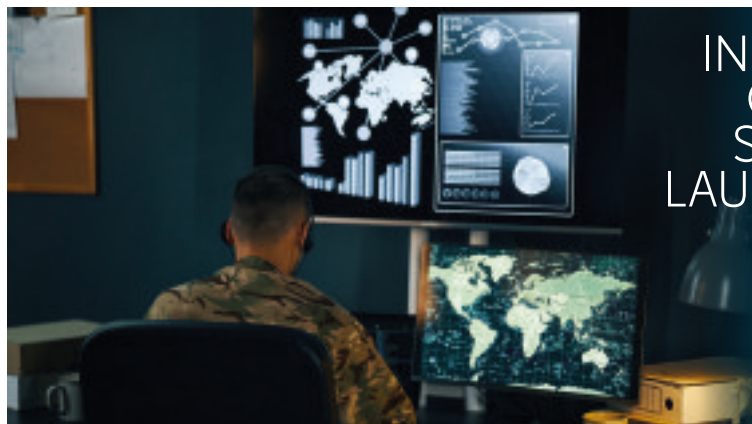
with pay going from £44,787 to £46,630.

Lt Col Thomas McEvoy (ACG (SPS)) said: "We do need to be very clear from the outset that this is not the main pay award – the five-year review affects trades paid from the main pay spines.

"However, there are a large number of people who will have seen their salary go up from the beginning of April 2026, so from an army perspective this is good news.

"Trade supplement placement is informed by job evaluation, which looks at issues such as the knowledge, skills and experience and the judgement and decision-making processes of each role across the armed forces.

"Through that mechanism the army can ensure pay reflects the evolving nature of employment."



INFO OPS CAREER STREAM LAUNCHED

EXCITING opportunities to work on the front line of the information war are set to open up thanks to the creation of a new career pathway for regular personnel.

Bosses at 77 Information Operations Brigade have begun recruiting for more than 120 roles from private to warrant officer level, giving troops the chance to specialise in the discipline long term as the army looks to beef up a capability that has become increasingly central to modern warfare.

An initial tranche of 19 individuals has already been selected and will start learning the fundamentals of the trade in October,

Picture: Shutterstock

Q&A

‘THE BEST THING I HAVE DONE IN THE ARMY’

Why a stint abroad could turbocharge your career

A ROYAL Signals junior NCO is urging troops to seize the chance to head overseas under the army’s exchange programme, Long Look.

LCpl Charlie Brett, who spent four months in Australia attached to 73 Squadron, 7th Signal Regiment as an electronic warfare and signals intelligence operator, said personnel should keep an eye out for details of the next deployment window, set to be published in July.

The 26-year-old told *Soldier* his time in Toowoomba, near Brisbane, had been “one of the most rewarding experiences of my life”, adding soldiers would reap a host of personal and professional gains no matter their rank...

Why did you want to apply?

My family nearly moved to Australia when I was a kid but it fell through, so when the opportunity came down via the chain of command it was a no-brainer.

What was the timeline?

The briefing was in March. I applied for the September intake and stayed out there for four months.

How were you allocated to a unit?

I researched where I wanted to go and fortunately the regiment was happy to have me. I coordinated my own deployability requirements, established comms with the Australian Defence Force and ensured all administrative and operational elements were in place.

How did it develop you?

Apart from first-hand experience of working with a key Five Eyes partner, it pushed me outside my comfort zone and exposed me to new cultures and ways of operating. I gained a wealth of knowledge that I have carried forward into my current job.

What other military taskings did you tick off there?

Visits to 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment and 1st Military Intelligence Battalion, which gave me a wider appreciation of how different capabilities integrate to support operations, as well as a major multinational exercise in Brisbane that also included US troops.

Any highlights, work-wise?

Receiving a United States Brigade Sergeant Major’s Coin was a proud moment.

How about during downtime?

Taking part in a 42-hour endurance event in honour of Australian troops killed or injured in Afghanistan. I also visited iconic locations such as the Gold and Sunshine Coasts and as a massive cricket fan, I managed to get tickets to the Ashes at The Gabba which was a remarkable experience.

What personal lessons did you learn?

Resilience, initiative and accountability. Without doubt, it is the best thing I’ve done in my military career – and life in general. I’ve grown in confidence, built lasting relationships and gained a broader perspective. Experiences like this shape you and I left a more capable, adaptable, well-rounded individual than when I arrived.

Any advice for others?

Be proactive, find out as much information as you can. And ask lots of questions to put yourself in a good position when it comes to your application.



‘It pushed me outside my comfort zone and exposed me to new cultures’



AT A GLANCE

The Long Look programme is open to lance corporals to majors and offers three-month placements in **Australia, New Zealand and Canada**

Visit the Army International Branch’s SharePoint for further information

including open-source intelligence, deception and psyops.

Lt Col Nick Barley (PWRR) from the formation’s headquarters explained the move also reflected polling that found 90 per cent of those serving there would consider staying on.

“There are very few places in the army outside of the special forces and a small number of others where soldiers can have a genuine daily operational impact, but 77 Brigade is one of them,” he said.

“That is why we need to professionalise information operations. And so to grow and invest in our people, we have created a new

career employment group that is hopefully interesting, attractive and satisfying to individuals in the role.”

Formed in 2014, in part to counter the weaponisation of disinformation by Britain’s adversaries, the brigade now numbers around 1,300 personnel, predominantly reservists with specialist skills.

Cpl Hannah Jones (AGC (RMP)), who came into the organisation three months ago from a background in digital forensics, said the sense of purpose the job offers was a major draw.

“You know that there’s going to be an

outcome from the work you do,” she added.

“It gives you a chance to be creative, but also you’re given responsibility and treated like a grown-up. Every day is different and I enjoy the environment.”

Personnel joining the career stream will continue to wear their own cap badge but will be managed by 77 Brigade.

The application window for tranche two will open in the summer and will see a further 20 soldiers brought into the fold.

For further details read ABN 022/2026.

Terms and conditions of service are also available via Defence Connect.

kit



HELMET HEADACHES OVER?

Better headset match spells less fuff for tank crews on the ground

EXPERTS at the Army Trials Unit have spoken of their satisfaction after their fix for a comms kit issue had a good reception from armoured vehicle pros.

Tech gurus at the Bovington-based outfit combined the brand new Virtus high-cut helmet with the latest Crewguard headsets for a much-improved rig with many benefits – not least removing the old tankie nuisance of having to swap lids when dismounting.

The kit will provide solid comms and hearing protection for troops from 3rd (UK) Division operating Challenger 2, its derivatives and Ajax armoured vehicle variants as next gen personal equipment comes online in the years ahead.

Trials unit stalwart WO1 Steve McCuaig (Scots DG) said the new configuration was produced amid frustrations with the older and ill-matched Crewguard Mark II, which was slower to put on and caused ear cup seal dramas when used with Virtus.

The warrant officer had suggested an over-the-helmet strap system to resolve the issues – creating the blueprint for the Mark III headset now in use.

WO1 McCuaig said this new version allows for easier pairing with the helmet. The combo has been trialled during exercises in the UK and in Sennelager (shown) and the response from personnel overwhelmingly positive.

Older versions of the headset are now being modified to the latest standards. A training programme will accompany the introduction of the new rigs, along with sizing and fitting checks, before they are handed to troops.

He added: “The high-cut helmet and Crewguard Mark III were tested by the Army Trials Unit and The Queen’s Royal Hussars on Challenger 2, Ajax and Ares.

“Feedback was consistently positive with soldiers citing improved comfort, clearer communications and preference over the

legacy system with no safety concerns.”

WO1 McCuaig continued: “This is not just a new configuration – it is intended to give soldiers one joined-up system for protection and communication.

“While interim in nature, the capability delivers a clear improvement for armoured crews now, while remaining compatible with the longer-term vision.

“The intended end state is clear – one helmet and one headset reducing the complexity for personnel today and setting the conditions for the future.”



MEDICS PONDER AI ASSISTANCE

MILITARY techies have been mulling the findings of a trial that could see AI become an established part of medical decision-making.

A study involving the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and US colleagues from the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (Darpa) saw boffins experiment with digital models that 'think' in the same way as people.

They ultimately want to establish whether clinicians would be willing to place their trust in a specially tailored AI system. Working as part of an American-led initiative called In the Moment, the scientists believe the trials could lead to benefits such as using the digitally distilled brain of a seasoned medic at scale across the battlespace.

The special series of sessions with 16 Air Assault Brigade saw personnel undertake desk-based PC simulations that established how individuals responded to mass casualty situations.

The soldiers faced open-ended, hypothetical questions such as whether they would treat a wounded attacker before friendlies and how they would weigh up saving one life against many. They then donned VR headsets to play out similar serials.

But unknown to them, an AI system set to either mirror or diverge from their recorded instincts had taken on the role of lead medic, with troops having to choose whether to accept the recommendations presented to them.

Commanders believe the experiments, conducted at Merville Barracks in Colchester and RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, could have far-reaching advantages.

WO2 Craig Richardson (RAMS), of 16 Medical Regiment, said the findings could influence decision-making models.

"The ability to use AI to augment the skills that our medics already have is integral to moving med into the new digital age," he added.

Jennifer McVay, behavioural scientist at Darpa, said the sessions in the UK had been a useful addition to the study. They aimed to establish whether personnel would be willing to "trust and delegate" to an AI system that had been tailored to replicate the instincts of a medic, she added.



Pictures: Rupert Frere

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

SENIOR soldiers were given a first-hand opportunity to experience techcraft in action as they dropped in on one of the firms behind the army's dismantled data system.

Bosses at Bristol-based contractor Rowden said the event – part of a professional development programme linked to Nato's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps – saw troops discuss a raft of topics with its engineers in a move to get them more closely involved in shaping new equipment in the digital battlespace.

They also had the opportunity to get hands-on with cutting-edge kit as part of the initiative, which aims to bolster NCOs' professional networks and strengthen partnerships with industry.



Picture: Rowan Griffiths

veterans

NOT JUST HORISING AROUND

The unusual healing programme that freed one ex-soldier from fear

AN INJURED veteran says former and serving military personnel could benefit from equine assisted therapy, after a charity helped to turn his life around.

Speaking at a demo by mental health support outfit Warrior Equine, Al Strudwick (ex-Int Corps) explained how seven years ago he was diagnosed with late-onset PTSD stemming back to tours of the Balkans in the 1990s.

Shortly afterwards, in a further devastating blow, he contracted sepsis and had both legs amputated above the knee.

Understandably at a very low ebb, he admitted he was sceptical when he was made aware of the organisation's work. However, the sessions had a profound impact from the start.

"I distrusted horses – I distrusted social situations," the ex-sergeant (pictured far right) explained.

"I thought I would end up on the floor being trampled, but I took to it straight away and my fears just dissipated, I felt totally focused.

"I didn't understand how it worked, but I blubbed my eyes out that first time. Horses are just amazing creatures.

"It brought back my self-confidence and ability to be spontaneous again."

By teaching students to tune into

and mirror the animals' energy, equine therapy aims to boost emotional regulation and communication skills.

Army units – including the Welsh Guards – have also tapped into the charity, staging two courses per year for troops struggling with poor mental health.

Welfare officer Capt Dean Hughes (below) admitted he had doubted whether operationally minded soldiers would get much out of "stroking horses".

"Then I witnessed what it actually does – the way that the horse reacts to the soldier, and vice versa," he went on.

"It breaks down the barriers between animal and human, which then allows them to understand

how to break down those barriers between themselves and other humans.

"I think every single person we've put through the course has got something out of it.

"For some of them, I would say it changed their lives."

Officially established back in 2019, Warrior Equine works with all branches of the armed forces as well as the emergency services.

It is also the charity partner of this year's Windsor Horse Show, which runs from May 14 to 17.

For more information on the organisation visit warriorequine.co.uk



Pictures: Beth Proddger

SUPPORT CENTRES ANNOUNCED

THE first tranche of UK-wide centres in the government's Valour initiative for ex-service personnel has gone live.

The 14 recognised outlets include Veterans Outreach Support and Royal Veterans Enterprise in South

East England, SSAFA in Scotland, Brooke House in Northern Ireland and Bulldogs Boxing and Community Activities in Wales.

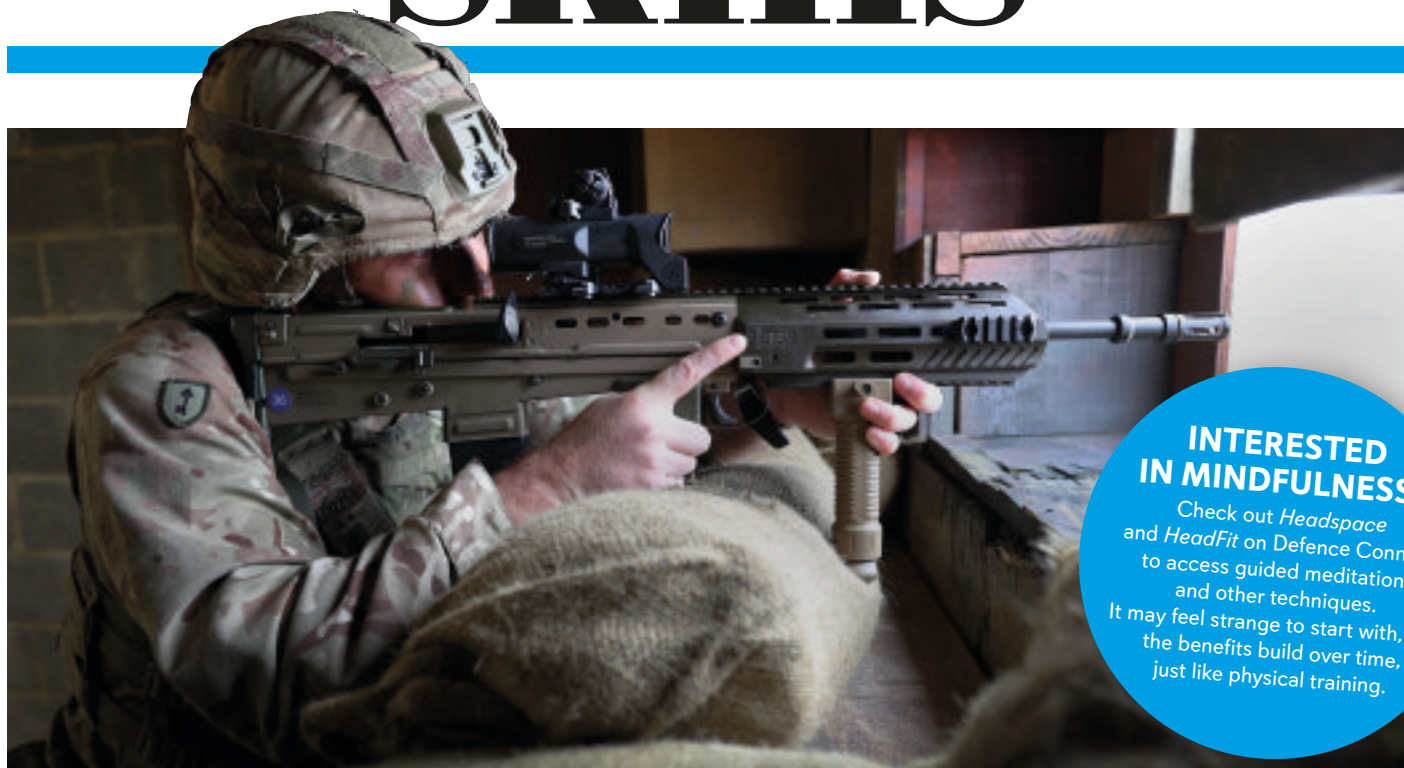
Other organisations will be able to apply soon. All will act as a single point of contact on issues such as health,

housing and employment.

The wider Valour programme – which aims to promote closer links between military charities, local authorities and service providers – will also include an online platform and specialist field officers.



skills

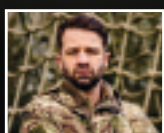


INTERESTED IN MINDFULNESS?

Check out *Headspace* and *HeadFit* on Defence Connect to access guided meditations and other techniques. It may feel strange to start with, but the benefits build over time, just like physical training.

TRAIN HARD, BREATHE EASY

How mastering mindfulness could help with marksmanship and more



He has completed an MSc in human performance optimisation – now **SSgt George Parsons (RAPTC)** reveals his findings on mindfulness and the brilliant brain boost it can bring

“IN ENVIRONMENTS that demand high performance, split-second decisions can be the difference between success and failure. Whether it’s sport, phys, adventurous training or combat, individuals and teams operating under intense pressure must stay switched on.

If you’d asked me a few years ago about processes such as breathing techniques, I would have assumed they were reserved for people wearing yoga pants and burning incense sticks.

But after researching mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and experiencing the benefits, I now see their value and importance. There is hard evidence, too, to suggest they are among the most effective ways to boost troops’ psychological performance.

In the same way as top-flight sports pros,

soldiers often practise mental skills without even realising it.

England rugby fly half Jonny Wilkinson once said: ‘If you have realistically imagined situations, you feel better prepared and less fearful of the unexpected’. And swimmer Michael Phelps repeated short technical phrases like ‘long and smooth’ or ‘hit the turn’ to centre himself before big races.

As soldiers, we might imagine keeping up with the squad or tackle the cargo net on the obstacle course by telling ourselves to grip the rope and not look down because heights aren’t our strong point.

While the army is effective at exposing personnel to uncomfortable scenarios, often referred to as stress inoculation training, other methods are neglected.

As the need for psychological resilience and sharper cognitive performance has

grown, so has the interest in mindfulness based training.

Originally developed for clinical settings, these approaches have evolved into models adapted for elite sport and the military, showing positive effects on focus, recovery, and mental readiness.

Growing evidence suggests that even breathing practices of under five minutes can enhance performance in top-tier athletes. In military settings, MBIs have demonstrated improvements in marksmanship and speed plus increased pass rates on demanding courses.

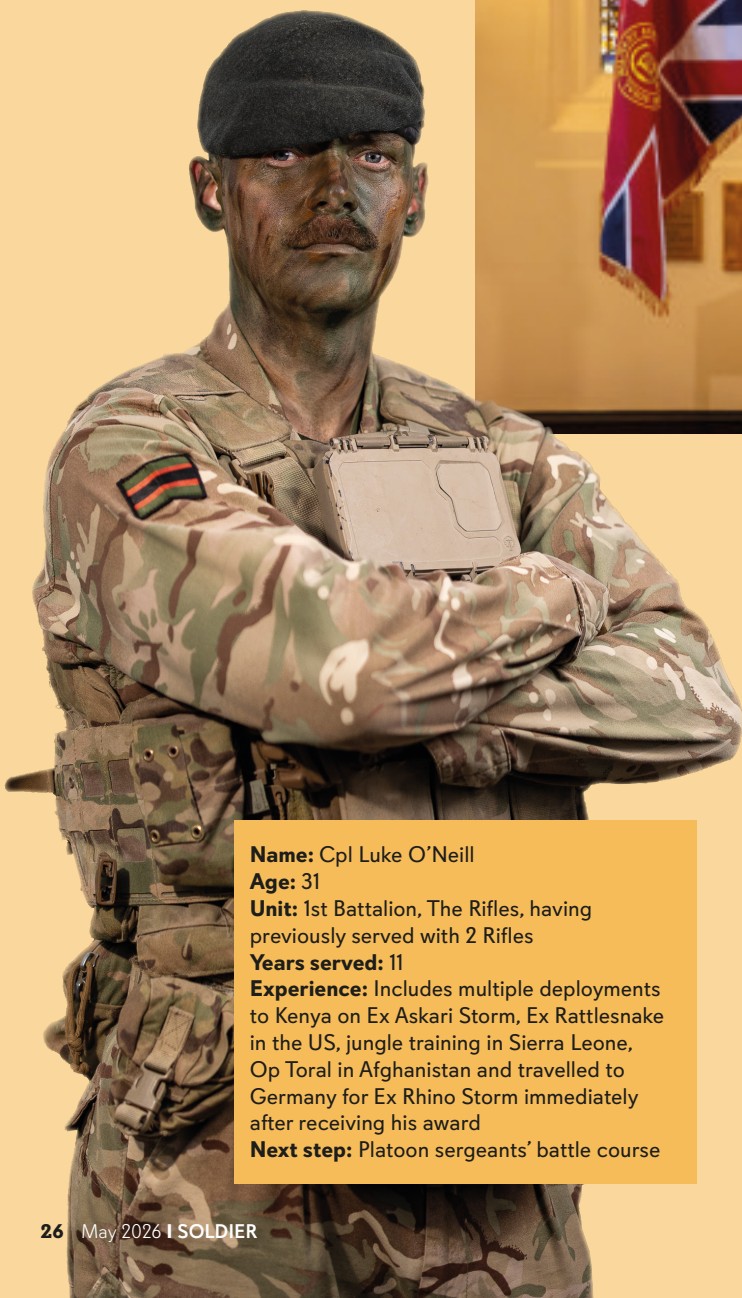
Research consistently indicates that these drills strengthen cognitive control and stress resilience, making them highly effective tools for anyone operating under pressure.

Traditional techniques such as guided meditation, visualisation, self talk, and goal setting are excellent options, while box breathing and body scanning are also brilliant for reducing adrenaline.

It may feel unnatural at first, but making mindfulness a daily habit can unlock some big psychological performance gains.”

AND THE WINNER IS...

Army announces first recipient of the Fitzgibbon Award



Name: Cpl Luke O'Neill
Age: 31
Unit: 1st Battalion, The Rifles, having previously served with 2 Rifles
Years served: 11
Experience: Includes multiple deployments to Kenya on Ex Askari Storm, Ex Rattlesnake in the US, jungle training in Sierra Leone, Op Toral in Afghanistan and travelled to Germany for Ex Rhino Storm immediately after receiving his award
Next step: Platoon sergeants' battle course

THE inaugural search to find the best soldier or junior NCO in the British Army has concluded, with Cpl Luke O'Neill receiving the very first Fitzgibbon Award.

The 31-year-old, who serves with Chepstow-based 1st Battalion, The Rifles, was selected from a raft of exemplary candidates who had all met the accolade's wide-ranging criteria relating to professional excellence.

A driving force in establishing a drone capability within B Company, his citation highlighted how he immediately hit the ground running as a section commander following a posting at the Soldier Academy North (Catterick).

As well as excelling in the field, Cpl O'Neill was praised for his efforts in calling out inappropriate behaviour and prioritising the welfare of his fellow personnel.

After recognising that several riflemen would be spending Christmas Day alone on camp, he took it upon himself to book a venue, apply for funding and organise entertainment, drinks and food for a celebration.

He then patrolled the barracks on Christmas morning, while his family waited at home, to encourage others to join him, resulting in 20 personnel coming together, forming all-important bonds.

But collective support was not his only focus and after seeing a young soldier struggling to adapt to the demands of army life, he invested time in getting to know the individual and then spent evenings and weekends integrating them into the team.

The Fitzgibbon Award is named after the army's youngest ever Victoria Cross winner, 15-year-old Andrew Fitzgibbon, who received >>



Cpl Luke O'Neill, Rifles

Previous page **Collecting his watch from Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker**
Right **Green skills and techcraft helped Cpl Luke O'Neill to win** Below **With wife Kathleen and brother Rfn Joe O'Neill at the presentation ceremony**

» the accolade for his actions in the Second Opium War in 1860.

Cpl O'Neill was presented with an exclusive, custom-made watch by Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, during the Meritorious Service Medal presentation at Sandhurst last month. He invited wife Kathleen and younger brother Rfn Joe O'Neill, who serves in 3 Rifles, to accompany him on the day.

But initial news of the success came as a total shock for the soldier, who was unaware of his nomination and the honour itself until Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller called him up out of the blue to say he was the winner.

"I was watching *Paw Patrol* on television with my daughter, who was climbing all over me at the time," Cpl O'Neill told *Soldier* as he reflected on the call.

"I just remember thinking, 'what is going on?'

"I didn't know anything about the award, and he had to explain what it was.

"I was gobsmacked – it was a lot of information to take in. Initially, I thought it was a wind-up and I later spoke to my platoon commander to make sure it was for real.

"I then started looking into Andrew Fitzgibbon and it is an absolute honour to have my name associated with his.

"The commanding officer announced it to the battalion before CO's PT, and it has gone down really well; my peers have been so supportive.

"Now I know more about it I think it is a great award, which is there to acknowledge the junior ranks and recognise their achievements.

"That is why I was keen to bring my brother to the ceremony; this shows what you can achieve with a career in the army."

Cpl O'Neill was nominated by B Coy's OC Maj Alex Aitken, who said he was a fantastic example of the junior NCO that makes the British Army one of the best in the world.

He added: "Driven, selfless, humble and intelligent, he leads his riflemen through a powerful blend of example and compassion.

"He demonstrates all the qualities of a modern soldier: relentlessly high standards, professional excellence and able to merge fieldcraft excellence with emerging techcraft skills to increase lethality.

"From devising, training and leading our drone section to organising a Christmas Day function for single soldiers unprompted, he is pivotal to B Coy's success and we're very proud of Cpl O'Neill being recognised for his efforts at such a high level." <<

'It is an absolute honour to have my name associated with his'





VIEW FROM ABOVE...

THE brainchild of Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller, the Fitzgibbon Award attracted high-calibre entries from across the army.

But having deliberated on the candidates, it was Cpl Luke O'Neill (Rifles) that ticked all the boxes for the service's senior soldier.

"It was his selfless commitment at Christmas, techcraft and pursuit of excellence in making both himself and his team better that really stood out," WO1 Miller told *Soldier*.

"He is very knowledgeable, and you can see he is a leader.

"When I called to say he was the winner I could tell he didn't believe it was me. The first thing I said was 'you're not in any trouble' and we then spoke about the award and why I chose him. It was quite humbling; he was shocked, and that is part of the beauty of it.

"I brought this into the army as I saw a gap in soldier recognition. We are very good at rewarding officers and senior NCOs but there was nothing at the other end.

"One of the brilliant parts of this job is that I get to do things like this – it is a great feeling, and I just wish I could have seen his face during that call."

WO1 Miller said all nominees had more than met the bar in terms of professional excellence and while there was only one overall winner, other candidates would receive formal recognition.

Indeed, one soldier has since been signposted for a separate accolade, meaning the award is much bigger than a single individual.

"I knew we had lots of talent," WO1 Miller continued. "I have seen every part of the army and the extraordinary work our people do – that is why I wanted to introduce this.

"The winner could have come from any of the top five – there were two in particular that were very good – but Cpl O'Neill just edged it. We have fantastic personnel who will do great things in the future.

"Hopefully, this will encourage senior officers to focus more on what their soldiers and junior NCOs are doing."





FLASH TO BANG

The army's newest cap badge continues its rapid trajectory along training pathway >>



Previous page **An L118 light gun crewman from the King's Gurkha Artillery loads a 105mm round during Exercise Combined Warrior; A detachment conducts a sniping mission**

» **T**HE cloud hangs low over the South Wales hills as the crump of an L118 light gun reverberates through the damp air, sending a nearby flock of sheep scattering in panic.

Some eight seconds pass before a puff of black earth on the ridge ahead marks the impact of the 105mm munition – a dull thump following moments later as the soundwave catches up.

Shouted instructions ring out while the crew ready themselves to fire again, unleashing a total of eight rounds onto the enemy's position in quick succession.

Then, having hurriedly hooked the weapon up to a waiting Pinzgauer, the troops bug out, lest they become targets in turn, and peace descends on the scene once more.

Safely away, detachment commander Sgt Umesh Limbu (pictured below) pauses to recap the drill for *Soldier's* benefit – and while the casual observer would have noticed nothing amiss, it appears things didn't go entirely to plan.

"We were using the gun in a sniping role, where we fire from a covert location given to us by the fire support team," the 34-year-old NCO explains.

"The FST observed the enemy, gave me their position, the bearing and the distance and I briefed the boys.

"The first shot was on target but because we were on hardstanding, the gun moved a lot and the second round was way off.

"So we reduced the range until we hit the target again. This was my second time doing direct fire – the first time was on soft ground, where the plate beds-in more to control the recoil – so it was quite difficult to do the corrections.

"But it's part of learning and the lesson for next time is to choose softer ground if possible."

It might be a fairly routine day on Sennybridge Training Area, however the troops involved are making history because ten months ago they signed up to become the first members of the brand-new King's Gurkha Artillery (KGA).

Created to bolster the army's close support gunnery capability amid the drive to increase fighting power – as well as to ease workforce shortages – the move will see some 400 Nepalese personnel welcomed into the fold by 2030.

And Sgt Limbu and his colleagues are at the vanguard of the effort, having undergone an accelerated training pipeline designed to rapidly upskill them in a completely new trade.

Their latest Brecon outing, under Exercise Combined Warrior, is the third time they have deployed to Wales for the large-scale package since last August, either side of various specialist courses at the Royal School of Artillery.

But the relentless pace reflects the challenge of recruiting a whole rank structure at once, rather than allowing experience to accrue naturally over time, with those transferring in at the senior soldier level needing to intimately understand the roles of their subordinates as well as their own.

For KGA boss Lt Col Michael Fletcher (RA) though, the process has been made significantly easier thanks to the Gurkha troops' dedication to duty.

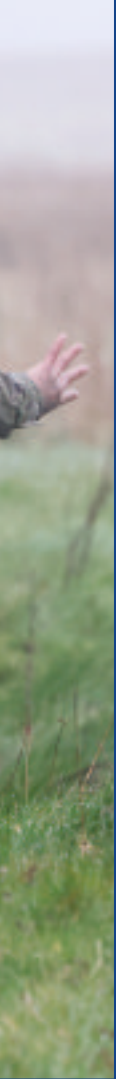
"The soldiers are so brilliant – their skill, their passion to be excellent in everything they do has made it genuinely gratifying," says the officer, who also commands 14 Regiment, Royal Artillery.

"They take things really seriously, are highly professional, and on lots of occasions have come out of courses as top students over their British artillery compatriots. »



Above **A soldier reacts to an enemy counter-attack on Cilieni Village**
Right **Troops practise modified indirect fire drills** Below **A casualty is extracted after the command post comes under fire**







Above **Gunners repel an attack by the opfor on Cilieni Village**
Right **Troops keep a watchful eye on enemy movements**
Below **Gun detachments conduct a defensive fire mission to hold their position**



» “And you can see how well they are coming together as gun detachments.

“Aside from the individual skills, teamwork is fundamental in the Royal Artillery and exercises like this really deliver that.”

Involving around 1,000 personnel in total and bringing together the full spectrum of warfighting capabilities, Combined Warrior is an ideal proving ground for the rookie gunners.

As well as the sniping mission, they were put through their paces in a variety of high-pressure scenarios in open and urban terrain, which tested not only their ability to lay down accurate direct and indirect fire in different environments, but also manoeuvrability and survivability.

Featuring a peer-level opfor, the package incorporated the latest lessons from Ukraine too.

According to former Royal Gurkha Rifleman Sgt Bishawaraj Rai, establishing a strong foundation for the fledgling cap badge has been front and centre throughout.

“We came with a positive mindset and are doing our best to build a baseline so that the KGA will be effective in future,” he says.

“I did 14 years in 2 RGR and when I heard the new regiment was being formed I thought my experience would be helpful and I was excited to explore a new role.

“Gunnery is different to my previous job – it’s quite complicated, but we have taken it steady, with good instructors who have guided us from zero to hero.”

Along with former infantrymen, personnel from across the Brigade of Gurkhas are represented in the new structure, including loggies, signallers and engineers.

This month, the first tranche of transferees, among them Sgt Rai, will officially become part of 34 Battery, 14 Regiment RA – the corps’ lead training unit – while others will join E Battery, 1 Regiment RHA.

Meanwhile, by 2030, sub-units within 7 Para RHA, 19 Regt RA and finally 4 Regt RA will also redesignate to the cap badge.

And much like the other arms within the brigade, the Gurkha troops will serve under a predominantly British officer cohort.

Lt Chloe Cowan, the first officer to commission directly into the KGA, finished her trade training in August and headed straight to Nepal for a “bucket list” cultural immersion course.

“It was pretty incredible to be able to go out and experience the country and learn the language,” says the 26-year-old (pictured left) of the three-month visit.

“You get to a confident conversational level and the main thing is that the boys see you are making an effort to speak with them and understand the places they have come from.

“They have spent 18 years of their lives in a completely different culture to the UK and it’s really important for us to be aware of their background.”

Commanding the ‘gurujiharu’ and ‘bhaiharu’ – as experienced troops and juniors respectively are known within the brigade – will moreover give her the opportunity to lead “the best soldiers in the army”, Lt Cowan believes.

If energy alone is any measure of future success, the King’s Gurkha Artillery is off to a strong start.

From the brief time that *Soldier* has spent with its troops, it’s clear they are taking their contribution to fighting power as seriously as they do their role in continuing the historic tradition of Nepalese service.

With one intake reaching the end of their training pipeline and the next lined up to start the journey, a palpable sense of momentum is building.

It may still be in its infancy, but the army’s youngest cap badge is already forging an identity grounded in professionalism, pride and purpose – and if it continues along its early trajectory, its impact looks set to be significant. ◀





FULL CIRCLE

Part-time paratroopers put historical spin on training after returning to Falklands duties, ten years on



IT'S NOT every day soldiers get to hone their skills on a genuine battlefield – with those who fought there decades earlier on hand to share their experiences.

But it was an opportunity that members of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment seized with both hands as they merged modern training with military history during their recent stint as the Falkland Islands Roulement Infantry Company (RIC).

Keen to step things up a notch while conducting Exercise Cape Upholder – a routine fixture of the three-month tour – unit bosses arranged for veterans of the 1982 war in the South Atlantic to brief troops on their memories of the campaign at key locations.

And in a further dose of realism, the part-time personnel inserted by helicopter and boat, before retracing the route their forebears famously tabbed, from Port San Carlos to Mount Longdon and Wireless Ridge then on to Stanley, after which a company-level live-fire package brought proceedings to a close.

Lt Peter Fadian said the outing had been a once-in-a-lifetime chance for troops to “soak up” their regimental history.

“It filled us with a lot of respect for what they did back then, with basically no notice,” he went on.

“You really appreciate the ground, the distance and the weight they carried – and the requirement to be fit. That’s what the veterans said to us – fitness is what gets you through mammoth tasks like that.

“It’s one thing reading about it in books, but walking the ground and having the people actually there sharing their experience – it makes everything you’re taught about tactics come to life.”

After covering around 80 miles across East Falkland, troops staged an attack on a mock enemy position on Onion Range – incorporating support weapons such as mortars and the heavy machine gun and teaming up with colleagues from the Falkland Islands Defence Force.

With members of 4 Para held at five days’ notice to move under the Very High Readiness Reserve, the serial saw some 90 troops signed off for potential rapid deployment.

Pte Ben Buxton (left), a London policeman in his day job, said the company-level live drills had been a highlight of the package.

“I’d love to do live attacks every week but it’s not possible,” he added. “People definitely concentrate a bit more on the



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ESPORTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES



IN NUMBERS

80

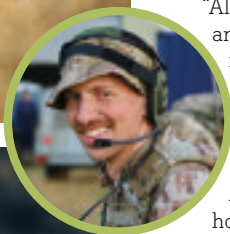
miles tabbed by 4 Para during Exercise Cape Upholder

130

troops deployed as part of the Roulement Infantry Company

3

months in country before handing over to colleagues from 5th Battalion, The Rifles



» marksmanship principles as opposed to with blanks, because you can actually see the effect of the rounds.

"I was on the sharpshooter, which is an excellent bit of kit, so I needed to be in a good position to hit the target as well as using suppressing fire.

"You feel a bit more switched on and it brings out the best skills for the job you're training for."

For 4 Para, the assignment – which wrapped up shortly before this issue went to press – marked a return to the Falklands after an absence of ten years, having last mobilised as the RIC in 2016.

Among those to make the journey last time around was Dan Conn (below) – then a private, now a corporal – who said that while the routine requirements of the tasking hadn't changed much, this visit had offered the chance to venture to Ascension Island and South Georgia.

"In Ascension we patrolled to various points of the island to collect intelligence, spoke to the American contractors who worked there and helped their conservation team with a few little jobs," explained the 29-year-old.

"All of the beaches are covered with turtle nests and we went and saw them at night with our thermal sights, which was really interesting.

"I think people in the UK have the perception that no one lives in the Falklands and all you do as the RIC is stag on, but that's not the case at all.

"There's a lot to see with different wildlife and the battlefields. And even doing the quick reaction force gives you an insight into how an ops room runs on tour."

Reflecting on the evolution of military training in the past decade, Cpl Conn said the package had kept pace with the rapidly evolving face of warfare, but in many respects remained timeless.

"In terms of what has changed, we now have a UAS detachment, with reconnaissance and first-person view drones," he continued.

"Other than that, we are still doing platoon attacks and live firing because as infantrymen, we're still practising those core skills that a soldier in 1982 would recognise."

Now back on home soil – and standing by to defend UK interests in an increasingly volatile global context – 4 Para have sharpened their edge, while continuing the legacy of those who answered the call 40-plus years ago.

For this generation of paratroopers, their time down south served as a reminder that the responsibility to be 'ready for anything' rests firmly with them. «

Number-crunching the UK's biggest military parachute jump for more than a decade

SALISBURY SCATTER

IT'S a fast and flexible way to move troops into battle, and a recent stint on Salisbury Plain put the Joint Airborne Task Force – a capability formed by 16 Air Assault Brigade and the Royal Air Force's Air Mobility Force – to the test. Here are the headline stats from the manoeuvres...

81mm

Mortars the soldiers were armed with, as well as Javelin anti-tank missiles



Royal Air Force A400M transport aircraft used

1100ft



10 miles

Distance off the drop zone that personnel marched after landing, before digging into defensive positions

11 YEARS

Time since a similarly sized UK drop took place, when 200 soldiers jumped from four C-130 Hercules. The platform has since been retired



Altitude the paratroopers descended from

Parachute Regiment unit that the force was built around

3rd Battalion





Troops from Colchester-based 16 Air Assault Brigade involved

“We enjoy a close relationship with the Royal Air Force and this jump is a powerful demonstration of our joint capabilities, which we continue to develop. The RAF’s transport aircraft and support helicopters are vital to the air manoeuvre capability that defines the brigade’s role as defence’s global response force.”

Brig Ed Cartwright, Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade



Distance in miles from RAF Brize Norton - home of the Air Mobility Force - to Salisbury Plain Training Area, where the drop took place

24 TONNES

The equipment and supplies
dropped by a fourth A400M
– items needed to sustain and
arm personnel in the field

30

40

50

Salisbury Plain



FRESH LEGS



Soldier meets the latest crop of Royal Gibraltar Regiment recruits – and they're anything but conventional »»

Previous page **Infanteers take flight across open ground on Lydd Training Area** [Top](#)
Barbarians hone room clearance drills
Below **A soldier takes a defensive posture during the package** [Right](#) **Personnel deal with a mock casualty**

» **T**UCKED away on Europe's southern tip, almost 2,000 miles from the UK mainland, The Royal Gibraltar Regiment is perhaps not always the first cap badge that springs to mind for aspiring infanteers – out of sight, out of mind, perhaps.

But those who overlook it might well be missing a trick, and not just on account of the Mediterranean weather.

Having defended the outpost known as The Rock since 1939, the unit's primary remit remains ensuring the territory's security, including providing force protection to any visiting Royal Navy ships. Beyond that, its personnel can also expect regular deployments on the likes of Op Cabrit in Estonia, as well as stints on short-term training teams elsewhere in the world.

It's a breadth of responsibility that makes any chance to sharpen basic soldiering skills invaluable – a point brought home during *Soldier's* recent visit to Exercise Jebel Tarik.

This year's package saw regulars and reservists (the regiment maintains a company-strength part-time element) converge on Lydd ranges in Kent for six weeks of intensive live firing and dry drills.

Maj Elvis Pearce said the annual outing was a cornerstone of the formation's training calendar, allowing experienced hands and new recruits alike to practise marksmanship on weapons including the SA80 and general-purpose machine gun, as well as to hone infantry tactics up to company level.

"It's critical to our mission because it qualifies us for our routine operational commitments within Gibraltar and wider UK defence," he said.





“A lot of what we do is in support of local and visiting capabilities, for example Royal Navy frigates, submarines, aircraft carriers or other Nato vessels that come through the strait.

“The secondary benefit is that the exercise provides the minimum training requirements for soldiers deploying on operations attached to other units. Last year we had about 30 people serving on Ops Cabrit and Tosca.”

Meanwhile, other defence engagement taskings had taken troops even further afield in recent years, the officer pointed out, with Bahrain, Norway, Iceland, Chile and various African countries among the many destinations ticked off.

Such off-the-beaten-track opportunities were a major draw for Cpl Tom Bunting, who decided to transfer from The Rifles to The Royal Gibraltar Regiment four years ago.

Having been informed, incorrectly, during basic training that he wasn't eligible to join, the 28-year-old eventually submitted the paperwork to complete the move and hasn't looked back since.

“I was told it was only open to Gibraltarians, so I let it go, but my family lives in Portugal so a couple of years later I chased it up,” he explained.

“It has been amazing. Apart from the weather, it's the camaraderie. There is lots of support and encouragement to progress.

“I've deployed more since transferring than I did during five years in The Rifles. We did short-term training teams in The Gambia and Morocco, both of which were really cool experiences. And working with the navy is a bit different to conventional infantry tactics.

“It's a good team here and I feel like I belong. I don't know why people wouldn't want to come.”

Curious to find out more after such a ringing endorsement, we quizzed some of the regiment's newer members about how - and why - they too joined the ranks of the Barbarians... >>

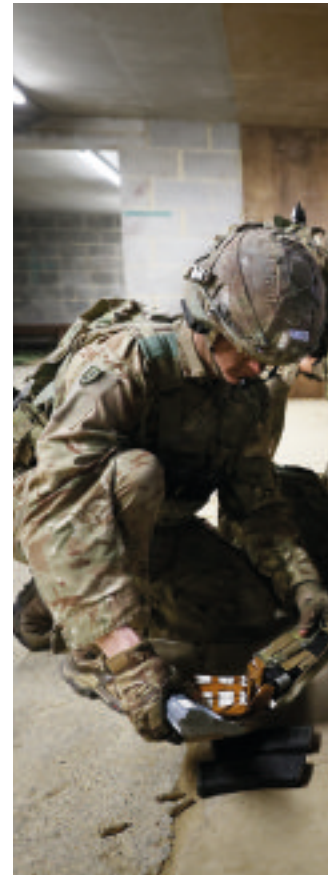


Top **Troops work their way through a building during a complex urban serial**
 Below **A machine gunner sizes up a target**



UNIT PROFILE

The Royal Gibraltar Regiment
Nickname: The Barbarians
Location: Rock of Gibraltar, Southern Europe
Remit: Light role infantry battalion tasked with securing Gibraltar, providing force protection to Royal Navy vessels and support to UK ops worldwide
Composition: An HQ company, two regular rifles companies and a reservist company – approximately 365 personnel at full strength
Who can join: Any British passport holders. You do not need to live in Gibraltar or speak Spanish



PTE ALEJANDRO COSTA

Age: 22 **Joined:** November 2024

What was your route to joining?

I was born in Gibraltar and my father was in the RG. I tried to join at 17 but I slipped a disc during training in Catterick and had to take three years out to recover. I'm back to full fitness now, though, and doing well. I look around at other regiments and I can't see myself anywhere else.

What's been the highlight so far?

Halfway through last year's Exercise Jebel Tarik I was told there was an opportunity to deploy on Op Cabrit, so I left for Estonia straight away and was attached to 1 Mercian for six months. It was very interesting because we are light



role and they are armoured. I got a lot of experience and enjoyed it. I'd definitely deploy again if the chance came up.

What do you think the main misconceptions are around the RG?

That you need to speak Spanish. Everyone is British and we operate in English. We only speak Spanish on our own time.

Would you encourage others to join?

Definitely. It's a really good place location-wise, but we also get lots of opportunities to deploy with other regiments. We specialise in tunnel warfare too, which lots of other units will never experience.

Pte Costa speaks fluent Spanish, thanks to a family with British, Spanish, French and Portuguese heritage.

FACT

PTE RIO WILSON

Age: 18 **Joined:** January 2026

Tell us how you came to join the RG.

I live in Spain, ten minutes from Gibraltar and since I was young I'd always been into sports, so the army seemed a good option because it gives you lots of goals – I never wanted a desk job. I found out I would have to go to England for training – but having grown up in Spain I'd never been there before. I talked it through with my family and they thought it would be good for me, so I went to Harrogate for 11 months.

That must have been tough...

It was at times. I had no family in the UK and I missed home – the culture, the food, the weather, everything was a big change for me. But I made some good friends who got me through it. Now I'm finally in the regiment, I'm really enjoying it.

How have you found your first exercise?

It's given me a really good opportunity to meet people and learn different stuff to become a better soldier. Being a new guy, obviously there's a little bit of pressure to try and make a good impression, but I think that actually helps me push myself a little bit, so it's fine.

Any messages to others thinking of joining?

Don't back off the army because the training looks tough. It's supposed to be hard, otherwise what's the point, but once you're actually in it's very different. It's like a brotherhood and everyone gets on well.



Born and raised in Spain, Pte Wilson had never been to the UK until he started basic training, aged 16.

FACT



PTE HARVEY MICHAEL

Age: 19 Joined: September 2025

How did you come to join?

My family are from South Wales but I grew up in Spain and Gibraltar. I honestly didn't do too well at school, so joining seemed the best thing for me. My dad also convinced me – he's a colour sergeant in the regiment.

How have you found your first big exercise?

It's been good – I'm happy to be out in the field again and shooting is fun, especially the moving targets. Everyone's supportive and I've made a good group of friends here.

What's it like serving with your dad?

It was a bit weird at first, but he works in the recruiting department so I don't see him very often. He was on this exercise for a week at the start so there was a bit of pressure on the shoots while he was here.

Do you see yourself staying on long-term?

Yes, I can't see myself doing anything else. I'm hoping to deploy too.



Pte Michael serves in the regiment alongside his dad, CSgt Craig Payne

FACT

LT MATTHEW LEECH

Age: 31 Joined: September 2024

What brought you to the RG?

It was during Covid. I was in North Carolina doing a marketing job but I just felt like I was scamming people. I wanted something more from my career and started looking into the army. As a Spanish speaker I thought maybe I would be an asset to The Royal Gibraltar Regiment. While I was at Sandhurst I went on a visit and that was the selling point. The location is amazing and the officers were welcoming, but the best part was the soldiers – they're gobby and opinionated and I thought 'I could work with these blokes every day'.

Has it met expectations?

It's actually been better. Being a platoon commander is the best job in the world. In the army you have days that are zero out of ten – like when you're on stag in Brecon, it's 0300 and you're wet through, contemplating everything about your life. But in the

RG I've had days that are ten out of ten, where the weather's beautiful, I wake up with a smile on my face and get to hang out with people I enjoy being with, who are genuinely impressive, motivated individuals. In a regular job, your worst may only be a three out of ten, but your best is also only a seven.

Are there any myths about the RG you think need busting?

A common one is that you need to be from Gibraltar to join. When I was at Sandhurst people said you couldn't commission into the RG, which is completely incorrect. There are lots of silly rumours, which is often because people don't know about us. But we are a light role battalion in the British Army and there's very little difference between us and other units. You go to Sandhurst or to the Infantry Training Centre, you do Brecon and all the same courses to promote.

This officer joined the regiment from America, having moved there at 16 on a lacrosse scholarship

FACT





COMING TO THE **RESCUE**

How niche skills and industrial acumen
can be the most potent of weapons





Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Cpl Rob Travis, RAF

WHEN a dam at the Toddbrook reservoir began to disintegrate and collapse during an unprecedented deluge seven years ago, a regional catastrophe loomed.

Amid a structural failure and building water pressure, 1,500 residents from the Derbyshire community of Whaley Bridge were evacuated from their homes.

It was then that the British Army, on the scene assisting the civilian authorities – turned to a pool of reservist experts, the Engineer and Logistic Staff Corps, for help.

“We knew a construction exec with knowledge in the dam field,” Col Gary Sullivan, the outfit’s then commander who took the phonecall, recalls.

“He was in a board meeting, handed over to his deputy and got into his car.

“The corps also called one of its other members, a geologist – he worked through calculations to find the best aggregate to support the structure, then worked with Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter crews to actually drop it.”

Calmly, and along with a group of regular sappers and other professionals on site, the expert duo helped to keep the dam in one piece, diverting the torrent of water. Then they had a bacon butty, put their suits back on and returned to work.

It was one incident in an impressive back catalogue for this tiny outfit, which is now known simply as the Staff Corps and is arguably one of the British Army’s

best kept secrets.

Made up of civvy captains of industry with a formidable array of expertise between them, it is a top-level example of the skills that reservists bring from their day jobs.

Plugging the military into a LinkedIn-like range of professional networks, from healthcare to construction and transport, their more recent work has included UK projects such as the setting up of the Nightingale hospitals during the Covid crisis, plus taskings in the Caribbean, Middle East and former Yugoslavia.

“There are only around 100 of us in all, and I suppose you could say we live in the shade rather than the shadows,” says Col Sullivan (pictured below), who has charted the history and human story of the outfit in a new book called *To Serve the Future Hour*.

“Unless there is a clear imperative, we would rather avoid the spotlight.

“You cannot volunteer for the corps either – you have to be invited to join, so if you are wanted your call comes with an old-fashioned tap on the shoulder.”

The history of the organisation is certainly a remarkable tale.

Formed during the Crimean War in the 1860s – when a belligerent Russia was fighting the Brits and their allies in what is now modern-day Ukraine – the corps began life as a means of tapping into the specialist knowledge of railway professionals.

It has since gone through various incarnations, while the disciplines on its books have changed with the times. But diversity has always been its strength >>



‘I suppose you could say we live in the shade rather than the shadows’

Main pictures **Troops and air crews work at the Toddbrook Dam scene, co-ordinated by Staff Corps experts** Below **The volunteers played a key behind-the-scenes role throughout the Covid crisis**



Pictures: Cpl Mark Lerner, Cpl Nathan Tanuku and Cpl Rob Kane, all RLC; Andrew Parsons; Mark Owens

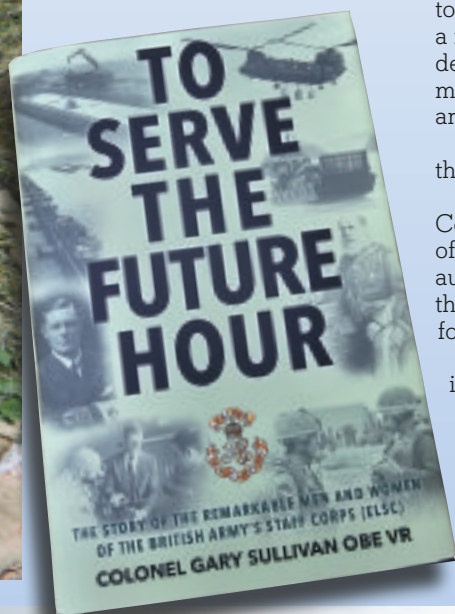
IN NUMBERS
The Staff Corps

1865

Date it was formed in the Victorian era

100

Officers on the books today



» and if the available experts are unable to assist, it is more than likely that they will know someone who can.

“Everyone with us comes with a black book of people they have met,” says Col Sullivan, who continues to serve after four years in command and is boss of civvy construction, logistics and security firm Wilson James.

“Built up over many decades, our people have their own powerful connections – these large professional networks are an asset in themselves.

“If you’re asked to join the corps, you will be vetted for a security clearance and receive an appropriate rank, so to speak. Most are majors or lieutenant colonels, which is important as you will likely operate at three-star level.”

With many of the experts well into their 50s, the stringent physical requirements usually required for service are waived as a balance to their professional abilities. They are required to self-certify their health, although a medical is essential for overseas deployment. And while all forego military pay, they are entitled to wear army uniform.

But given the hierarchical structure of the service, do they find it easy to fit in?

“I’ve only once had an issue,” recalls Col Sullivan. “I had to tell a senior officer, who questioned the rank authority of one of the volunteers, that the person concerned was responsible for thousands of people in his day job.”

It might have been an isolated incident, but it shows that the chain-of-command model can potentially be at odds with civvy street thinking.

Yet the Staff Corps pathway does present a compelling argument for greater cooperation between the two sectors, one made by Field Marshal Lord Haig before the First

World War. He said a conflict in the mechanised age would require “the resources of a whole nation to bring it to a successful end”.

Pools of specialists to call upon if needed are certainly a template that has become more prevalent in defence and the wider security sector in recent years.

Col Sullivan points to the UK Strategic Command’s Cyber Advisory Team, formed in 2017, which uses volunteers from digital domains brought together under the Royal Signals badge, as an example of a growth business.

Elsewhere, law enforcement organisations including the National Crime Agency have adopted similar schemes with a register of ‘specials’ to counter the sophisticated workings of cyber criminals and perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation.

Far from using volunteers to bolster boots on the ground, these initiatives turn the traditional reserve model on its head, geared towards cohorts that are numerically fewer but with niche skills to surge when required.

Despite the changing picture over a century-and-a-half, however, Col Sullivan is convinced the personality templates remain broadly similar.

“I remember getting my own tap on the shoulder in 2009, unexpectedly, after meeting somebody at a social event,” he adds. “Since then I have seen others face the question and I’d say that 80 per cent say ‘yes’ – for individuals that don’t, it is usually because something doesn’t align at a particular time.

“Those who agree to come forward are committed,” the officer concludes. “They are resolute, humble and determined to play their part in supporting the personnel fixing bayonets and facing the enemy on the front line.” <<





A TROJAN combat engineering platform does its thing during a demo at the army's Armoured Expo on Salisbury Plain last month. Speaking there, GOC 3rd (UK) Division Maj Gen Olly Brown told visitors armoured forces would “underwrite the success of any major tactical action” in future battles.

Picture: Graeme Main



REVIEWS

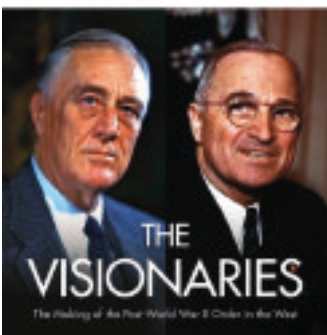
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Franklin D Roosevelt (centre) with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin at the Yalta Conference in 1945

Pictures: IWM

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
JAMES HOLLAND



The Visionaries

James Holland explores how those who fought fascism laid the foundations of a new world order

BOOK

IN A departure from his usual approach of zooming in on key chapters in the Second World War, James Holland's latest offering takes a broader view of the geopolitical and economic factors that paved the way to conflict.

And more specifically, he looks at the leaders who steered the US through the 1930s up to victory in 1945 and beyond.

The titular visionaries are Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his successor Harry S Truman, who

even as the fighting raged, were planning for the peace that would follow, determined not to repeat the mistakes that led the global powers to a second confrontation just two decades after the first.

A cornerstone of their plan was the (then) novel concept of funding the reconstruction of the vanquished as well as the vanquishers, so that the resentments that gave rise to Hitler could not fester again.

Holland strikes a wistful tone as he writes of the early days of Pax Americana – when its statesmen

pledged the nation would be an ongoing force for good, a defender of democracy in the face of the authoritarianism taking root behind the Iron Curtain.

Their foresight, and that of their allies, laid the foundations for bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the UN and Nato.

While he doesn't explicitly put any of today's politicians in the crosshairs, he lays down significant indirect fire simply by setting out their predecessors' achievements, just as the passages on what allowed fascism to flourish – economic hardship, the scapegoating of minorities and despots surrounded by yes men – are heavy with implied reproach.

A small criticism of the book would be that it only briefly



Top **Reconstruction efforts in Berlin** Below **Author James Holland**

addresses the extent to which America profited from its post-war status as 'world police' in terms of its share of global trade and the dominance of the dollar – it wasn't all about altruism.

However, that is a minor point in an otherwise sound text, delivered in Holland's signature stodge-free style, with many an interesting nugget thrown in.

For example, the insights into how the US ramped up its forces from an army of some 180,000 troops in 1939 to a combined total of around 16m across all three services in 1945 – with assembly lines churning out almost 100,000 aircraft in 1944 alone – would no doubt make modern military planners weep.

As the author himself admits,

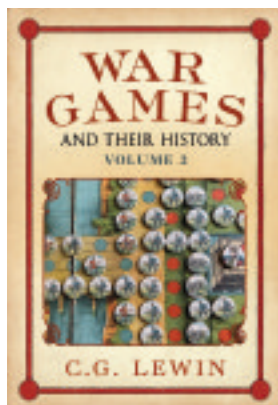


The Visionaries is a precis of events rather than an encyclopaedic retelling – but given the heavy subject matter, so much the better. All told, this is another solid outing that serves up a fresh take on the Second World War and its legacy.



Review: **Becky Clark**, *Soldier*

BOOK



War Games and their History

by *CG Lewin*

COVERING more than 200 different war games, this book tracks the development of the genre from early Imperial China and Roman times through to the modern day, with a focus on the 20th century. It describes the rules and general concepts of the games, some in enough detail that you could play them relatively easily with only this text to go off. While there are sections dedicated to the history of wargaming and some discussion of

strategy and tactics, this is relatively light. And if you are after a general introduction to key concepts, you should look elsewhere – this is one for the purists.



Review: **WO2 Rob Leaper**, *Int Corps*

WIN ZULU DAWN on Blu-ray



THE 1960s and 70s saw two classic war movies about British colonial campaigns in South Africa and battle for supremacy with the indigenous inhabitants.

Following the account of heroics at the Rorke's Drift outpost in *Zulu* the second of the outings –

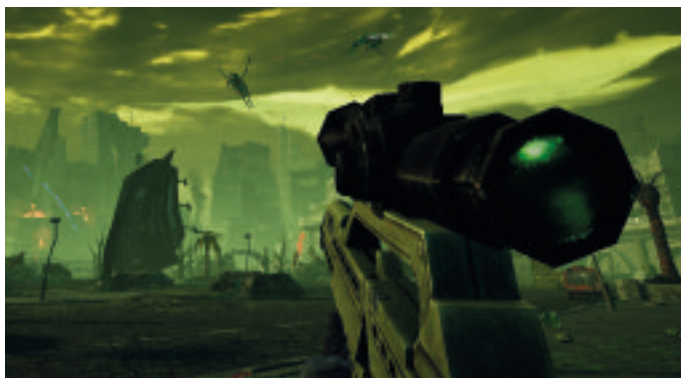
Zulu Dawn – focused on the 1879 defeat of the UK forces at Isandlwana, an encounter that saw 1,500 British soldiers take on 25,000 enraged warriors in a fight that remains one of the army's bleakest moments.

With a stellar cast that includes **Peter O'Toole**, **Simon Ward** and **Burt Lancaster**, the movie has now been given the 4K remaster treatment and is being released on Blu-ray at the end of this month following a cinema preview in Southampton.

The special two- and three-disk sets feature up to six hours of extra material to accompany the retreated film, which also included a cast of 13,000 Zulu extras and is regarded by critics as being among the finest of its genre.

We have two standard edition Blu-ray boxes of the movie to give away. To stand a chance of winning, tell us which British monarch was on the throne at the time of the Zulu Wars. Send your answer to **comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk**. All the usual rules apply. Closing date is May 29.





JOIN THE TEAM

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GAMES

Starship Troopers: Ultimate Bug War

Out now on PC, Switch 2, PS5 and Xbox X/S

PAUL Verhoven's movie adaptation of the classic novel *Starship Troopers* attracted a fair bit of incoming fire when it hit cinema screens 30 years ago.

While the film – about mankind's war with a race of aggressive alien

insects – has since established a cult following, it was then lambasted by reviewers for its simplified take on Robert Heinlein's book, a social commentary on a society in which full citizenship rights are only possible through military service.

But superficiality, as we know, does make for great console blasters. And this is especially true of this *Starship Troopers* squad-based shooter – *Ultimate Bug War*.

Clearly taking its cues from classics of the 1990s such as *Doom*, players fill the boots of troops tasked with clearing out buggy battlespaces, starting with the infamous rocky outcrop of Klendathu, all while armed to the teeth. The overwhelming numbers of an enemy willing to take mass

casualties, however, means the array of weaponry ranging from assault rifles to air strikes soon runs dry, resulting in the trusty combat knife often being the difference between defeat and victory. Players successfully progressing through eight human missions can also try sorties as the enemy bugs, approaching the battlespace from a different perspective.

Don't expect the polish level of *Call of Duty* or *Zombie Army*, but this is definitely a fun outing, with the look, sound and nostalgia of the movie well captured. And it should provide a dose of satisfying downtime mayhem.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

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DIRECTORY

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

WELFARE

If you have a problem, your chain of command and unit welfare teams are a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. Padres can provide individuals with pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and wellbeing, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for regulars, reserves, ex-forces and their families.

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk or **01904 882051/2053**

Forces Connect

A free, simple, advert-free and confidential app that signposts soldiers, veterans and families to local and national organisations that can help them with everything from crisis support to business advice or housing. No personal information required. forcesconnect.co.uk

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own you can get confidential, free advice from your medical officer during routine hours, or your unit duty officer.

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline **0300 123 1110**

NHS support

Various information can be found at nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/ HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service
0306 770 7691 or
mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or **mil 96770 4656**
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command **0800 014 2381**

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

These can be a considerable burden, made worse by dealing with them alone. The following organisations can provide support.

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service **020 7820 9988**
forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the armed forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives
joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators
moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control **0808 808 4000**
nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice **0800 138 1111**
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK **0808 8020 133**

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support
0808 808 1677
cruse.org.uk

SSAFA supports people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding group supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

RESETTLEMENT

Career Transition Partnership employment fairs help support the transition to civilian life by providing resources, networking opportunities and direct access to forces friendly employers. To book your place at an event visit modctp.co.uk

Plymouth – May 21

Ipswich – July 1

Newbury – July 8

Elgin – August 6

Salford – September 10

HOUSING

Single living accommodation

Faults and issues must be reported to the local contractor – Vivo, Mitie or Vinci or your unit quartermaster, depending on location. Check common areas for posters detailing local procedures. Inform your chain of command if you believe repairs are not being properly dealt with.

Pinnacle Home Services Team

The primary point of contact for families for housing, the allocation of SFA and details of local housing officers **UK 0800 031 8628**
Overseas +44(0) 161 605 3517
pinnaclehomeservices.co.uk/contact-us

Forces Help to Buy

For home ownership support visit gov.uk/guidance/forces-help-to-buy

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services
01748 833797
spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS Personnel Recovery Centres

These centres can be found across the United Kingdom. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence Connect or send an email to rc-pers-arc-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation afvbc.world

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement **116 123 samaritans.org**

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services **0808 802 8080**
britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. Charities and other organisations also provide support, including...

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline
0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk or Modnet email address. To try it out visit work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity
0300 123 3393 mind.org

NHS

General mental health support nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

COMPETITIONS

MARCH 2026 WINNERS

HOAY 1006 (Highlander Forces jacket and daypack):
Mike Booth, Lincolnshire

RULES: Winners chosen at random from valid entries. Unless stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by our terms and conditions. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass your details to a third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

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TEN details have been changed in this image of Royal Engineers carrying out essential construction tasks in sunny Cyprus in support of forces in the region.

Circle all the differences on image **B** and send the panel to HOAY 1008, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU, along with contact details, including email address, by May 29.

A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a Stoirm Primaloft thermal jacket and heavyweight 100 per cent cotton t-shirt in ranger green.

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Buy this kit and more at stoirm-tactical.com, where *Soldier* readers can save 15 per cent using discount code SM15 (T&Cs apply).



Picture: ASI Joshua Whiting, RAF

Op Courage

A specialist NHS service for armed forces leavers, reservists, veterans and their families. Search for it on nhs.uk to find your local team

Samaritans

116 123; samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans

0333 900 1028
theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously

togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking

02394 216 816
aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims

01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate

Relationship support

relate.org.uk

SEXUAL OFFENCES

Anyone wishing to report an incident can do so in multiple ways. It does not matter if your allegation is not recent, or if you believe there's no evidence. There is no need for anyone to speak directly to their chain of command.

The Defence Serious Crime Command

is responsible for investigating crimes such as sexual assault and harassment within defence and operates independently of the three services. Contact them 24/7 via the Service Police Crime Bureau on 02392 285 170

Crimestoppers can be reached at 0800 555 111

Alternatively, complaints can be reported directly to the **civilian police**

To discuss victim support contact the **Victim Witness Care Unit**, which operates independently from the chain of command, on 07974 074259 or via people-dsc-wwcugroup@mod.gov.uk

Your information will be treated in confidence and you can discuss your options for reporting any allegations.

Further support can

be found on the **Defence Connect Call it Out Hub** or via the **Speak Out Helpline** on 0306 770 4656 or army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

STAFF NETWORKS

The following groups are open to regulars and reservists and civil servants.

LGBTQ+ Network

army-lgbt-network-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Multicultural Network

army-amcn-network-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Parents Network

armypers-parents-network@mod.gov.uk

Servicewomen's Network

army-servicewomen-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

NCO ACADEMY

Development Days 2026

- May 13 Bramcote (30 Sigs)
- May 21 MoD Lyneham
- July 8 Edinburgh
- Sept 16 Thorney Island (16 RA)
- Oct 21 MoD Lyneham
- Oct 26 Chepstow (1 Rifles)

Search for the NCO Academy on Defence Connect for more information

REUNIONS

The 13 HQ Bty (Martinique 1809) Past and Present Members' Association

will hold its biannual reunion and inaugural meeting on **May 23** at Bosworth Hall Hotel and Spa, CV13 0LP. The function includes 13 Fd Bty, 13 HQ Bty and HQ Bty 19 Regiment. Cost £35 each. For details contact bambra@hotmail.co.uk

UKSF BRIEFING COURSE

This six-day package is the first step for anyone wanting to attempt selection for UK Special Forces - regular or reservist. For more information on 2026 courses search **UKSF** on Modnet or Defence Connect.

Course name	Date
4/26	May 10-15
5/26	Jun 7-12
6/26	Sep 6-11
7/26	Oct 18-23
8/26	Nov 15-20

SOLDIERSPORT



Rfn Shevin George (Rifles) delivered on debut

TITLE JOY FROM LATE CHARGE



Skipper Sgt Liam Fletcher (REME) on the charge against the navy

CRICKET (MEN)

ALL-ROUNDER Rfn Shevin George (Rifles) blasted the army to a dramatic victory at the Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships as he enjoyed a debut to remember at Lord's.

Set a target of 144 inside 14.1 overs to defeat the Royal Navy and lift the trophy, the Reds were in trouble as they lost a flurry of middle-order wickets and found themselves needing 23 from just seven deliveries.

But George proved to be the man for the occasion as he smashed 24 runs - including three sixes and a four - from spinner Mne Nathan Hill's third over to win the game with two balls to spare.

The nerve-shredding conclusion came about after the navy downed defending champions the Royal Air Force in the tournament's opening fixture, only for the airmen to then beat the soldiers.

Bowling first in the final, the army set about restricting their rivals to a total that could be chased in a quick enough time to seal the title on run rate.

And that effort paid off as the senior service stuttered to 64-1 at the midpoint of their innings.

WO2 Ross Dearden (RE) then reduced them to 86-2 as he claimed the prize wicket of AET Ben Johnston for 46 and the scoring was largely kept in check as the back-end onslaught failed to materialise.

The Reds made a rapid start in response as LBdr Denzel James (RA) despatched three sixes and a four from the opening over.

James and skipper Sgt Liam Fletcher (REME) shared a 50-run stand for the first wicket and James found a further ally in Pte Keddy Lesporis (RLC) as the target remained in sight.

However, they then lost five wickets for 19 runs to slip from 77-1 to 96-6, leaving the stage set for George's fireworks.

"The young players coming into the team have pulled it out of the bag," Fletcher said afterwards. "That was unreal - he has won us the game on debut."

Earlier in the day the army won the toss and elected to field first against the Royal Air Force - a decision they were swiftly made to regret as their rivals piled on the runs.

LBdr Jake Benson (RA) gave the soldiers early hope as he claimed the wicket of Flt Lt Sam Moorby. However, his departure brought Flt Lt Adam Fisher to the crease and from there the carnage unfolded.

The skipper crashed three fours and a six as he raced to 20 from seven deliveries and with Cpl Tom Shorthouse joining the

INTER-SERVICES TWENTY20 CHAMPIONSHIPS

ROYAL NAVY	143-4
B JOHNSTON	46
N McLENNAN	31
S GEORGE	2-29

ARMY	145-7
D JAMES	40
S GEORGE	40
R WIGLEY	3-19

party the RAF reached 71-1 at the end of the power play.

The easing of fielding restrictions did little to aid the soldiers' cause as the duo took their team's score past 100 in the eleventh over, with Fisher also bringing up his 50.

Shorthouse went on to reach the same landmark at a more sedate pace but then perished from the next delivery when he was bowled by Dearden.

Fisher slogged the spinner's final ball for six and continued his assault until he finally fell for 88 off 49 balls.

With a total of 200 seemingly on the cards, the army attack did well to restrict their opponents to 188-6 at the close. Spr Stavone Gabriel (RE, pictured below) was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 1-26.

In reply, the Reds needed early impetus with the bat, but they failed to fire as just a single boundary was struck in the power play.

Maj Ben Ringrose (RAMS) top scored with 40, while Fletcher contributed 37, but after slipping behind the required rate they eventually finished on 155-8 - losing by 33 runs.

FAMILIAR FACES HELP UKAF TO VICTORY

CRICKET (WOMEN)

ARMY stalwarts Capt Connie Cant (RA) and SSgt Amanda Potgieter (REME) starred with the bat as the UK Armed Forces women triumphed over Marylebone Cricket Club in their latest clash at Lord's.

Coming together with the score at 21-2, the duo shared a stand of 117 for the third wicket as the military outfit posted a challenging total after being asked to bat first.

LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) despatched the first ball of the day for four before being trapped leg before from the next delivery, while Capt Georgina Dean (REME) fell to the spin of Bex Tyson.

Her departure brought Potgieter to the middle and, together with Cant, she set about upping the tempo as the

boundary rope was found with increasing ease.

They brought up their 50 partnership in an expensive eleventh over for the MCC that also saw Potgieter launch the first six of the innings.

Skipper Cant later departed for 46 from 51 balls - an effort that included five fours - and her dismissal resulted in a distinct halt in momentum.

Lt Georgie Franks (RLC) and Cpl Emilee Steel (RAF) both suffered first-ball ducks at the hands of spinner Issy Routledge but Potgieter was able to reach her half-century in the final over with a lofted drive down the ground.

The innings closed on 149-6 and UKAF then cranked up the pressure with the ball during the power play.

2Lt Milly Till (QRH) bowled Holly Wilson with her first delivery of the game and while a flurry of wickets failed to follow, some tight bowling and fielding tipped the contest in their favour.

Routledge offered resistance with an unbeaten 72, while Pte Carly Rush (AGC (SPS)), Cpl Abbie Steele (RAMS) and Potgieter all took scalps as the MCC closed on 128-4, handing UKAF victory by 21 runs.

20-OVER FIXTURE LORD'S

UKAF	149-6
POTGIETER 53	
C CANT 46	

MCC	128-4
ROUTLEDGE 72	



Capt Connie Cant (RA) anchored the UKAF innings

LORD'S BY NUMBERS

2 Wickets and 40 runs with the bat for Rfn Shevin George against the navy

9 Army players included in the UKAF women's team that faced the MCC

4 Sixes from LBdr Denzel James as the Reds made a flying start in the final

12 Overs of spin cost only 65 runs as the army bossed the navy



RING REIGN ENDS ON HISTORIC NIGHT



LCpl Leon Moulds (REME) was unlucky in defeat

Pictures: SSgt Donald Todd, RLC



Spr Marley Devitt (RE) takes instructions

BOXING

ARMY fighters found themselves on the wrong side of a historic night at the Inter-Services Boxing Championships as the Royal Air Force claimed their first trophy since 1972.

The outcome was made even more painful by the fact the soldiers failed to win a single bout in the ring during the competition, with their two successes - for heavyweight LCpl Jack Lorja (Mercian) and super heavyweight Sig Tobi Lawal (R Signals) - coming courtesy of walkover victories.

Cpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME, pictured right) was the only boxer to raise her hands in triumph as she claimed a unanimous verdict in her

60kg clash with Cpl Carys Mainwaring (RAF); however, the result did not count towards the team title.

Split decisions went against the army in the first three male bouts as Pte Lucas Forinton (R Anglian), LCpl Leon Moulds (REME) and Pte Dylan Swales (RLC) all tasted defeat against RAF rivals.

The Royal Navy opened their account as Mne William Woodward beat Cpl Arran Devine (RAF) on a split decision, an outcome that was repeated in the 75kg ranks as Spr Marley Devitt (RE) succumbed to Mne Connor Fanning.

And there was further disappointment for LCpl Aaron Doherty (R Signals) and LCpl Leon Harris (Rifles) as they lost via unanimous verdicts

to Sgt Cameron Lewis (RAF) and Mne Dominik Zieba (RM) respectively.

The RAF topped the final standings with four wins, compared to three for the navy and two for defending champions the army.

While the outcome went against his team, head coach Sgt Chez Nihell (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport* he was proud of the effort shown by his fighters on a difficult night.

"They performed well across the board," he added.

"We have quite a junior team and for some it was their first Inter-Services.

"The RAF had a lot of experience and there were some tough bouts. They also had a bit of luck on their side, but you need that to win a competition like this.

"Lucas Forinton finished strongly in a super-close bout, but I had no complaints with the final outcome.

"The result for Leon Moulds was the only one where I shook my head - he was very unlucky.

"AS1 Blaine Lambert (RAF) really showed up against Dylan Swales and Marley Devitt had an absolute war with Connor Fanning - they were punching holes in each other.

"I cannot grumble, but at the same time it is a tough pill to swallow, especially in my last year as head coach.

"However, that is boxing, and you wash your gum shield off and get back in there.

"This event should never be a given; in the past we have turned up and won with walkovers - nobody wants to see that.

"The RAF head coach has bolstered the squad and given

INTER-SERVICES BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

MEN

1	RAF	4
2	NAVY	3
3	ARMY	2

the sport a real uplift - it was their night."

Reflecting further on the outcome, Nihell said no stone was left unturned during their preparations and the squad went into the tournament with an undefeated record this season.

He added: "We had a two-week sparring camp in the build-up.

"In the first week we had six different clubs come in and we did a lot of good matchmaking for that.

"For the second we faced Brighton and Hove, Guildford and Repton and every boxer had competitive sparring.

"This year we have won every show apart from one, which we drew, and on paper we looked unbeatable.

"But this is a performance sport. We have been a beaten team before and have come back to win the Inter-Services - that is what we will have to do again."

Despite the setback, Stuart, Lorja and Lawal all progressed to the latter rounds of the England Boxing National Amateur Championships.

Stuart went on to lose to Ella Lonsdale, of Sunderland East End, via a unanimous verdict in the semi-finals, while Lorja and the number-one-ranked Lawal both bowed out at the quarter-final stage.

FEMALE FIRST AT NOVICE CONTEST

STRONGWOMAN

THERE was another notable first for the sport of strongman and strongwoman as Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Strensall held the inaugural UK Armed Forces strongest novice female competition.

Featuring a deadlift, overhead medley, sandbag and farmer's carries and an arm pull of a three-tonne army ambulance, the event welcomed 11 athletes to the start line as they vied for a place at the full UKAF championships being staged in Colchester as this issue went to press.

Cpl Alyssa Dixon (AGC (RMP), pictured below) triumphed in the under-64kg field, with SSgt Nicole Frew (RAMS) taking the under-73kg honours and Pte Chelsea Francis (RAMS) the under-

82kg prize. Maj Lucia Phillips (RHA) was victorious in the open category.

"For many women in the armed forces, opportunities in strength sport are still developing," said organiser Maj Katie Hildred (RAMS), the female lead for UKAF strongman and strongwoman.

"This competition helps change that by providing an accessible entry point into a discipline that rewards grit, resilience and personal courage.

"Our aim is to create a pathway that allows UK Armed Forces women to step forward, try something new and see that their potential in this sport can be limitless.

"If even one competitor walks away believing she's capable of more than she thought, then this event has done exactly what it is designed to do."

The contest was also supported by sponsors Giants Live, with three-time world's strongest woman Donna Moore on hand to offer expert advice to those competing.

'THEIR POTENTIAL IS LIMITLESS'



Picture: Cpl John Warburton, RLC

BOXING BY NUMBERS

6 Defeats in the ring for army team members on the night

2 Victories for the soldiers - courtesy of walkovers - in the competition

3 Boxers progressing in the England National Championships

54 Years between team titles for the Royal Air Force





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WARRIORS SURGE TO COURT DOUBLE

BASKETBALL

THE army men continued their domination of the court to claim a fourth successive title at the Inter-Services Basketball Championships.

Points were in plentiful supply as the soldiers downed the Royal Navy 103-42 in their opening match, a result that was followed by an 85-78 win over the Royal Air Force.

Tpr Darreo Glasgow (RTR), a recent call-up for St Vincent and the Grenadines ahead of their FIBA Americup qualifiers, WO2 Daniel Cole (REME) and Sig Sulayman Suwareh (R Signals) all played starring roles in what was a comfortable triumph for the Warriors.

"The RAF are a very good team, but we were just too strong," Lt Col Phil Pascoe (RLC), chair of Army Basketball, told *SoldierSport*.

"Darreo was exceptional with his distribution and assists, while Sulayman went on the rampage - dunking on an opponent early on.

"After that we never let them in and our individual quality and team game won through."

While the men were in cruise control it was far more dramatic in the women's final, where OCdt Evangeline Davies (Oxford UOTC) sank a three-point shot with just three seconds remaining to secure a 39-37 victory over the RAF - a result that clinched the Inter-Services trophy.

"It was a low scoring affair," Pascoe continued. "We were up by eight points early on, but they came back into it.

"We were ahead up until the last few minutes, when the lead starting changing hands. With eight seconds remaining we were down by a point, the coach then called a time out and drew up a plan.

"The ball came in from the side; it was passed to Evangeline on the three-point line, and she held her nerve to drain the shot.

"It is extremely rare to have a finish like that - it was executed brilliantly."

'WE WERE JUST TOO STRONG'

Tpr Darreo Glasgow (RTR) on the attack against the navy



Picture: Sgt Penny Coldwell-Dabbs, AGC (SPS)

ENCOURAGING SIGNS IN SERVICES OPENER

EQUESTRIANISM

ARMY riders made a strong start to the new military equestrian season as they travelled to Lincolnshire for the Royal Air Force Championships.

Lt Col Laura Mitchell (AGC (RMP)), Lt Col Kirstie Deakin-Main (RA), Maj Emma Lee-Smith (AAC) and LBdr Liz Griggs (RA) represented the team at the event, which was the first of four legs in the Loriners Inter-Services competition.

Despite some excellent

individual scores - including second and third places on the podium - it was the hosts who eventually came away with a narrow victory.

However, newcomer Lt Ellie McLay (RAVC) was victorious in the qualifying leg for the London International Horse Show, with two other soldiers finishing in the top ten.

The Army Championships follow later this month.

Follow [@armyequik](https://www.instagram.com/armyequik) on Instagram for details of upcoming events and how to get involved in the sport.

HOCKEY

THE Royal Army Medical Service (pictured) reigned supreme in the women's competition at the Inter-Corps Hockey Championships.

The medics finished ahead of the Royal Signals and Royal Engineers to lift the trophy, having finished third last season.

Elsewhere, the Infantry claimed a corps double as they triumphed in both the men's and masters' draws.

And 8 Battalion, REME defeated Army Headquarters 3-2 in the Army Cup final.

They will go on to represent the soldiers in the Tri-Service Cup in July.



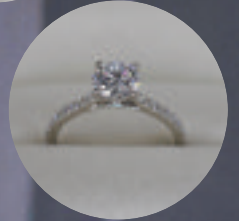
Picture: Andrew Fosker/Alligin Photography

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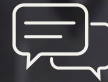
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Cpl Jess Smale (RLC) in action at the Nations Cup



DEBUTS MADE AT ROCK TEST

POOL

A SIGNIFICANT landmark was reached in the mission to grow pool in military circles as personnel took to the table for the Nations Cup in Gibraltar.

Six soldiers were included in the three UK Armed Forces teams that competed in the event - which boasted professional-level players and squads from as far away as Mauritius, Mexico, and Australia.

It was the first time the British military had been invited to the high-profile tournament and those charged with expanding the discipline hope it will spark an influx of talent to the fold.

Former county player SSgt Jeff Southall-Owen (RY, pictured below) was selected for the men's A team and told *SoldierSport* the ten-day test offered fantastic experience against formidable opposition.

"This was elite-level pool," the

reservist, who finished 49th out of 90 players in his draw with a win rate of 45 per cent, said.

"We won two of our 12 matches, which was great for us. I managed to beat a former world champion and the eventual Nations Cup champion - it was one-frame pool, so anything could happen.

"This was our first ever competition and we were straight in at the deep end. We defeated Gibraltar, which was the match we wanted to win, and Shetland but were never going to beat the likes of Scotland, Wales and Ireland as they were all professionals.

"We went there with no pressure or expectations, but held our own against world champions. Everyone loved it."

The army provided five players for a women's team captained by Cpl Jess Smale (RLC), who also finished with a win rate of 45 per cent.

A regular in local leagues, she led an inexperienced group - some of whom were playing in

their first tournament.

"One girl only picked up a cue for the first time in August, and for another four it was two weeks before the event," the NCO, who is chair of the Army Cue Sports Committee, said.

"They were really nervous, but as the week went on the frames got closer and they started winning towards the end.

"They got involved because they wanted to try something new - and they've all said they will be coming back."

The focus now shifts to seeing the discipline officially recognised by Army Sport.

A friendly match with the Royal Navy is being planned in June and anyone - regardless

of experience - wanting to get involved is urged to register their interest and help grow the player pool.

Scan the QR code or email jessica.smale102@mod.gov.uk



Pictures: C Correa Photography

BIG WIN SEES REDS SIGN-OFF IN STYLE

FOOTBALL (WOMEN)

A BRACE from Bdr Anna Birtwhistle (RA) helped the army women end their Inter-Services campaign on a high as they ran out 4-1 winners over the Royal Navy.

Having already lost 3-0 against the Royal Air Force, who were then crowned champions, the match at Havant's Westleigh Park was effectively a dead rubber – although it appeared anything but for what was a determined Reds outfit.

After seizing control early on LCpl Ashleigh Mills (RLC) was the first to threaten for the soldiers as her shot from distance flashed past the far post before forward Fus Katie Ellwood (RRF) prodded a close-range effort just wide from a Mills' cross.

They deservedly took the lead on the stroke of half-time as Birtwhistle (pictured below against the RAF) was played through in the left-hand channel and passed the ball into the bottom corner with a composed finish on the angle.

The midfielder doubled her

tally in the 67th minute when she rifled home after the navy failed to clear from a corner as the weather conditions worsened.

Despite holding a comfortable lead, the army upped the tempo in the latter stages and Pte Indiana Totty (RAMS) and Bdr Shannon Bradley (RA) both struck in added time to give them a 4-0 advantage before their rivals claimed a consolation goal with one of the final touches in the game.

"It was an important win for us," skipper LCpl Courtney Jones (REME), who was playing her final match in army colours, said at full-time.

"We were disappointed with our first result and said this was either sink or swim; we came out and smashed it.

"The girls put in all the effort to come away with the win and that is exactly what we wanted."

'WE CAME OUT AND SMASHED IT'



Picture: Graeme Main

INTER-SERVICES AMERICAN FOOTBALL

ARMY 14 V RAF 29



MUSTANGS MARCH TO TITLE NUMBER THREE

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

VICTORY over the Army Jackals saw the Royal Air Force Mustangs secure back-to-back titles in the Inter-Services American Football Championships.

With both sides beating the Royal Navy earlier in the competition it was a winner-takes-all clash at Abingdon's Tilsley Park, and it was the visitors who edged a tight first half to lead 9-0 at the break.

Maj Drew Newiss (R Signals) brought the soldiers back into the contest as he gathered in the end zone, but RAF wide receiver Lewis Truman then crossed for his second touchdown as the lead stretched to 16-6.

A third touchdown followed in the final quarter as the champions-elect seized control, but the soldiers stayed in the fight as a score from quarter back SSgt Martin Brown (AGC (RMP)), followed by a two-point conversion, made it 22-14.

But Arthur Fox had the final say for the Mustangs as the match ended 29-14 – a result that saw them lift the trophy for the third time in four seasons.

The Jackals were embarking on a tour of the USA as this issue went to press – the set-up's first overseas trip.

The schedule included visits

to West Point, the National Football League headquarters and the home of the New York Jets. Training sessions were also planned, along with two competitive fixtures against the US Army and New York Fire Department in a 7v7 non-contact variant of the sport.

Players will then compete at the Nato Bowl at RAF Lakenheath later this month, while a corps-level flag festival is planned for June 30 and July 1 in Aldershot.



Pictures: shotsbydom.uk



ALL CHANGE AT CORPS CLASH

SWIMMING

TEAM titles switched hands at the Inter-Corps Swimming Championships in Aldershot as the defending champions from last season saw the trophies slip from their grasp.

In the men's competition, the Royal Logistic Corps posted a total of 169 points to head the field from the Royal Engineers in second and the Adjutant General's Corps in third.

The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, champions in 2025, came fifth.

Loggie swimmers topped the podium in six events as they finished 18 points clear of the Sappers, with Capt Chris Wylie taking gold in the masters' (35+) 50m and 100m freestyle.

Sgt Losong Tamsang repeated that feat over the same distances in the masters' (45+) field, while WO2 Matt Price won the masters' (35+) 50m backstroke and Maj Rob Charters the masters' (35+) 50m butterfly.

After finishing down the field

in the men's contest, the REME hit top form in the women's draw as victories in ten of the 20 events saw them amass 176 points - finishing 19 clear of last year's winners the Royal Engineers in second.

In a further sign of their domination, they collected four silver and five bronze medals - meaning they took a podium place in every race completed. They were disqualified in the 50m breaststroke.

LCpl Tia Ward showed her versatility as she claimed gold in the 800m freestyle, both the 50m and 100m backstroke and 200m individual medley.

She was also part of the REME's successful 4x50m medley relay team.

LCpl Belinda Shields was another swimmer to have a day to remember as she triumphed in the masters' (35+) 100m individual medley, both the 50m and 100m freestyle and the 50m butterfly events.

She also took silver in the 50m backstroke and 50m breaststroke.



Pictures: Graeme Main

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INTER-SERVICES FOOTBALL

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PAIN IN PORTSMOUTH

Picture: Graeme Main

FOOTBALL (MEN)

THERE was a disappointing conclusion to the Inter-Services Football Championships for the army men's senior team as a 2-0 defeat to the Royal Navy ended their title bid.

A last-gasp winner against the Royal Air Force a week earlier saw the soldiers travel to Portsmouth with high hopes, but a well-drilled senior service

outfit proved too strong.

Keeper Sgt Luke Cairney (RE) thwarted forwards Dylan Holgate and Jake Walker with smart first-half saves and the army came close to scoring when forward Gnr Kishawn Johnny (RA) rounded Lawrence McCormack in the navy goal, only to see his shot blocked by a covering defender.

The hosts opened their account in the 65th minute as Holgate was impeded by

Fus Leigh Phillips (R Welsh, pictured) in the area for what appeared to be a soft penalty.

David Vincent converted from the spot, and they doubled their advantage ten minutes later as Olly Ward expertly controlled a long ball forward and calmly found the bottom corner.

With the Reds failing to build momentum late on their rivals held firm for their second win of the competition, having earlier beaten the RAF 3-1.

WATER POLO

IT WAS a case of recent history repeating at the Inter-Corps Water Polo Championships as the Royal Engineers won the men's and women's titles for a second successive season.

A 9-7 victory over the Royal Logistic Corps, coupled with a 7-7 draw with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, was enough for the sappers to secure the men's honours.

And back-to-back wins in the women's competition - including a 13-1 triumph over the loggies - saw them seal another double in impressive style.



Picture: Jarrad Hulm/Alligin Photography

RUGBY UNION

THE army women's rugby union team completed their on-pitch preparations for this month's Inter-Services campaign with a 31-17 win over London Irish.

Victory at Hazelwood came on the back of a 24-12 defeat to the French Army in Lille (pictured), where the men's squad beat their cross-Channel rivals 33-6.

The soldiers face the Royal Navy at Twickenham on May 2 before travelling to Gloucester to take on the Royal Air Force at Kingsholm Stadium on May 16.



Picture: Cat Coryn/Alligin Photography

TAKING THE PLUNGE



Picture: Jed Leicester/Alligin Photography

DIVING

THERE was another strong showing at the Inter-Corps Diving Championships as 20 athletes vied for honours across the springboard and platform disciplines.

Defending champions the Royal Engineers enjoyed a successful outing in the men's field, retaining the team trophy courtesy of fine performances from LCpl Charlie Blake and SSgt Ben Martin.

The former was also crowned platform and individual combined champion, with Sgt Andrew Whatmough (REME) taking the springboard honours and finishing as the overall runner-up.

The Royal Logistic Corps sealed the women's team crown thanks to the efforts of Maj Amanda Prentice and Cpl Amy Oliver, with the sappers finishing second. Prentice was also the individual combined champion.

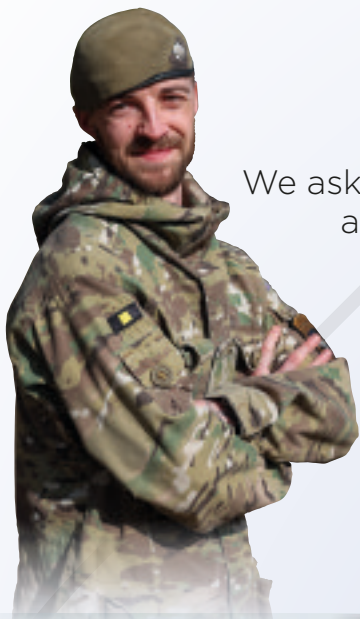
Nations united

We asked troops returning from recent Nato outings for their advice on working in a multinational environment

Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Beth Prodger; 1 Lancs

Take the opportunity to build good relationships.

Cpl Joe Ramsden, R Anglian



Make sure you learn about the countries you'll be working alongside before you go. Military cultures vary and soldiers from different nations work differently.

LCpl Jordan Redway, R Anglian



Willingness to learn from others is key to getting the best from everyone.

Kgn Braydon Carrington, Lancs



Know the language – especially how their armed forces speak. Good communication means you will also forge lasting friendships.

Capt Cameron Johnstone, R Anglian



Explore foreign language programmes before you go. We held French sessions before exercising at Cenzub and two soldiers have now chosen to attend more advanced courses. The benefits go well beyond just one deployment.

Maj Lance Morris, Lancs

Understand that despite different languages, equipment and ways of operating, we are all united by professionalism and purpose.

Kgn Issah Mohammed, Lancs



There are common bonds between soldiers, wherever they are from. Go in with a completely open mind and understand you'll learn a lot from others.

Capt Hamish MacKellar, R Anglian



Every Nato nation has a niche capability. For example, the Czechs are experts in CBRN and the Danes are great at civil military cooperation. Get to know them.

Capt Laurence Roche, QoY



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