

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

November 1998 £1.60

# SOLDIER

Remembrance

**Images and  
stories from  
the Front**

**Battle stress:  
Are we coping?**







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## SOLDIER to soldier

### Soldiering on: the solution to trauma?

ARE WE a nation of softies for whom the slightest exposure to trauma means a series of counselling sessions? Or is ours an enlightened society which appreciates the delicate human mind might crack under the stress of conflict?

Men who fought in the First World War in conditions unimaginable today (but hinted at in our coverage of the 80th anniversary of the Armistice) may be divided into three groups: those who died, those who lived, and those who survived but were condemned to a living hell because their minds could not cope with the horror of the trenches.

Our special report (Pages 4-5) carries a psychologist's warning that graphic films such as *Saving Private Ryan* may trigger post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) – sometimes decades after the event itself. The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society (Combat Stress) has provided care and support to 65,000 people since 1919, and its services are still in demand.

#### MORE HARM

Yet last month another psychiatrist was reported in a national newspaper as saying trauma counselling could be doing more harm than good. Dr Martin Deahl studied 102 soldiers who came under fire during the conflict in Bosnia.

He says soldiers, doctors and paramedics should be encouraged to visit mortuaries as part of their training to help them "become immune to the sight of death".

A book (see Page 26) accompanying a television series states that no matter how much counselling has been given, the problem of PTSD for the Armed Forces is actually increasing.

Who do we believe? The only certainty is that every person deals with trauma in a completely different way.

How to contact  
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# Battle starts when the fighting stops

Report: Anthony Stone

GRAPHIC war films such as *Saving Private Ryan* can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in veterans, according to a leading clinical psychologist.

Dr Chris Allen, who works at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Buckinghamshire was prompted to write to a national newspaper to voice his concerns.

"I am not entirely convinced that the entertainment and education of the many is entirely worth the suffering of the few, particularly when they have already suffered," he wrote.

Dr Allen has highlighted a problem which for some veterans is the legacy of half a century of repressed feelings.

"There must have been a lot of soldiers who went through traumatic events, and presumably most of them got on with their lives and don't have delayed trauma reactions," Dr Allen told *Soldier*.

"But there are a proportion who are having reactions a long time after the events and these are the people I have been seeing recently."

The patients Dr Allen refers to are veterans of the D-Day landings, PoWs held by the Japanese, and veterans of the Suez Crisis and Korean War.

Why should these old soldiers start having problems now, decades after the events?

"I think what happens is that they had a coping strategy during their working life, often keeping very busy, not talking about it. But it fails them as they get into old age," Dr Allen said.

The reasons for this often have to do with retirement and having more time to think about the past.

Sometimes PTSD can be triggered when a partner or former comrade-in-arms dies. Suddenly veterans find they are having nightmares and flashbacks.

"It could be caused by anniversary celebrations for the end of the war, or because there has been so much coverage about the film *Private Ryan* in the papers. They find it hard to cope with because it brings back memories.

"A man I am seeing is having nightmares about his D-Day experience, triggered by his

wife's death. Often, the last time they experienced death was in the war and now they are having to experience and cope with it again.

"What surprises me is how many people never talk about their experiences to their partners, or even at reunions," Dr Allen said. "I wonder if those who haven't coped so well are the same people who never discussed it. It may have been helpful earlier in their life to

have talked about it and to have got some support. It may have been that they were not encouraged to talk about their traumatic experiences."

The horrors witnessed by Dr Allen's patients are of a nature likely to live with them forever.

One old soldier had seen the friend next to him lose an arm and half his head in battle. The soldier carried his mate to a first aid station where he died the next day.

"Sometimes it is fresh for them even though it's 40 or 50 years ago because they have put it aside," Dr Allen explained. "Now, for whatever reason, it's back and causing difficulties."

So how can therapy help?

"It gives them an opportunity to talk about their experiences in a contained way and for them to realise that this is a reaction to traumatic events. There are a proportion of people who react in this way and they should know they are not unusual in doing that and that they are not going mad. That it is a normal reaction to traumatic events."



## Enlightened physician who treated the men for shock

EIGHTY years ago doctors had not coined the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If a soldier presented the classic symptoms of nightmares, intense feelings of guilt, difficulties relating with others and preoccupying thoughts, he was likely to be told he was suffering from shell-shock. For some unfortunates, their condition was misdiagnosed as cowardice. They were shot.

At the start of the First World War the doctor's main method of treating shell-shock depended on encouraging soldiers to repress the horrific memories of trench warfare. Patients were told not to talk about their experiences, not to read newspapers and generally to think about something else. Sometimes this worked. More often than not it just masked the problem.

However, a few enlightened doctors were beginning to experiment with more modern approaches. Foremost among these practitioners was W H R Rivers, a medical officer at Craiglockhart War Hospital, Scotland. A fictionalised account of Rivers's work runs through Pat Barker's acclaimed war trilogy in which the poet Siegfried Sassoon also appears and is treated at Craiglockhart.

Rivers is credited with a new form of treatment for battle stress. Here is a condensed extract taken from Rivers's academic paper *The Repression of War Experience* delivered to the Royal Society of Medicine on December 4, 1917.

"This case is that of an officer, whose burial as the result of a shell explosion had

The mutilated or leprous officer of the dream would come nearer and nearer until the patient suddenly awoke pouring with sweat and in a state of the utmost terror

been followed by symptoms pointing to cerebral concussion. In spite of severe headache and vomiting, he remained on duty for two months. He then collapsed altogether after a very trying experience, in which he had gone out to seek a fellow officer and had found his body had been blown to pieces, with head and limbs lying separated from the trunk.

"From that time on he had been haunted at night by the vision of his dead and mutilated friend . . . in which his friend appeared, sometimes as he had seen him on the field, sometimes as one whose limbs

and features had been eaten by leprosy. The mutilated or leprous officer of the dream would come nearer and nearer until the patient awoke in a state of the utmost terror.

"He dreaded to go to sleep . . . "The problem was to find some aspect of the experience which would allow the patient to dwell upon it in such a way as to relieve its terrifying character. The aspect to which I drew his attention was that the mangled state of the body of his friend was conclusive evidence he had been killed outright and had been spared any long suffering.

"He brightened at once and said he would no longer banish thoughts and memories of his friend from his mind, but would think of the pain and suffering he had been spared.

"Then came a night in which he dreamt that he went out to no man's land and saw his friend's mangled body just as in other dreams, but without the horror that had previously been present. He woke with none of the horror and terror of the past, but weeping gently, feeling only grief for the loss of a friend."

● See Books special Page 26-27

## You are not alone

VETERANS can turn for help to the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society (Combat Stress), the only organisation specialising in helping men and women of all ranks suffering from psychiatric disability.

Founded at the end of the First World War, its work has been going on ever since, explained Maj (Retd) Colin Crawford, assistant director (fund-raising). Combat Stress has provided care and support to 65,000 people since 1919 and currently has responsibility for 4,500 casualties of the many campaigns since 1939.

"The original founders thought their work would be short-lived because they had just fought the 'war to end all wars'," Maj Crawford told *Soldier*. "We still have a lot of patients from the Second World War and we have never stopped getting more in all the years of so-called peace since 1945. That includes Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands, the Gulf and Bosnia."

The society has a regional network of welfare officers throughout the United Kingdom who visit clients at home or in hospital. They help with the presentation of claims and appeals for war disablement pensions.

Although psychiatric help is available in the wider community, Combat Stress offers a unique service.

"All our welfare officers are retired Servicemen or women," Maj Crawford said. "We find that many of older patients cannot get a young social worker to understand why events of 50 years ago might still be worrying them now and they find it easier to relate to help and advice from someone they know is an ex-Service person."

The society's excellent facilities depend upon charitable donations to survive. Annual cost of running them and its three nursing homes is more than £4,000,000. It has just announced that its residential home, Kingswood Grange, is to close next year to save money (see Issues, Pages 38-39).

Combat Stress can be contacted on 0181 543 6333. Cheques should be made payable to the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society and sent to Broadway House, The Broadway, Wimbledon SW19 1RL.



Maj Crawford



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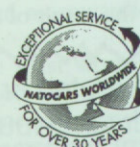
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SOLSAVE/4



# People, places, events

## Troop levels reduced in Northern Ireland

CONTINUED improvements in the security situation within Northern Ireland have led to further reductions in force levels.

The latest to return to their mainland bases are around 400 members of 39 Regiment RA and the 1st Battalion, The Highlanders. However, the two units remain under the control of the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland and could return to the Province at short notice should circumstances change.

With approximately 16,000 troops in the Province, the Army presence is now at its lowest level since the 1994 ceasefire, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary is operating increasingly widely without assistance from routine military patrols.

South Derry has joined Belfast as an area in which routine military patrolling has ceased.

It has also been announced that the Army's requirement for bases in Northern Ireland is being reviewed.



Picture: Chris Fletcher

Close order: Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson, Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex, pauses for a word with SSgt Karen Bate of the Horsham-based 6th/7th Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment as he makes his inspection during the battalion's Freedom parade through Crowborough. PWRR puts a smile on Reg's face – see Page 67

## Army leads Europe's observers in Kosovo

FIFTY British soldiers have flown to Kosovo as part of a special European mission to oversee a peaceful settlement between the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians.

Ranked from staff sergeant to lieutenant colonel, they have been joined by Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Foreign and Commonwealth Office personnel. The UK contribution to the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) Verification Mission is being led by Maj Gen John Drewienkiewicz who has served in Zagreb and Sarajevo.

Unarmed and in civilian clothes, the



Maj Gen John Drewienkiewicz

soldiers are part of a 2,000-strong force from OSCE member states. They will have diplomatic status.

The mission has its HQ in Pristina, a liaison office in Belgrade, and members in all key areas of the country. Its task is to ensure all parties comply with the UN Security Council Resolution intent on ending hostilities so refugees

can return home without fear. The mission will act as a high-profile internal watchdog, overseeing local police, working on the removal of road-blocks, assisting in the development of civil institutions, and supervising elections.

## Uniforms back on the streets

FOR the first time in decades, Army uniforms are to be worn routinely on the streets of Britain in response to the reduced level of terrorist threat. Many soldiers have been told they no longer have to change into civvies to travel to and from work or to move around in predominantly civilian communities.

The relaxation, effective from November 1, is designed to make it easier for soldiers to commute . . . and to help recruitment by giving the Army a higher public profile.

It has been stressed that wearing uniforms in "places of recreation", such as pubs and bars, will not be permitted, and, in any case, permission for particular units to relax the dress code will lie with commanding officers.

A ban on uniforms off base was introduced in the 1970s when it became clear that soldiers were being targeted by terrorists.

## Scarborough assault puts loggies to test

ELEMENTS of the Combat Service Support Group (CSSG (UK)), the Army's standing force of logistic and support units, re-enacted a wartime operation when troops and vehicles went ashore at Scarborough seafront from two heavy-lift landing craft.

Unlike 1944, when landing craft operators were rehearsing for D-Day, 17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC invited local people to climb the ramps and inspect the Army's little ships.

### LOG LEAP

The sea-borne phase came towards the end of the two week-long mobilisation phase of Exercise Log Leap 98, which involved the deployment of 2,000 vehicles and 5,000 Regular and Territorial Army soldiers across the North-East of England and East Anglia.

Units converged on the east coast from as far afield as Belfast. Billed as the largest peacetime test of Britain's war-fighting logistic support capability, Log Leap tested the ability of units under the command of CSSG (UK) to mobilise in support of two brigade-sized forces operating overseas simultaneously.

● THE first production WAH-64 Apache attack helicopter for the British Army made its maiden flight at the Boeing plant at Mesa, Arizona on September 25 and was handed over to the UK prime contractor, GKN Westland. The 30-minute flight was the first by Apache with Rolls Royce Turbomeca RTM322 engines.

## Military detachment to quit South Georgia

BRITAIN's military detachment on South Georgia is to be withdrawn in 2000 when an enhanced permanent British Antarctic Survey (BAS) team is established on the remote island. Security for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, will be provided by the 2,000-strong garrison on the Falkland Islands.

An Argentine presence on the then undeclared South Georgia led to the the invasion of the Falklands and the war of 1982.



# People, places, events

## Grenadiers on song . . .



You hum it, Sarge, we'll sing it: **LSgt Ian Edwards** struts his stuff with three young ladies during a hard-working, month-long KAPE (Keeping the Army in the Public Eye) tour by the Grenadier Guards. Ian, dubbed the Singing Guardsman, was one of the star attractions on the very successful tour, which returned with the names of more than 800 young men interested in joining the regiment.

On the day the Grenadiers appeared in Weston-super-Mare with their vehicles, uniforms, face-painting, mobile laser range, field kitchen (providing curry, an "all-in stew" and fish-and-chips), and Corps of Drums, they were said to have attracted bigger crowds than the competing Radio 1 Roadshow.

## Micaela joins the band

TWENTY-year-old **Micaela Mann** was so impressed by the Band of the Royal Corps of Signals when it made a concert tour of her native Sweden that she returned to the UK with the band for a period of work experience. Micaela, who plays the clarinet, performed with the band at several musical engagements wearing the dress uniform of the corps band. She plans to join the Swedish Army band as a conscript in January before studying architecture at the University of Lund. The Royal Signals band performed at the Swedish Army Tattoo during their visit to Sweden.



Polish-speaking Fus **Peter Witkowski**, left, of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, learns about the finer points of a machine-gun mounted on a T-72 main battle tank from a soldier of the 6th Polish Tank Brigade during Ulan Eagle 98. Fus Witkowski, whose parents are Polish, comes from Birmingham

## Local bakery uses its loaf to get up-to-date

THE long hours and fresh air on Drawsko Pomorskie training area gave British soldiers taking part in Ulan Eagle hearty appetites.

During the three-week exercise 4,500 troops munched their way through 2,000 fresh loaves a day. As soldiers sweltered in the autumn sunshine, a bakery in the nearby town of Zlocienec was also feeling the heat as its ovens went into over-drive. The bakery, which has 33 staff, delivered five truck-loads of bread to the exercise area every day.

"Providing fresh food for the sol-

diers wherever possible is vital," said SSgt Gareth David of the Local Resources Team, part of 6 Supply Company RLC. "Where we can, we buy local produce. We first used this bakery during Ulan Eagle 1996 and the staff has risen to the occasion."

"The contract is worth about 6,000 Zlotis (£1,000) a week and they tell us they've used the money to modernise, so if anything the service is better than ever."

"Buying locally is one way for us to put something back into the community in which we are exercising."

### IN BRIEF

THE Tri-Service Equal Opportunities Training Centre, the first of its kind in Europe, was opened by Armed Forces Minister Doug Henderson at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham. It will contribute to increased understanding and awareness of equal opportunities policies among Service and civilian staff.

Welsh Guards joined 500 troops from 26 nations on the ten-day Exercise Co-operative Best Effort 98 at Krivolak training area in Macedonia. It was the biggest NATO peace-keeping exercise so far in the former Yugoslav republic, which shares borders with Albania and Kosovo.

● Ten soldiers from the 1st Battalion,

● Soldiers from the Colchester-based 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots played



# Paras, Poles in big jump

FOR the first time since the Arnhem campaign in 1944, British and Polish forces have taken part in a mass parachute jump. It marked the start of the third Ulan Eagle exercise in Poland.

Nearly 900 British and Polish paratroopers took part in the airborne insertion. First to land were 200 troops from 5 Airborne Brigade and the Polish Airborne Assault Battalion who parachuted from an RAF Hercules aircraft on to the vast Drawsko Pomorskie training area.

Minutes later they were joined by more paras as Hercules followed Hercules down the long landing strip, each remaining on the ground for only a few seconds. By the end of the complex operation the Lead Parachute Battle Group, with all its heavy equipment, including 105mm light guns, had been inserted in just 24 minutes.

History was also made on the training area when, for the first time, a British armoured infantry battalion and a Polish tank company worked side-by-side. A unit of the Polish 6th Tank Brigade, equipped with T-72s, linked up with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers with their Warriors to provide "opposing forces" for the three-week exercise.

For almost 50 years the armies of the Warsaw Pact faced NATO troops across the Iron Curtain. Poland is now poised to join NATO and, for the first time since the Second World War, Polish tanks and British armoured vehicles trained together.

Polish T-72s were under the com-

mand of Lt Col Gary Cass, CO 2 RRF. "We are delighted and honoured to be working with a Polish unit," he said. "Our Warriors and their T-72s are completely different and we are all looking forward to exchanging ideas."

Ulan Eagle 98 was a 4th Armoured Brigade exercise involving more than 5,000 personnel, 500 armoured vehicles and 750 wheeled vehicles. The Queen's Royal Lancers battle group, equipped with Challenger,

was shipped from the German port of Emden to Stettin in Poland. The bulk of vehicles arrived overland in 30 convoys, with 111 Provost Coy from Hohne patrolling the route to keep things moving.

WO2 Grenville Horsley, RLC movements officer, said every effort was made to avoid busy roads and peak times.

"The convoys are travelling on public roads, so safety, not speed, is what matters," he explained. "We deliberately build staging posts into the itinerary, with enforced rest stops and a chance for hot meals."

Many troops travelled to the area by train. When they stopped for a meal just inside the German border they found the buffet cars were from the former British Military Trains which used to operate between West and East Germany before the Berlin Wall came down.

Convoys carrying thousands of tons of fuel, food and spares continued to make their way east to keep the brigade on the move and firing.

● During Ulan Eagle, soldiers from the 1st Battalion, The Royal Highland Fusiliers paid tribute to a colleague, Fus Jason Glasgow, who was killed while on Exercise Prairie Eagle in Poland in May. They took part in a service led by Army Padre Cole Maynard at the spot deep in the forest where he died. A forest service was also held for Lt James Connolly of 32 Engineer Regiment, who died in a separate accident on Prairie Eagle.

host to the French Picardy Regiment for ten days of military training and sport. The regiments fought together in the 17th century after Charles 1 formed the Royal Scots to fight for Louis XIII.

● Lt Fiona Stewart, the first female cadet to win the Sword of Honour at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, was a guest of honour at the 43rd Women of

the Year lunch, attended by the Duchess of Kent. Lt Stewart is currently attending a troop commanders' course at the Royal School of Signals at Blandford.

● Bugle calls of the *Last Post* and *Reveille* form part of a special sequence added to the Royal British Legion's web site to encourage a two-minute silence on the internet at 11am on November 11.



Picture: Terry Champion

Honoured: Capt John Young holds the sword as Armed Forces Minister Doug Henderson congratulates the staff and inmates at MCTC Colchester

## Sword of peace given to MCTC

STAFF and inmates at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester have been awarded a special tri-Service Wilkinson Sword of Peace for their charitable and community work.

The award, given annually to the tri-Service unit judged to have done most to foster good relations between military and civilian communities, recognises the value of a number of projects carried out by men and women from the MCTC during 1997.

The military prison's commandant, Lt Col Julian Crowe, received the silver-and-gilt sword on behalf of the 130 tri-Service and civilian MoD staff and approximately 200 detainees, from Armed Forces Minister Doug Henderson. The Minister said their work had received "the recognition it deserves".

Mr Henderson told *Soldier* that while the MCTC's priority must always be to bring soldiers back to the mainstream of military life, their contribution to the local community was important. He said: "The Armed Forces are servants of the community and that has been demonstrated."

Although most of the projects for which the military prison was honoured took place during 1997, the MCTC's 50th anniversary year, the good works have continued throughout 1998. They include clearing up fire damage at a local school, regular help at a hospice and fund-raising for SSAFA Forces Help and Children in Need.

Wilkinson Swords of Peace have been presented since 1966, but in 1994 a "special" sword was introduced enabling the work of the increasing number of tri-Service units to be recognised.

● The 1997 Wilkinson Sword of Peace, awarded to the Household Cavalry for humanitarian work in Bosnia, was being presented by the Queen to the regiment at Windsor on October 26.



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# People, places, events



A dozen youth teams from around the country tested their mental and physical skills at Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester, in the national finals of the Silver Eagles competition, an Army-sponsored event for boys' clubs. Activities, including orienteering, an assault course and command tasks, are designed to develop teamwork and individual skills. Picture with Leamington, the winners, are Brig Andy Craig, left, who presented the trophies, and Capt Sean McEvoy, right, OC of the Royal Green Jackets regimental recruiting team, who co-ordinated the event

## Award for cyber surgeons

ARMY surgeons at the cutting edge of computer technology have been recognised for their pioneering use of the internet.

The "Telemedicine Team" from the Royal Hospital Haslar has been awarded a medal by the British Computer Society and short-listed for its top award for use of cyber technology to diagnose illness among Servicemen and women deployed over-seas.

Using high-resolution digital cameras, modems and lap- or desk-top computers, Haslar's team of specialists have been able to carry out virtual examinations and advise medical teams in Bosnia, Gibraltar, the Falklands and South Georgia.

They have also used the technology to help sailor-patients on board HM ships *Invincible* and *Cardiff* while the vessels were on global patrols.

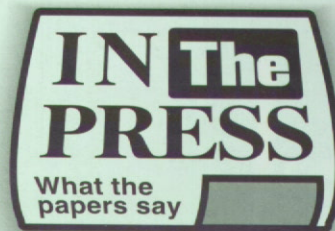
## New era for training at Sennelager

A foundation stone has been laid for one of the Army's more expensive buildings to house the Combined Arms Tactical Trainer in Normandy Barracks at Sennelager, Germany.

The £10 million building will make it possible to train battle groups in

combined arms tactics, drills and procedures in a realistically simulated combat environment.

The building will include a gas-driven power station which can provide power to the remainder of the barracks when the trainer is not in use.



❑ The system of pet passports and microchips designed to replace the current six months in quarantine will not be implemented until the year 2001 at the earliest. — *Express*

❑ A British Army football from the Battle of the Somme in 1916 has been found in France on a rubbish dump near Mailly-Maillet, a village where troops were billeted just behind the front line. — *Daily Telegraph*

❑ New "stealth clothing" which makes soldiers almost invisible to the human eye, noiseless, and even odourless to avoid detection by dogs, is being tested by the Royal Marines. — *Sunday Telegraph*

❑ All the English county regiments will be merged and 170 bases closed in the MoD's revised plans for the Territorial Army. — *Sunday Telegraph*

❑ The Army is to scrap long-range artillery and replace its big guns with high-technology rockets and missiles. — *Sunday Times*

❑ Porton Down, the former biological and chemical weapon research station in Wiltshire, has been developing futuristic uniforms for the battlefield... and discovered a process for making any fabric almost impervious to stains. — *Sunday Times*

## Officer cadet rescuers commended by police

THREE officer cadets who saved people stranded when the Avon burst its banks at Welford-on-Avon near Stafford at Easter have received commendations from Warwickshire's Chief Constable.

OCdts Peter Beaumont, Barry John and Nicholas Lilley were on their way home from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst for Easter when they became involved in rescuing people trapped in caravans near the pub in which they were taking refuge.

In total darkness, and roped together, they took turns to wade through very cold and fast-flowing water, rescuing nine people over a period of several hours.

### IN BRIEF

SOLDIERS of the 3rd Battalion, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire received new Colours from Fd Marshal Lord Inge at Imphal Barracks. The parade was commanded by Lt Col Duncan Barley, CO 3 PWO.

● Ten part-time soldiers from Cambridge-based 254 Field Ambulance (Volunteers) won the Army Services Territorial Army patrol competition at Longmoor Camp in Hampshire. Belfast-based 204 (NI) Hospital (V) were runners-up for the second year running and

received the AMS (TA) Challenge Shield for military excellence.

● A tri-Service team from the Brize Norton-based Joint Air Transport Evaluation Unit, supported by an RAF Chinook helicopter, flew in four 4-tonne sections for a new footbridge over the River Irthing at Willowford, Cumbria.

● Sappers from 118 (Tees) Field Squadron RE (V) built a 40-metre footbridge across the River Whiteadder near its junction with the

Tweed at Berwick during their annual two-week camp. Construction of the 24-tonne, single-span steel girder bridge was carried out under the Military Aid to the Civil Community programme and funded by Berwick Borough Council.

● WO2 Richard Buttigieg of The Gibraltar Regiment has received a Commander British Forces commendation for his "prompt and expert" actions when a civilian was seriously injured in an accident at Devil's Tower Camp.





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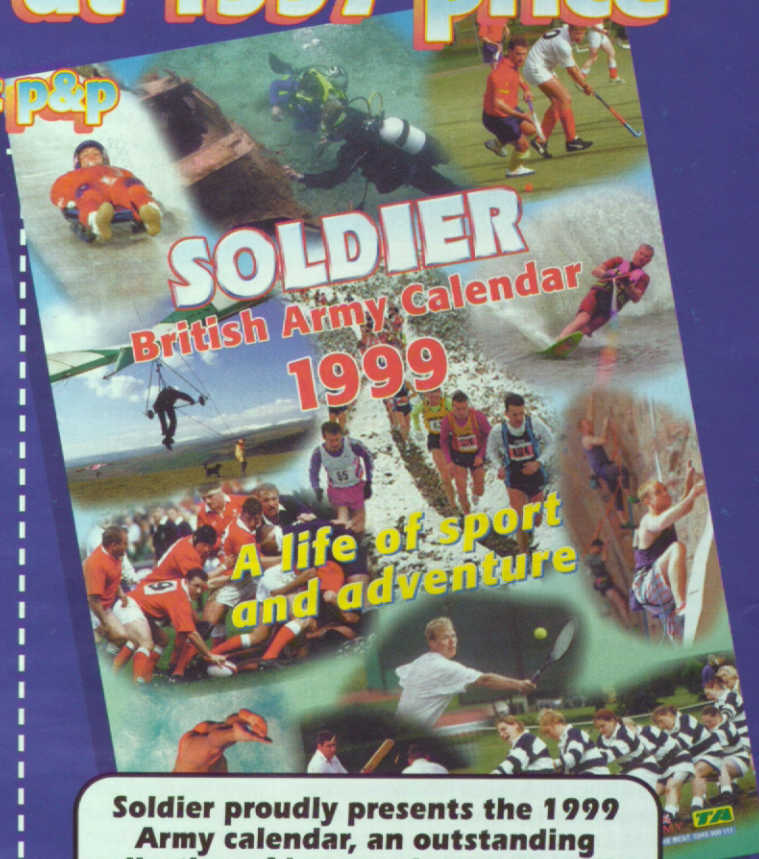
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# Armistice anniversary



The Menin Gate at Ypres, where local firemen play the Last Post every evening in memory of 54,900 soldiers who disappeared without trace

*'You see why you should walk lightly if you ever go to Ypres, the very stones of which are memorials to men who perished on the Field of Honour' – J M Halley, 62nd Field Coy RE*

**Report: Karen Moseley  
Pictures: Mike Weston**

EVERY night in the Belgian town of Ypres, a simple and moving ceremony commemorates the tens of thousands of British and Commonwealth soldiers who died on the fields of Flanders.

As the clock on the magnificent Cloth Hall tower strikes eight, the traffic around the massive Menin Gate memorial is stopped and the Last Post is played under the arch by members of the Belgian Volunteer Fire Service. The ceremony is performed regardless of weather, date or whether there is anyone to watch.

On the 80th anniversary of the Armistice, November 11, the ceremony will be attended by the Queen and the King of Belgium.

The Menin Gate is the memorial to the soldiers of the British Empire who fell in the Ypres Salient section of the Western

## Gate of destiny

Front. On its panels are recorded the 54,900 names of men who disappeared without trace beneath the mud or were buried as unknown soldiers. The inscription reads:

*"Here are recorded the names of officers and men who fell in the Ypres Salient but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death."*

Of the ten million men who died in the Great War, more than half a million died or disappeared on the Ypres Salient alone.

Albert Verkouter is one of eight buglers in the Belgian Fire Service and has been playing the Last Post at the memorial for 35 years. He has just been presented with an MBE by the British ambassador in Brussels for his services, not just as a bugler, but also as head gardener for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, looking after the cemeteries at Passchendaele and Poelkapelle.

"When you see the names of 55,000 people missing you realise that someone

● Turn to next page





Death of a city: The famous Cloth Hall of Ypres resembled broken teeth

## Reduced to rubble

● From Page 13

must remember them," he explained. "It is the tradition of this town and people here think it is important. There is always someone who comes and watches, even when it is minus four or five degrees. People are grateful for what they did."

Known to many old soldiers as "Wipers", the town of Ypres became a terrible and costly symbol of the Allies' fight against the Germans. The word "salient" is a military term for a bulge in the front line, and in 1914 the bulge concerned was caused by Ypres. Whole battalions were virtually annihilated defending the city which was systematically pummeled by artillery. By the end of the First Battle of Ypres – there were four major battles altogether – more than 50,000 casualties had been sustained by the British.

It was decided that the town should be held as a symbol and also so that the soldiers who died at the beginning of the war should not have lost their lives in vain.

So began the appalling carnage to win a piece of ground which stretched to the village of Passchendaele, a few miles from Ypres. It was estimated that a man died for every inch the Allies advanced. It took them 100 days to reach Passchendaele and only three days to lose everything they had gained.

Relentless shelling changed the land-

scape beyond recognition. A British soldier wrote at the time: "There is not a sign of life of any sort. Not a bird, not even a rat or a blade of grass. Nature is as dead as those soldiers whose bodies remained where they had fallen the previous autumn. Death was written large everywhere."

"Where there had been farms there was not a stick or stone to show. The earth had been churned and re churned. It was simply a soft sloppy mess into which you sank to the neck if you slipped from the duckboard tracks. Shell hole cut across shell hole. Pits of earth, like simmering fat, brimful of water and slimy mud, mile after mile as far as the eye can see."

"It is not possible to set down the things that could be written of the Salient. They would haunt your dreams."



Risen from the ashes: The Cloth Hall restored and now used as a museum

Ypres (now known by its Flemish name of Ieper) was reduced to a pile of rubble no higher than a man's chest, with the famous Medieval Cloth Hall resembling a few broken teeth on the stark landscape. It was said that a soldier sitting on a horse could see through the town from one side to the other.

So many British men died in defence of "Wipers" that it assumed a special significance for Britain. Much time was taken deciding how to fix the sacrifice in the minds of future generations.

Winston Churchill, then War Minister, said: "I should like us to acquire the whole

# Sarajevo ... cradle of insanity

SARAJEVO. The name of this ancient city is enough to conjure memories and feelings in many soldiers today.

It was the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics, but more significantly became the focus of Serbia's relentless siege against the Bosnian Muslims during the recent civil war. British gunners defended the city from Mount Igman when NATO decided the time had come to show its teeth, and no one who served there in its worst days will ever forget "Sniper Alley".

Now the headquarters of NATO's Stabilisation Force, the city still bears the scars of street-fighting and bombardment. But if troops who have served in Bosnia think that the area's problems began in the early 1990s they are much mistaken. Sarajevo was the birth-place of the First World War.

In 1914 tensions were at fever pitch in Europe between the great imperial powers of Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia and France. It needed only an incident at the wrong place and time to start a full-scale war.

That incident happened in Sarajevo. A shot fired by a young Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, killed Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and reverberated around the world, sparking off the bloodiest war in history. So great was the scale of the

ruins of Ypres ... A more sacred place for the British does not exist in the whole world."

The Imperial War Graves Commission, of which Rudyard Kipling was a member, finally appointed Sir Reginald Blomfield to design a memorial to the fallen. He chose the site of the old gate through which so many British soldiers had passed on their way to the front, and was known by Tommy as "the Gap". It led to the infamous Menin Road along which was situated the dreaded Hellfire Corner.

The vast triumphal arch in the Roman style weighs 20,000 tons, is 135ft long, 104ft wide and 80ft high. Despite its size the gate was found to be too small to bear all the names of those who had no grave and 35,000 extra names were engraved at the Tyne Cot cemetery near Passchendaele. A proud British lion, which lies on



Sarajevo today: Princip Bridge, where a student fired the shot which started the Great War

slaughter that hardly a family in Britain was not in mourning for a husband, father or son.

More than 900,000 British men marched to their deaths in a series of battles etched forever on the Colours of our modern regiments: Mons and the Marne, Cambrai and the Somme, Amiens and Armentieres, Ypres, St Julien, Arras, Messines, Bapaume, Loos, Passchendaele, Pilcherm and Poelcappelle, to name a few.

But of course the battles were not confined to the fields of Flanders. It became a "world war" because the imperial states

carried the fighting to their colonies, notably Africa. Other countries which had, in reality, nothing to do with the conflict, such as Turkey, were bribed or forced to take sides. The war became more global when, finally in 1917, America entered the battlefield.

It was expected to be a short war – six months at the most – and young men flocked to join up in case they missed the action. Despite whole armies being destroyed during the first year there was enough "cannon fodder" left to replace them.

Compared with the huge distances mis-

top of the gate gazing down the Menin Road, was designed to be "a symbol of the latent strength and heroism of our race", according to Blomfield's memoirs.

Today it is still a place of pilgrimage for relatives of those who died in the Great War. Nearly every evening, in a small ceremony just before the Last Post, representatives from veterans' associations present a wreath and say the poem of remembrance.

Ken Fielding, the county chairman of the North Staffordshire branch of the Royal British Legion, has visited the Menin Gate a dozen times.

"There is still a lot of pride in our history," he said. "It seems to me there seems to be a reawakening of it recently, and we have noticed it in our poppy appeal, with an increasing number of young people wearing them."

"I'm proud to be here. I fought in the Second World War, where, like the first, there was muck and bullets and death. It seems right we should stop here and pay our respects."

The people of Ypres also feel it is right the men who made the ultimate sacrifice should never be forgotten. They have rebuilt their town in the same style as it was before it was razed to the ground, but made the Menin Gate very welcome.

Piet Chielens, the provincial co-ordinator for the museum in Ypres, *In Flanders Fields*, said he thought it would be very unwise for people to forget.

"There are a lot of lessons to be learnt from it," he explained. "There is a lot of public interest. Before it was 'We'll ask Grandad'. Well, Grandad has gone now. I feel the repetition of live music and the human gesture every night makes the

siles and bombs can travel today, the great land battles of the First World War were fought over remarkably narrow strips of land. In the west, parts of the front did not move a yard throughout four years of fighting and, because of the range of artillery on both sides, was never wider than ten miles at any one time.

All the fighting on the Eastern Front took place in a belt 100 miles wide north and south of the Carpathians or on the crests of the Caucasus. Gallipoli, where the British and French armies were defeated by the Turks, was fought on a "pocket handkerchief" battlefield. The Italian front, which opened up in 1915, was confined to a few peaks in the Tyrol and Julian Alps.

A generation was lost in what was supposed to be the war to end all wars.

France suffered grievously: 1.4 million young men dead. The Russians even more: 1.7 million, or thereabouts, never returned. Germany's dead were put at 1.8 million, the Austro-Hungarian Empire losses at 1.2 million.

Historians believe the First World War cost the lives of ten million people between 1914 and 1918.

Surprisingly, an estimated 4,000 British veterans of the conflict are still believed to be alive.

But for a modern generation distanced by time from the wholesale grief of those terrible years, small reminders come in the form of poppies which are worn in the first two weeks of November, and the recently reinstated two-minute national silence at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month.

monument come alive. Every night at 6 o'clock it's as if the names have just been added, and I would hate it if it were to stop.

"It is such an important part of the fabric of the town, and I don't think it will ever go away."

"Occasionally the ceremony becomes more elaborate, but I think it is important it should be kept simple. Some of the most moving ceremonies are in the middle of winter, in the pouring rain with just two figures in cloaks playing the Last Post."

The Menin Gate stands as a monument to bravery, freedom and gratitude. When, during the Second World War, the town was liberated by soldiers of the Polish Armoured Division on September 6, 1944, their arrival was celebrated by repeatedly sounding the Last Post under the Menin Gate.





Picture: Silver Knight Exhibitions Ltd.

Picture: Tank Museum

Report: Graham Bound

IF YOU want to get a flavour – and a bitter one at that – of the way of life and death on the Western Front during the First World War, make your way to Bovington.

This month, the curators of the nation's greatest collection of armoured fighting vehicles opened an elaborate and remarkably realistic recreation of British and German defensive systems; a maze of trenches, tunnels and evocative panoramas takes visitors into what theme park designers might call "the trench experience".

This attempt to reproduce the more tolerable aspects of a typical Tommy's journey to hell begins in an upbeat recruiting office. The burly effigy of a recruiting sergeant comes to life as you approach, querying (half-heartedly, as they probably did) whether you are really 18 and old enough to fight. The path continues past wounded men being evacuated from the front, the first glimpse young Tommy might have had of the Western Front's mincing machine.

A little further on in a British trench a soldier, deafened by shell-fire and his spirit gone, huddles in a funk-hole, risking a bullet from his own side but still ignoring the exhortation to go over the top. Fat rats feed near his feet.

The climax of the exhibition is in a German trench (notably better-built than those of the British) over which one of the original stalemate-breakers, a Mk II tank, rears crazily, apparently blasting and crushing the enemy into submission.

The danger of such an exhibition is

Over the top, main picture: British soldiers leave their trench in the Tank Museum's new exhibition

The stalemate-breaker, inset. A Mk II tank poised to crush a German trench

that it will either fail to adequately portray the horror or do it so vividly that visitors will be disturbed by the experience.

The Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset, has opened a remarkable new exhibition about trench warfare on the Western Front

The designers seem to have walked this tightrope reasonably well: the exhibition is not fun, but neither is it horror.

As always when one peers into the history of the First World War it is the personal tragedies which linger in the mind. Into this category falls a display of photos and documents. There are copies of two letters written to a mother.

A loyal and idealistic son and soldier, Pte Arthur Morrow, writes to her in an undated letter: "Don't be down-hearted and think that I am fighting for your liberty and freedom. I am not afraid to go."

The second came from a Casualty Clearing Station and was written some time later by the matron: "Your son was sent down to this hospital this afternoon, very badly wounded. He passed away a short time after he was admitted, he was quite unconscious. We found a letter in his pocket with this address. He also had a testament in his pocket which you had given him."

The Tank Museum, more used to dealing with the cold, hard technology of armoured vehicles, does well to let human frailty, suffering and compassion emerge from its new exhibition.

## Kitstop

Report: Anthony Stone  
Picture: Mike Weston

IN 30 seconds the whistles will blow and this soldier is going "over the top". He is an infantryman in the Middlesex Regiment and his job is to clear the German trench 150 yards away.

He has been in the front line for eight hours. Typically, attacking troops were in position for less than 24 hours. Front-line troops were in the trenches for five to seven days. There were relatively brief periods of exposure.

Although you might think he is in the worst possible place in all the world, Tommy Atkins sees things slightly differently. He thinks things could be worse. He could be in the second wave. Then he would have to scramble into no man's land carrying barbed wire, duck boards, rations, and petrol tins full of water. Being unencumbered gives him a fighting chance.

He is 27 and has been in the Army since 1915. Since conscription was introduced in 1916 he has lost two members of his family... a brother in his teens and an uncle in his late 40s.

By 1918 the Army would take conscripts between the ages of 18 and 50. The youngest British soldier killed during the war was 14, the oldest in his 60s. The attrition rate was so devastating that by 1915 the Army lowered its height requirement to 5ft 2in. Some units had special trenches dug so that small soldiers, issued with short-butt rifles, could see over the top.

### All the comforts...

**Tin rations of bully beef, corn beef, and pork and beans.** The French would trade their rations of bread and sausage. They were not impressed by bully beef and referred to it as monkey. British troops called the mixture of pork and beans dog's vomit because of its colour and texture. Tin food was heavy and awkward. **Biscuit rations** usually smashed to thicken stew.

In theory soldiers were allowed to have **blankets** from October to March but in practice there was nowhere to carry them. **Greatcoats** were discouraged because they made soldiers look like Germans and were too bulky. Leather jerkins, of the type worn until recently by dustbin men, were popular after 1915.

Soldier thanks the National Army Museum for the loan of the uniform and equipment and for its assistance with this feature. The kit is modelled by LCpl Mark Howe, 1 PWRR, the regimental antecedents of which include The Middlesex Regiment.

There was no protection apart from that afforded by the **steel helmet**, which was only introduced in 1916. This might or might not deflect a bullet. The helmet was designed to protect the head from explosions outside the trench. After its introduction, the number of injuries actually went up, but the number of fatalities declined. This was because of the safety-belt syndrome. The safer you feel, the

faster you drive. The Army experimented with steel breastplates but the men could not move easily. The helmet was worn with the chinstrap at the back. If worn the other way around, apocryphal stories suggested that in an explosion the disc-shaped helmet would jerk back and break the neck. So it was worn the wrong way round, which meant if Atkins ran or fell over, his helmet came off.

**Two ID tags** made of vulcanised fibre, one circular and one octagonal, attached to a cord and worn around the neck. They carried the soldier's name, number, religion and unit. The circular tag was taken off if he was killed and the other stayed with the corpse to aid identification. This became standard after the battles of 1916 when so many bodies were left in no man's land. Soldiers could also buy aluminium tags from the Army Service Corps which were attached to the wrists. They did not rot or burn.

**Bayonet:** 17.5in-long, normally carried in the scabbard on the left-hand side. As a weapon for clearing trenches it was without equal.

**Wire cutters:** The jaws acted as a guide for the wire. The weapon was pushed forward to complete the cutting action.

Top pockets in the **tunic** were supposed to contain two grenades, but more usually these were replaced with postcards, pencils, pipe or cigarettes. Grenades would be passed up to the bombers at the front when required. **AB 64 pay book** inside the top left-hand pocket contained the soldier's will, qualifications and record of inoculations.

**Patches system** of different badges was used to allow officers to identify a soldier's battalion and division. Sometimes worn in the middle of his back, above his haversack. On the first day of the Somme NCOs wore tin triangles fastened on their packs so they could be seen by aerial observers.

**Haversack** contained groundsheet and a cape for wet weather. A tin mug was carried upside down with a spare pair of socks inside to keep them dry. D-shaped **mess tins** were also carried on haversack's back, so there was no chance of keeping quiet. Inside, a **hold-all** contained a sewing-kit, knife, fork spoon, cut-throat razor (or if he was lucky a safety razor), shaving brush, comb and tin opener. There was also a cloth for cleaning the weapon.

**Bag** for unconsumed portion of day's rations.

Cotton **bandoleer** carried at least another 50 rounds. This was worn over the top of everything else so the soldier could take it off and throw it to whoever needed more ammunition.

Standard wool **trousers** in khaki, an Urdu word meaning dusty. The dye was originally from India and made from tea or mud. This colour blended in better than the blue-grey of the German Army uniform.

**Water-bottle**, not shown, but worn on the right side, contained two pints of water, cold tea... or wine, if he could scrounge it off the French. British soldiers were given a rum ration in cold and wet weather and frequently before troops went over the top. Other than that, alcohol in the front line was discouraged. Troops were given their allowance unless the CO was teetotal, in which case they got pea-soup powder.

The alcohol was delivered in big ceramic jars inscribed SRD – Service Rum Depot and not, as Tommy Atkins believed, Seldom Reaches Destination. Water was delivered in old petrol tins and so always tasted of petrol, chloride and lime. The Germans took over wine bottling plants and used the bottles for carrying water. When the British took over a German trench it looked as if there had been a massive party!

Small box **respirator** in the ready position. First introduced in 1915.

**1908 Mills Web** equipment. It could carry 150 rounds of small arms ammunition.

**Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) MkIII\*.** A simplified version of the complex weapon first introduced before the First World War. Sighted to 2,000 yards, expected to fire 15-20 rounds per minute, loading from five-round charges. In 1914 a soldier firing a Lee Enfield is recorded losing off 37 rounds in a minute and hitting 22 bullseyes.

**Leather sling**, frequently with a single round in the little slider which kept the strap in place when it expanded in the wet.

**Field dressing** sewn into right front flap, almost under the butt of his weapon, and always in the same place for every man.

**Handle** of the entrenching tool. The head of the entrenching tool was carried in his webbing pouch on his back.

**Puttees**, derived from an Indian word meaning bandages. These strips of material covered the gap in the boots and also kept the lower leg warm and dry. Remarkably effective, but being made of wool, once they got wet, they stayed wet. They were the successors to gaiters and splat-dashers worn in 17th and 18th century.

**Steel-shod ammunition boots**, made with the flesh side outwards, so they could absorb dubbin to make them waterproof.

Typical weight of kit was 72lb (33kg).



# A million reasons to grieve

Report: Graham Bound

*Oh we don't want to lose you,  
But we think you ought to go...*

*... With all our might and main  
We shall cheer you, thank you,  
kiss you,  
When you come back again.*

MOST of them did not come back. Something like 1,104,890 young men, urged on by such cynical and sentimental doggerel as the lines above, were rewarded not with kisses or cheers, but with unspeakable horror and a filthy death. Hardly a family in the country (or, indeed, the empire) was unaffected and their grief went on and on.

The suffering and sadness of the soldiers and their families is what the Imperial War Museum's moving special exhibition, "The First World War Remembered", is all about.

Designer Angela Godwin has presented moving and evocative testaments – poetry, letters, photographs, memorials, paintings and personal treasures – which speak with a clarity unaffected by the passage of 80 years.

"We have emphasised the personal loss and the process of grieving," she said.

Just as the men had died united in the same effort, it seems that families wanted to grieve together. When the government of the day erected a temporary memorial in Whitehall a year after the Armistice, it was shocked at the public response... millions swamped the site. A *Daily Express* article claimed: "If only they would leave it here for all time, there would never be mothers lacking to keep the spot fresh with flowers." The Cenotaph was unveiled a year later on the same site.

The difference between the officially-favoured concept of noble sacrifice and the people's perception of unnecessary slaughter are implied, or obvious.

*No Man's Land*, for example, is a grimly ironic bronze relief by C S Jagger depicting skeletal, open-mouthed corpses suspended on barbed wire and sprawled across machine guns. It is difficult to imagine it hanging in a cathedral or palace.

Tears prickle when one looks into a series of small boxes, each containing the mementoes of a dead soldier, sailor or airman. The contents – family photos, letters, poems or trinkets – are desperately poignant.

Near them are manuscripts of works by the war's great poets, Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon and others. They leave one in awe. To see the draft of *Dulce et Decorum Est* annotated by the hand of Wilfred Owen, who was killed a month before the Armistice, is inspiring.

## Military heritage

# When Codford went to war

Few signs remain of the years when English villages were drawn into a global conflict

Report: David Falcke

TODAY they are small, quintessentially English villages scattered around the edge of Salisbury Plain. Eighty years ago they were vast training and transfer camps for tens of thousands of troops waiting to move to France during the First World War.

One such village is Codford on the A36 between Salisbury and Warminster. An Australian Expeditionary Forces cap badge cut into the side of a hill and a discreet sign to the Anzac War Cemetery are the only reminders of a period in its history during which between 17,000 and 25,000 troops from Britain, Australia and New Zealand were stationed in and around the village.

At the beginning of the war Codford comprised some 500 souls. There was no telephone, piped water or electricity, only two cars... and the doctor did his rounds in a pony-and-trap. There was one pub, two grocers, a draper, butcher, saddler, cycle shop and blacksmith and the post went to the station, a mile away, by hand-cart in the late evening.

The year 1914 brought not only war to Codford, but also some of the worst weather this century. Between October and February 24 inches of rain fell, causing major flooding in the village. Because of the volume of military traffic the roads quickly became a quagmire and earned it the nickname of "Codford-on-the-Mud".

The influx of men and material went on until 1919 when the last of the soldiers, except those in the cemetery, returned home.

Soldiers were housed in tents on several sites around the village. In September 1914 the *Warminster Journal* reported that



Codford then: a shanty town of shops, right, sprang up to cater for the soldiers

Codford today: There are no reminders of the war in the centre, below, but soldiers who died are remembered at the Anzac graveyard

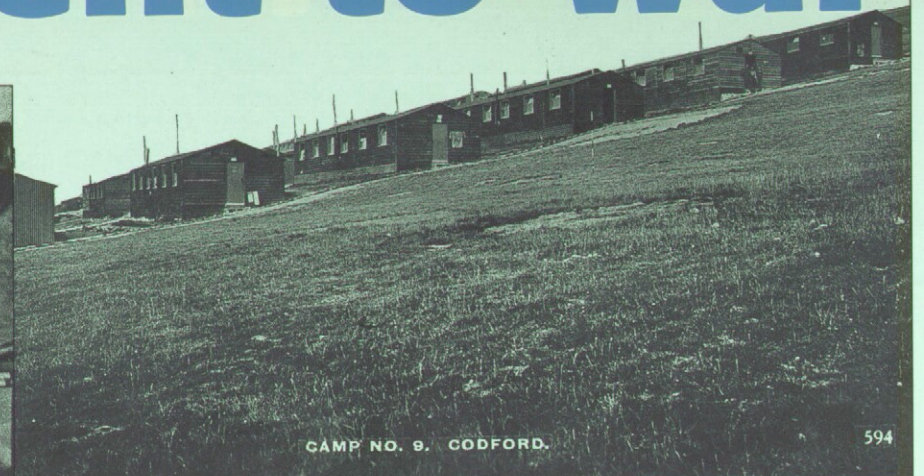


Picture: Terry Champion

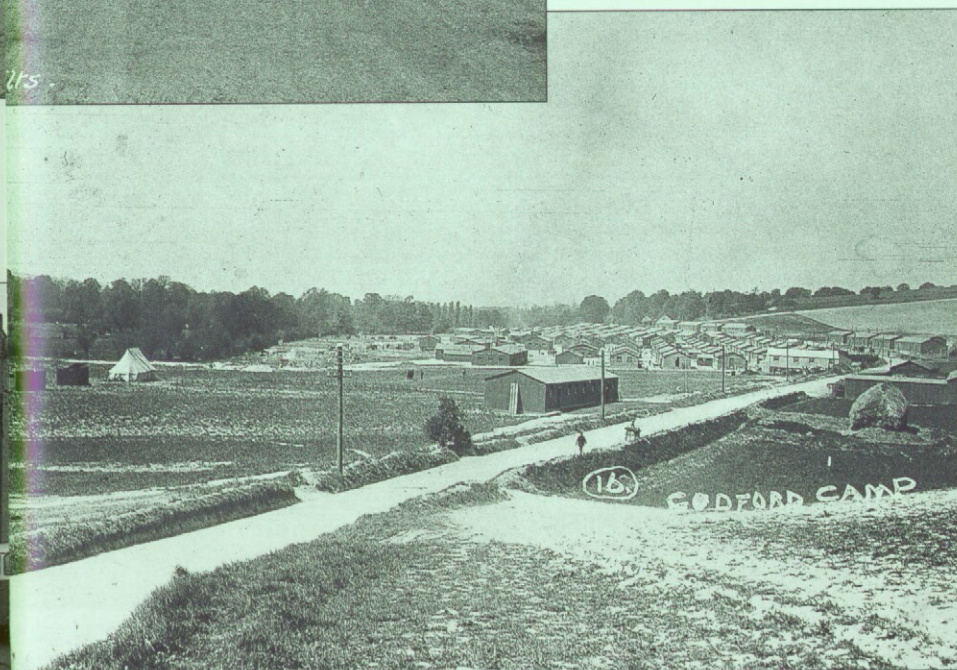
"The camps are divided into two Divisions, the 25th and the 26th. The former is situated in the Codford and Fisherton Delamere area."

Fifteen camps were built in and around the village and a Red Cross hospital was constructed beside Codford St Mary church. Military engineers were called in and hutted camps soon replaced the tents.

To help with the movement of men and stores a military railway was constructed from the existing Codford railway station



By 1917 the camps, above and below, around Codford were well established, home to as many as 25,000 troops. Today they are pastures for cattle and sheep



with a branch-line that served nearly all of the camps.

Local inhabitants were quick to realise that this influx of troops was a boon to trade and a mass of shanty shops opened. Many of the photographs that depict the village during the Great War come from such shops as Talbot's Army Stores, Couzens Military Stores, and Holvey and Co, Stationers and Tobacconists, Codford.

The 25th Division left Codford for France in 1915 where it remained for the duration. In 1916 Codford was selected as the New Zealand Command Depot for men who had been casevaced from the

front line and, although recovered from their wounds, were not yet fully fit to return to the front. The camp hospital was taken over by No 3 New Zealand General Hospital with beds for up to 1,000 patients.

As well as a large YMCA club, a huge New Zealand Club was established and gained a reputation as the best Service venue on the Plain.

A local manor house, Stockton Manor, was taken over as the headquarters for troops in the area, which led to the creation of the Australian badge on the hillside. It was constructed by soldiers on defaulters and, in its original state, was

made out of beer bottles dug in, neck first, so that when sunlight caught them they gave off the bronze colouring of the actual cap badge.

Codford was not the most popular of bases and less-than-flattering poems were written about the village. An excerpt from one reads:

*"There's an isolated, desolated spot I'd like to mention,  
Where all you hear is 'Stand at ease', 'Slope Arms',  
'Quick March', 'Attention'.  
T's miles away from anywhere, by Gad, it is a rum'un,  
A chap lived there for fifty year and never saw a woman.*

*There are lots of little huts, all dotted here and there,  
For those who have to live inside, I've offered many a prayer  
Inside the huts there's rats as big as any nanny goat,  
Last night a soldier saw one trying on his over coat*

*Now when this War is over and we've captured Kaiser Billy,  
To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly,  
Just send him down to Codford there among the rats and clay,  
And I'll bet it won't be long before he droops and fades away."*

One view of the High Street is entitled "Some Street" – almost certainly a local person's mis-spelling of Somme.

Life for soldiers in Codford was hard. In one postcard written in May 1915 by a soldier in 16 Platoon, D Company, 8th Norfolk Regiment, apologises for his delay in writing. "We have been out from early morning till late evening then turn in rather weary, but I will send a letter at first opportunity."

Eighty years on, there is little evidence of Codford's role in the momentous years of the Great War.



# It's a long way to go . . .

Report: Graham Bound  
Pictures: Terry Champion

"EIGHTY years ago you would have been doing this for real . . . and God help you then!" Wade Russell, one-time lieutenant colonel in the Royal Tank Regiment and all-time enthusiast for the life and times of Tommy Atkins, jolted our little expeditionary force into the proper mind-set for this four-day introduction to the history and heartache of the First World War's Western Front.

Rolling ashore at Calais in our luxury coach, our Holts Battlefield Tours guide reminded us that we were re-tracing a journey taken by millions of ordinary soldiers of the "Great" War. There was one major difference, of course: we had return tickets and were expected to dine (rather well, actually) in Flanders and Picardy, not to die.

Now their destinations, Ypres (Wipers to the lads) the Somme and Vimy Ridge were also ours, and we were to see why these market towns and this beautiful countryside became bywords for horror.

## STATIC BATTLES

Ypres, reached after a few hours driving, was the place where, following a brief period of stop-start advances and static battles, both sides came to a jarring halt and hunkered down for a long war of attrition. The Germans built huge concrete bunkers which they were generally happy to defend, while the allies made do with less elaborate trenches, always believing they would soon be advancing.

But there was to be little of that. Within weeks the medieval town of Ypres had been levelled and the low, sodden land around it was a churned-up sea of mud inhabited by corpses and rats; a hellish blister protruding six miles into German territory. For the best part of four years it sucked up blood like a sponge, but the British high command insisted the Salient could never be lost. They would break out and round on the Germans, or they would die there.

We visited many of their graves. The massed ranks of Portland stone memorials scat-

To the troops marching and singing *Tipperary* back in 1918, it must have seemed like a very long way indeed. Now the battlefields are a lot closer and easier to visit. Haunted by history, they are fascinating and moving, as we found out

tered around the now green and pretty Flanders fields spoke of the sacrifice in Ypres' three long, slogging battles – and of some astonishingly brave men.

In a small cemetery near the village of Branlooke, we found the grave of Capt Noel Chevasse, a gentle man, a doctor and the winner of two Victoria Crosses awarded for heroism in rescuing wounded soldiers from no man's land.

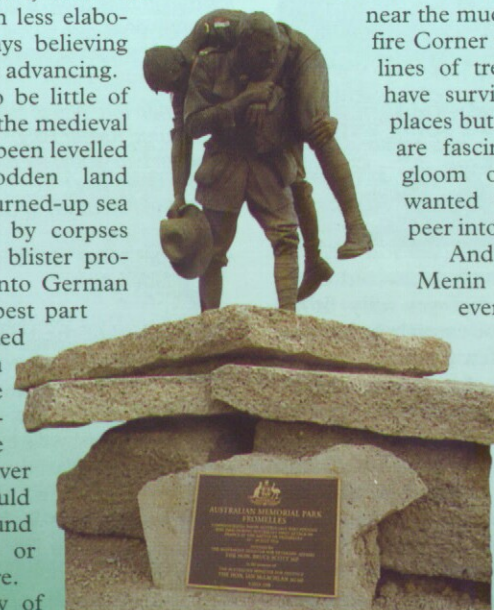
After the war, local people denied Churchill his wish to leave the Salient barren as a memorial to the fallen. As we have seen earlier in this issue, even the gorgeously ornate Cloth Market is now exactly as it was before the shelling began.

Now a modern museum, it is a must for any visitor. German and allied artefacts share the dioramas and displays. Simulated artillery explosions sometimes drown out the recorded voices of actors reading the war's famous poems. There are T-shirts with poppy designs for sale, but this is a rare example of Western Front commercialisation.

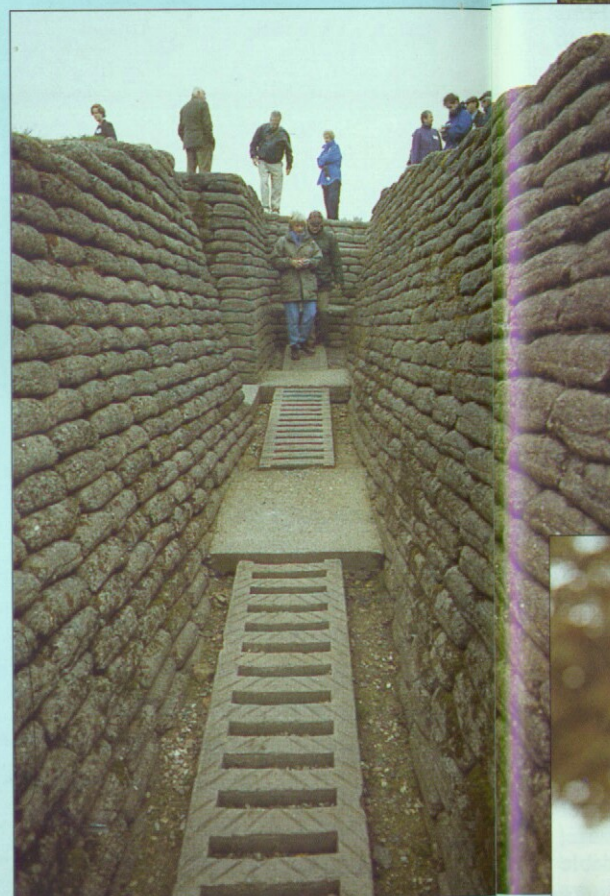
In Sanctuary Wood, a mile or two down the Menin Road from Ypres and near the much-bombarded Hellfire Corner (see Page 69), a few lines of trenches and tunnels have survived. Shored up in places but never restored, they are fascinating. But, in the gloom of that wood, few wanted to step down and peer into their damp tunnels.

And there is the huge Menin Gate with almost every square centimetre of its marble faces covered with the names of the dead. Standing beneath it, as our group did, and listening to the nightly *Last Post* ceremony, this monolith makes an impression like no other memorial.

It was only a



**Don't forget me, cobber:** Erected this year, this statue commemorates the 8,000 Australians who lost their lives at Pozieres



**Vimy Ridge:** From these now restored trenches, Allied troops watched Germans dug into positions just a 100 metres away

**Tommy's best friend:** Playing the part, guide Wade, right, demonstrates the reliable old bolt-action Lee Enfield rifle. A good soldier could fire 15 rounds a minute

short drive across the French border to the wide, sluggish Somme river. Here in France's lovely Picardy region the landscape remains pockmarked with craters. No wonder. There has never been a more dreadful infantry battle than the one which started here on July 1, 1916.

The Somme attack looked good on paper. It would take place over a front of 15 miles, with more than 200,000 men committed to it. A huge week-long



**Peaceful now:** In the Ypres Salient's oddly-named Sanctuary Wood, near Hellfire Corner, the old trenches have survived for 80 years



artillery bombardment would destroy the barbed-wire and kill the enemy in their trenches. Just to make sure, sappers dug tunnels under the strongest German points, detonating 40,000lb of explosives in each.

Gen Sir Henry Rawlinson, in command of the front, ordered his men to wait for a few minutes after the bombardment had lifted and then walk to the German trenches. It would, he thought,

be rather like moving house. But the British artillery had not destroyed the wire nor penetrated the bunkers. The enemy may have been deafened and driven half mad, but most were still alive.

Given a vital few minutes, the Germans raced to their guns and watched as battalion after battalion walked into their interlocking arcs of machine-gun fire. By the end of that appalling first day the British and Empire forces had sustained 58,000 casualties – and the battle was to last for five more months.

Across the Somme battlefield, there is an astonishing number of memorials to the men of the colonies and dominions. One which particularly touches the heart stands at Pozieres, where 8,000 Australians were cut down. In this tiny park their countrymen have erected a statue depicting a soldier carrying a wounded comrade. The statue is known as *Don't forget me, cobber*.

The story of the Newfoundland Regiment told at Beaumont Hamel on the Somme is desperately tragic. It had taken this tiny colony (not then part of Canada) two years to raise a single battalion, but it was wiped out in half-an-hour, probably for the loss of not a single German. After

the war the Newfoundlanders bought the land on which their men had fallen and made it into a particularly lovely park.

It was almost a relief to learn that at Vimy Ridge, the final stop on the tour, things had gone relatively well for the Allies. One of the most heavily-fortified German positions of the war, it was taken in textbook style by 40,000 Canadians.

Allied and German trenches preserved here are often less than 100 metres apart.

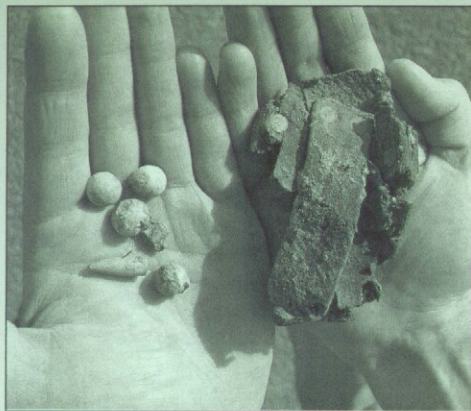
The never-ending cemeteries are a testimony to the huge scale of the battles. In them we found personal, heartfelt messages which reminded us that the impact of the Great War is still felt today. This one was attached to flowers left at Thiepval Cemetery: "*Granny couldn't make this journey, but we have not forgotten you. Your grandchildren, Alex and Margaret*".

The Tipperary Tour, as Holts call it, returned to Blighty having suffered nothing more than a little light opposition in the duty-free queues. It would have been different 80-odd years ago. Then a tour to the Western Front might have taken years. Indeed, for tens of thousands of soldiers it never ended.



**We have joined forces with Holts Battlefield Tours to offer you the same tour at a special rate. See Page 24 for more details.**





Bullet, shrapnel and old webbing from a farmer's field, once a nightmare landscape...

## Deadly harvest

TRANQUIL fields of sugar beet and corn stretch across the Belgian countryside under the late September sun, writes Karen Moseley. It is almost inconceivable to imagine that 80 years ago these same fields, known during the Great War as the Ypres Salient, were a nightmare landscape of mud, jagged stumps of dead trees and unburied corpses.

But every year since 1918, as the farmers gather their crops and plough their fields, they also collect a more sinister harvest – the tragic remains of First World War soldiers, ammunition and equipment – known locally as “the Iron Harvest”.

“Farmers are still finding 200 tons of live ammunition a year,” explained Mark Horner, who runs the Ypres Battlefield Memorial Tour. “This was a very big war in a very small area.”

Farmers place the pieces in piles at the edge of their fields, usually under signposts or markers, or put single shells in the holes of electricity poles. They are collected by army experts who make regular visits during harvest time.

On July 31, 1917 the British and Canadians attacked the Germans and by November pushed them back to Passchendaele, about ten miles from Ypres. Before the first attack the British bombarded the reclaimed bogland in front of them with four million shells to destroy the drainage patterns.

Four months later the Germans pushed back to the outskirts of Ypres and the Allies lost everything they had gained in just three days. Half a million men died, and 100,000 bodies were never recovered.

“The centre of Passchendaele was the most heavily shelled spot on the planet,” said Mark. “The atomic bomb on Hiroshima had the equivalent of 12,000 tons of TNT. More than 12,000 tons of shells fell on Passchendaele, and when you think that Passchendaele is 100 times smaller than Hiroshima, it means that the destruction was 100 times worse than the atomic bomb.”

Interview: Karen Moseley

ROBBIE BURNS bustled down the corridor at some speed waving an arm in an invitation to follow. “Tea time,” he explained. “Best to get there in good time.”

At 102 years of age, still spry and dapper, there was little outward sign of the wound that during the First World War threatened amputation of his leg. He poured with practised efficiency and insisted on everyone having some chocolate cake before sitting down himself.

A veteran of the Loos and the Somme, ex-shorthand typist for a circus, dance-hall organiser, cinema-group manager, hotelier and charity worker, Robbie now lives in a residential home in Wokingham run by the Cinematograph Trade Council Benevolent Fund.

He still visits the battlefields of France and Belgium and is a staunch member of the Royal British Legion. He recently visited the Houses of Parliament and 10 Downing Street as a member of the World War One Veterans' Association.

What, did he think, accounted for him being so fit at his age? “Whisky and wine, but no beer, and nothing but cigars since 1920,” came back the prompt reply with a twinkle.

Eighty years ago this month Cpl Robert Burns was in a camp hospital in Ireland when he heard news that the guns on the Western Front had fallen silent after four years of terrible fighting. It was the day before his 23rd birthday.

### SHORTHAND DIARY

During the war he had kept a diary, in shorthand, which he was later to turn into a book of his personal reminiscences called *Once a Cameron Highlander*.

When he and his friend Jimmy left Inverness on St Andrew's Day 1914 as part of the 7th Battalion, The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, they were convinced the war was going to last just six months.

“We jauntily marched off towards the railway station and the nearer the centre of town we got, the louder the cheers from the people lining the streets – except from those with tear-laden eyes,” he remembered.

The battalion moved to Salisbury Plain, where the real hardening-up process began, and on July 8, 1915 set off for Boulogne, joining thousands of other troops, cavalry, gun carriages, ammunition wagons and field kitchens.

In those early days, Robbie recalled, the

Robert Burns was just 19 when he went ‘over the top’. *Soldier* visited the centenarian who still loves life but has never forgotten the horrors of the First World War

front line was surprisingly peaceful. “No rifle fire or trench mortars to disturb those trying to get a nap after spending hours during the night on look-out duty,” he wrote at the time.

“On a summer's day what is more comforting and assuring than to listen and watch the larks and other birds fluttering between the trenches – where no man dare tread?”

After a few days they would go back to a village to “rest”, but much of the time was spent tidying up streets, filling in shell holes and re-making battered reserve and communication trenches.

His first serious experience of fighting was at the battle of Loos on September 25, 1915. The order to advance was given at 0600. For the first time, Robbie, with fixed bayonet, went over the top. He noticed a horrible sickly smell which came in invisible waves – gas which had been released by his own side.

“Having wriggled through, over, or under masses of barbed wire, which were responsible for many casualties, we threaded our way out of the much-damaged village of Loos.

“It was here that the first real horror of war hit me. Unbelievable to think that such a thing could happen. I was

running like mad over no man's land with someone practically rubbing shoulders with me. There was a flash and a bang and I threw myself to the ground. When I got up I found myself alone at the spot.”

Only 75 out of the whole battalion turned up for the initial roll-call after the battle. “As the hours passed quite a few more turned up and it was really pitiful to see them staggering home.”



Nineteen-year-old Robbie Burns before heading for the Western Front in 1914

There followed two weeks of comparative luxury in the town of Lilliers. “Undreamed of: bed, hot food at a table instead of dry biscuits and rainwater in an open trench – and hot water to get the dry mud off my hairy legs.”

He headed back to the front with the days getting shorter and the weather adding to his discomfort and difficulties. He remembers the “gluey mud, ankle deep plus overnight frost. No wonder so many men had to be taken away to hospital suffering from trench foot.”

During this time he was in and out of different trench systems, which involved long, exhausting marches over shell-torn roads carrying heavy equipment. The following winter was harsh. “In addition to being drenched due to lack of dug-outs, the front line trenches were like quagmires, up to the knees in mud. Having bare knees it was advisable to wipe the mud off before it hardened.”

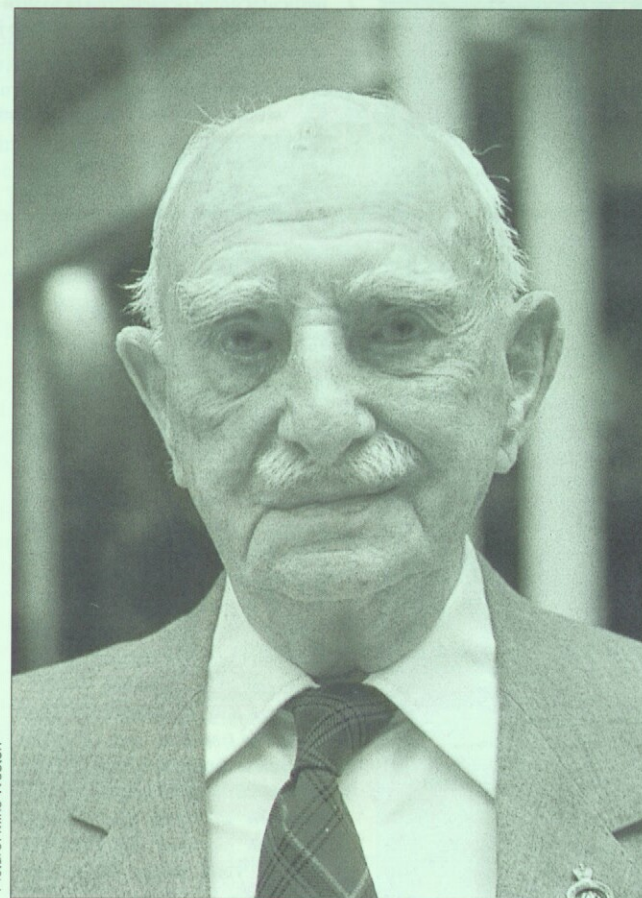
A request came through from Brigade HQ for a shorthand typist and Robbie was given the job. After roughing it for so long the unexpected transfer was wonderful, not least because he was able to stretch out on a dry floor and to get hot food every day. He even managed to return to Scotland for some R and R. When he walked through the village towards his old school to see his little brother, the headmaster gave all the pupils the day off.

### FIRST TANKS

He rejoined the Camerons and by August 9, 1916 was at the Somme. The assaults and shelling were relentless.

He wrote later: “From where I was standing I could see some strange-looking objects – like miniature steam road-rollers. This is a date I must remember – September 15, 1916.

“It was a weird phenomenon to see them crawling forward with infantry, bayonets fixed, cautiously crouching immediately behind them whilst it was a heart-warming sight to see the Germans on the run. What were these strange contrivances? No one could give them a name at that time but later they became known as tanks.”



Spry and dapper: At 102, Robbie Burns still loves life

Robbie fought at the front line until October 27 when he was unexpectedly given a leave pass. He celebrated his 21st birthday at home with his mother. He returned to the Somme where the “great push” was still going on. At the end of November he was in the middle of what he described as “agonising chaos”.

Until this point in the war his luck had held, but it ran out a few days before Christmas 1916 when he was caught in an explosion and his leg was badly injured. The next thing he remembered was being put on a stretcher and carried to a horse-drawn ambulance. As they set off to the dressing station the ambulance was blown up and the horses killed. Amazingly the wounded were lifted out.

“After first-aid cleaning I was transferred to a large marquee. I remember being put on the table but not being taken off it. On coming to I put my hand down and was overjoyed to find my leg was still there.”

He was transferred to a hospital in York where he was finally told that his leg would not be amputated, and after three

months was able to walk without crutches although he still needed a stick. He was allowed on leave to his beloved Scotland but did not mention to his mother that he was due to go back to France.

While waiting for his departure date he found out that a shorthand-typist was needed, applied for the job and was appointed as a confidential clerk, working directly for Col The Mackintosh of Mackintosh.

Everything seemed rosy until he was shown a letter saying that Pte Robert Burns had been accepted for a commission, which would have meant returning to France as an officer.

### EASTER RISING

It was Mackintosh who bluntly told him that if he went back he would most likely be killed and he ought to stay as his clerk. The decision was made and he stayed.

He moved with the battalion to Ireland which was very tense after the Easter Rising of 1916. But the end of the war finally arrived and uppermost in all their minds was the prospect of getting home.

Since leaving Inverness for the first time in 1914, more than 1,100 men from the 7th Battalion, The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders had died.

Robbie Burns's military career ended in 1919. For the next 20 years and during the Second World War he ran huge dance halls in London before becoming the manager of a group of 30 to 40 cinemas in the south-east of England. When he retired he opened a small hotel in Eastbourne which he ran with his wife until she died in the 1960s.

At an age when most men would have been going “gently into that good night”, Robbie set off for France where he stayed for 12 years working with the Little Brothers of the Poor, looking after people in need.

The Army took only five years from Robbie's extraordinary life, but he will never forget. His 103rd birthday – celebrated incidentally, the day after the Armistice – is being spent on the battlefields of France and Belgium... remembering the comrades who went out, but unlike him did not return.



# SOLDIER

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## IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY



This tour visits the battlefields of the Ypres Salient, Vimy Ridge and the Somme and is Holts' introduction to the Western Front.

To give a rounded picture, we also look at the politics, the generals, the letters home, the songs and the home front.

Some of the cemeteries and memorials are always included and we are happy to build in "special visits", giving the traveller a chance to find a particular grave or memorial or to visit an area mentioned in letters from the front. The group always lays a wreath in one of the cemeteries to remember those who fell in the Great War.

We run either three- or four-day alternatives. The itinerary is the same, but the four-day tour runs at a more leisurely pace, with a later departure from London and Dover.

**THREE-DAY TOUR DATES:**  
March 20-22 (T002/146), May 1-3 (T002/147), July 3-5 (T002/148), September 4-6 (T002/149).

### THREE-DAY ITINERARY

**Day 1:** Depart London 0845. Dover/Calais ferry 1215 and follow the BEF route to Ypres. Visit TOC H in **Poperinghe, Brandhoek CWGC Cemetery** (Noel Chevasse, double VC medical officer), **Essex Farm** (John McCrae's dressing station), **St George's Memorial Church**, the **Last Post** at the **Menin Gate**. Dinner and overnight in Ypres.

**Day 2:** Breakfast. Tour of the Ypres Salient including **Langemark German Cemetery** and the Canadian memorial, **The Brooding Soldier**. The great CWGC cemetery at **Tyne Cot**. The museum and preserved trenches at **Sanctuary Wood**. Lunch break and the **Flanders Fields Museum** in Ypres. The beautiful Canadian memorial and battlefield park at **Vimy Ridge**. Dinner and overnight at Assevilleers.

**Day 3:** Breakfast. Tour of main **Somme battlefield**, including the back area town of **Albert, Lochnagar Crater** at La Boisselle Delville Wood, **High Wood** and **Pozières**. The **Schwaben Redoubt** and the imposing Memorial to the Missing at **Thiepval**. The trench lines, cemeteries and memorials in the beautiful **Newfoundland Park**. The **Pals battalions** at **Serre**. Lunch in Arras. Calais/Dover ferry 1830. Arrive London approx 2100.

### FACT FILE

\*\*\*Hotel, half-board, wine with dinner, one lunch (four-day tour only), museum entrances.

**3/4 day tours (3) (4)**

Price per person (sharing)

£279/£369

Single supplement

£28/£41

Deposit

£50/£60

Insurance

£13/£19.50



**FOUR-DAY TOUR DATES:**  
April 10-13 (T181/24), May 22-25 (T181/25), June 19-22 (T181/26), July 24-27 (T181/27), August 21-24 (T181/28), September 25-28 (T181/29), October 9-12 (T181/30).

### FOUR-DAY ITINERARY

**Day 1:** Depart London 1015. Dover/Calais ferry 1345. **Brandhoek CWGC cemetery**, **St George's Memorial Church**, the **Last Post** at the **Menin Gate**. Dinner and overnight in Ypres.

**Day 2:** Breakfast. Tour of the Ypres Salient, including **Essex Farm**, TOC H in **Poperinghe, Langemark German Cemetery**. Lunch and the **Flanders Fields Museum** in Ypres. The Canadian Memorial, **The Brooding Soldier**. The CWGC cemetery and memorial at **Tyne Cot**. The museum and preserved trenches at **Sanctuary Wood**. Drive south to the Somme area. Dinner and overnight Arras or Assevilleers.

**Day 3:** Breakfast. Tour of main **Somme battlefield**, including **Lochnagar Crater** at La Boisselle. The South African museum and memorial at **Delville Wood, High Wood** and **Pozières**. Picnic lunch at **Auchonvillers**. The **Schwaben Redoubt** and the Memorial to the Missing at **Thiepval**. The trench lines, cemeteries and memorials in beautiful **Newfoundland Park**. The **Pals battalions** at **Serre**. Dinner and overnight.

**Day 4:** Breakfast. The battlefield park, trenches and Canadian memorial at **Vimy Ridge**. Lunch break in Arras or Bethune. Calais/Dover ferry 1700. Arrive London approx 1930.



In association with

**SOLDIER**



## Unending vigil ensures their names liveth for evermore

IT is possible to create beauty and serenity out of pain and butchery, **writes Anthony Stone.**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has proved this many times over in its 2,500 cemeteries and plots in 145 countries throughout the world. There, in many corners of foreign fields, the Commission has created the final resting places for the 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth countries who died during two world wars and numerous smaller conflicts.

It is an enormous undertaking and the Commission employs 1,250 staff, mostly gardeners and craftsmen, to maintain the graves in impeccable order, usually in a setting of lawn, trees and shrubs.

The Commission was established by Royal Charter in 1917, born out of the overwhelming outpouring of public grief. Its founding principles have remained unaltered: that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on the headstone on the grave or by inscription on a memorial; that the headstones and memorials should be permanent; that the headstones should be uniform; and that no distinction should be made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.

### DUTIES

Its duties are to mark and maintain the graves, to build and maintain memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown, and to keep records and registers.

Two monuments are common to the cemeteries: the Cross of Sacrifice, usually set upon an octagonal base and bearing a bronze sword upon its shaft; and, in the larger cemeteries, the Stone of Remembrance, upon which are carved the words from the Book of Ecclesiasticus; "Their names liveth for evermore".

The Commission's work is paid for by the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand and South Africa in the proportion to the number of their graves. Other Commonwealth countries contribute by bearing the cost of maintenance in their own lands.

The guns had been silent for four years when King George V walked across Flanders' fields and said: "We can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead... and in the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."



Serene and beautiful: The huge cemeteries of the Western Front are places of pilgrimage

## Poppy's claim to fame

A MEDICAL officer in the Great War sat at the door of a concrete dugout and gazed over the rows of wooden crosses beside him. He had just buried a patient who happened to be one of his closest friends, **writes Karen Moseley.**

On that day, May 2, 1915, Col John McCrae of the Canadian Army was moved to write what is one of the First World War's most famous poems.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place.*

Published in *Punch* in December 1915, it was so successful that the image of the poppy was taken up by the British Legion as a symbol of remembrance.

When he wrote the poem McCrae was only a few hundred yards away from the front line at a place called Essex Farm and the small cemetery was growing daily. His friend, Lt Alexis Helmer, was virtually blown to pieces by a direct hit from an 8in shell. McCrae said the committal service over his grave, which was lost in subsequent fighting. Lt Helmer is now commemorated on the Menin Gate.

The dugout, next to the Yser Canal, was a dressing station and housed the officers' mess, wards, latrines and kitchen. Grim and dark, it is still there, having been extensively restored three years ago. The crosses in the graveyard have been replaced by the beautifully engraved white headstones of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, many of which have roses planted next to them.

Once surrounded by the horror of mud and



Preserved: Dressing station at Essex farm

carnage, the place is now sheltered by trees and overlooked by a memorial column to the 49th (West Riding) Division. The old cobbled path leading to it and the canal towpath is used by schoolchildren on their bicycles, satchels strapped to their backs, laughing and calling to one another. Eighty years ago, on the same spot, soldiers were dug in along the bank of the canal watching corpses float past them in the slimy, brackish water.

On the other side of the canal across a smooth field of mown grass, where the Germans once had their front line, is ironically now a Mercedes Benz car showroom.

Among the 1,223 graves in Essex Farm cemetery is that of 15-year-old Rifleman Valentine Joe Strudwick of the 8th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade, who was killed on January 14, 1916 – one of the youngest British boys to die in the war.

In front of the cemetery is a diamond-shaped Albertina memorial to McCrae which was unveiled three years ago.

### Also in this issue:

- Chuckle with Chip – Page 31
- Bird's eye-view – Page 63
- First World War videos, National Army

### Museum events – Page 67

- Girl's poignant poem – Diary, page 68
- Signpost from Hellfire Corner – Page 69
- Vox pop – Page 70



## Truth to end all truths

The First World War by John Keegan. Hutchinson, hardback, £25.

CONSIDERING the gravity and scale of the 480 pages that follow, the opening sentence of military historian John Keegan's newly-published *magnum opus* startles you with its brutal simplicity.

"The First World War," he writes, "was a tragic and unnecessary conflict."

Having skilfully employed the art of surprise to stun you with the truth to end all truths, this practitioner in the words of warfare then bombards you with a more sustained but no less powerful vindication of his opening salvo.

"Unnecessary," he explains, "because the train of events that led to its outbreak might have been broken at any point during the five weeks of crisis that preceded the first clash of arms, had prudence or common goodwill found a voice; tragic

because the consequences of the first clash ended the lives of ten million human beings, tortured the emotional lives of millions more, destroyed the benevolent and optimistic culture of the European continent and left, when the guns at last fell silent four years later, a legacy of political rancour and racial hatred so intense that no explanation of the causes of the Second World War can stand without reference to those roots."

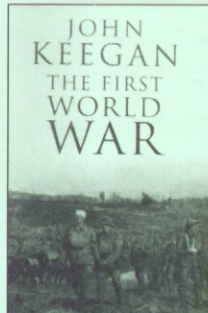
In his second devastating sentence this former senior lecturer in military history at Sandhurst, apart from leaving you mentally winded, somehow sums up four years that scarred the world.

But you don't escape that lightly, and as you would expect, what follows is a masterly analysis in which Keegan examines with lucid insight the complexities and consequences of this historical and military watershed.

It is when he asks why the war started at all and how it came to drag on so long that this awesome *tour de force* impresses most. He leads us to the conclusion that the First World War is a mystery – in its origins, in the course it took, and in the way it made human beings behave.

"Men whom the trenches cast into intimacy entered into the bonds of mutual dependency and sacrifice of self stronger than any of the friendships made in peace and better times."

"This is the ultimate mystery of the First World War. If we could understand its loves, as well as its hates, we would be nearer understanding the mystery of human life." – CH



# After 80 years, a race against time

OF the millions of men who fought in the First World War, about 4,000, say the authors of a new book, are still alive in Great Britain.

Added to 200 nurses who worked behind the lines and 1,000 or so munitions workers or "canary girls", they make up what Steve Humphries calls a "lost community".

He and Richard van Emden, co-authors of *Veterans: The Last Survivors of the Great War* (Leo Cooper, hardback, £16.95), which accompanies a BBC 1 documentary scheduled to be shown in two parts on November 8 and 15, took great trouble to track down eye-witnesses for this extraordinary oral history and found 120 "new" members of a band dwindling so fast that some they located died before they could be reached.

During their research they concluded that men who survive into their late nineties and early hundreds are overwhelmingly what they call "middle-class" – retired accountants, office managers and headmasters – and they made a special effort to record soldiers of more humble origins.

Members of the "working-class" form more than a third of the remarkably lucid interviewees, of whom the oldest is 105 and the youngest 95 – a boy of 13 when he went to France.

A Channel 4 TV series, again starting on November 8, is also accompanied by a book – Wendy Holden's *Shell Shock: The Psychological Impact of War* (Channel 4 Books, hardback, £14.99).

The battle-stress phenomenon was recorded by the early Greeks but only recently has society's attitude to the mental casualties of war become more sympathetic (see Pages 4 and 5), despite an aversion in some quarters to all forms of "counselling".

After a wide-ranging study of shell-shock from the First World War to Bosnia, Holden asserts: "The fact is that, no matter how many psychiatrists are mobilised to offer counselling to those who have been seriously affected by their combat experiences, the armed forces have been simply unable to prevent a rise in the number of cases."

Non-judgemental First World War history told through eyewitnesses is a style Lyn Macdonald has made her own, honing it to perfection through her popular chronicles. The seventh, *To the Last*

## A leaf through some newly-published offerings on First World War subjects

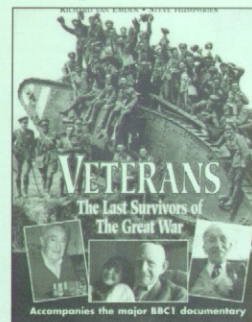
**Man: Spring 1918** (Viking, hardback, £25) tells of the massive German assault which broke the stalemate of the trenches.

While the common soldier, she says, never saw himself as a hero, he certainly did not consider himself a victim. Now, because of retrospective reappraisal, "many are half-convinced that they were and, worse, are half-ashamed of it".

A victim of what – or whom? If not an accident of history then certainly incompetent and callous leadership, or so popular belief would have it. Robin Neillands believes otherwise and examines the evidence thoroughly in *The Great War Generals on the Western Front 1914-18* (Robinson, hardback, £25).

"It cannot be a good thing," he writes, "that a whole period in Britain's history has become so distorted, and that the distortion goes on, repeating malignant accusations about honourable men, accusations that go uncontested or unexamined by the public at large." But who were the *real* heroes? Of 633 First World War VCs, many posthumous, for example, 24 went to members of the Royal

Engineers and associated corps. Their stories are told in Gerald Napier's *The Sapper VCs* (The Stationery Office, hardback, £35), which includes all 55 who have won the supreme award for

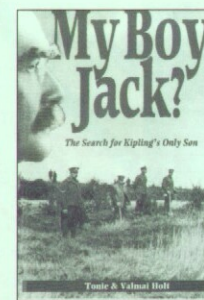


Did they survive the spring of 1918? Men of the 1/7 Bn, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment in the 55th Division's La Bassée Sector, pictured on March 15, 1918. Picture: Imperial War Museum

valour since its inception in 1856.

Accounts of a further 50 VCs – including many Commonwealth troops who fought with the British Army – are told in *VCs of the First World War: Arras and Messines 1917* by Gerald Gliddon (Sutton, hardback, £19.99).

Among the millions of others who did not survive was Lt John Kipling, of the Irish Guards, and battlefield historians Tonie and Valmai Holt have taken the title



of their biographical detective story, *My Boy Jack* (Leo Cooper, hardback, £19.95) from father Rudyard's agonised poem about the disappearance at Loos of his only son, whose grave he failed to locate during a lifelong search.

In July 1992, 77 years on and 56 years after the great writer's own death, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission took the "exceptional action" of identifying the battlefield site where they said John Kipling lay. The authors question this decision – as well as telling an engrossing family story.

According to Malcolm Brown, the intense and crucial last year of fighting has received short shrift in Great War histories, so he decided to put this right once

## In the muddy footsteps of Wilfred Owen

ASK anyone to name one of the great soldier-poets of 1914-18 and the reply will frequently be Wilfred Owen, who is the subject of the first in a new Leo Cooper series, *On the Trail of the Poets of the Great War* (Battleground Europe paperback, £9.95).

Helen McPhail and Philip Guest place Owen's writings in the context of his war service with the Manchester Regiment, drawing on his poetry and letters as well as on battlefield diaries and regimental histories.

Owen, who died a week before the Armistice, is prominent in *A Deep Cry* (Sutton, paperback, £14.99), which gives a similar treatment to the lives of 66 published

British soldier-poets killed in northern France and Belgium. The book's editor, Anne Powell, became absorbed by the history of the war while living in Belgium when her husband, Jeremy, was serving on the staff of the Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).

Another literary figure whose life and work was profoundly affected by his war experiences was Henry Williamson, best-known for *Tarka the Otter*, who enlisted in the Territorial section of the London Rifle Brigade and later



served as an officer with the Machine Gun Corps in the attack on the Hindenburg Line in 1917. He drew on his experiences to write more than a million words of fiction, including the novel sequence *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight*.

His daughter-in-law Anne Williamson, whose biography of the writer was published in 1995, is also the author of the newly-published *A Patriot's Progress: Henry Williamson and the First World War* (Sutton, hardback, £18.99). – CH

and for all in *The Imperial War Museum Book of 1918: Year of Victory* (Sidgwick & Jackson, hardback, £25), claimed to be the only book providing "the authentic voice of British soldiers".

Similarly, Paul Greenwood argues that if anything has lacked attention it has been one particularly crucial phase of the fighting, which he describes in *The Second Battle of the Marne – 1918* (Airline, hardback, £19.95).

It was the first time British, American, French, Colonial and Italian forces campaigned together against the common enemy and this retired teacher, whose father took part in the battle, chronicles the events painstakingly.

Whatever may have been neglected, today's younger readers could get their first introduction to the Marne through an ingenious form of "faction" by journalist and broadcaster Larry Harris.

His 1996 time-travel fantasy novel, *Jackie Was a Hero*, set on the Somme in 1916, was used in some British schools as a First World War studies primer. Now a sequel, *Don't Shout at the Guns*, fol-

lows the exploits of a US aviator at the battle, using the device of a camcorder's "flashback" mode. This slick, pacy read is published in paperback at £5.99 by The Cartoon Cave, PO Box 9138, London W3 7WQ.

Heavier going though no less laudable as a publishing enterprise is *At the Eleventh Hour*, edited by Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle of the University of Leeds (Leo Cooper, hardback £35, paperback £19.95), which records international "reflections, hopes and anxieties" as the war ended.

It includes weighty contributions by historians from around the world, complemented by about 100 illustrations which alone are worth the space the book will take up on the already groaning bookshelves labelled "First World War". – CH

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All books mentioned in the *Soldier* Books pages (see also Page 65) are available from Helion & Company, who can supply 14,500 in-print military books and operate a free professional military booksearch.

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## Feature

# If you can't stand the heats . . .

The competition was as hot as the gourmet food at the annual tri-Service cookery competition, hosted this year by the Army at Aldershot

**Report: Graham Bound  
Pictures: Terry Champion**

THERE was something gladiatorial about the *Salon Culinaire* cookery competition held at the Army School of Catering at St Omer Barracks, Aldershot. Not in the classical sense, of course, but this fiercely-fought competition seemed to owe something to television's most popular body-contact TV show.

The cooks' potentially lethal utensils were (it should be stressed immediately) aimed only at the varied ingredients, which, to the delight of an enthusiastic audience, were rapidly transformed into gorgeously aromatic and colourful *cordon bleu* dishes. But this was a kitchen like no other.

An indoor grandstand was packed with passionate supporters bellowing encouragement at corps and regimental colleagues as they battled it out over such culinary creations as pan-roasted breast of duck, *delice* of salmon and chocolate orange soufflé. White-clad civilian judges – among them restaurant luminary Albert Roux – took the places of television's little blonde presenter and the referee in the funny striped shirt.

The picture was completed when the charismatic judge and master of ceremonies for the final heat of the Army Junior Chef of the Year competition, yelled: "Come on, chefs, you've got three minutes to complete your meals . . . plenty of time!"

Less skilled cooks in the audience probably thought, "yeah, plenty of time if you



Kitchen capers: Participants in action during the Army Junior Chef of the Year competition



Piece of cake: Junior chef Pte Carl Preece with his grand centrepiece

want to boil an egg". But this kind of pressure, which had been sustained throughout the many rounds of the competition, only seemed to enhance the performances of the Army chefs, carrying them to a resounding victory over the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

### PRESTIGIOUS

The Army emerged from three days of competition with the highest number of points overall and with the two most prestigious individual awards. Sgt Bob Oberhoffer, serving with SHAPE in Belgium, was crowned Armed Forces Senior Chef of the Year, while TA Pte Kelly Albiston, serving with Catering Support Regiment in Grantham, proudly accepted the title

of Armed Forces Junior Chef of the Year.

With the competition only in its second year, the Army has already established an enviable track record. In 1997 the first inter-Service *Salon Culinaire* was hosted by the Royal Navy at HMS *Nelson* and won overall by the Army.

Having spent the best part of six months bringing together competitors, judges, sponsors and facilities, Ian Cowley, senior civilian instructor at the Army School of Catering, was well satisfied. The competition had, he said, provided real incentive for trainee chefs to improve their skills.

He pointed out that the action-packed live cooking competitions were just one aspect of the event. Other contestants, perhaps those less inclined to entertain while they cooked, had spent long

days working on intricately-decorated cakes, table centrepieces and even edible sculptures.

"This competition has real value in terms of self-esteem and achieving goals," said Ian Cowley. "Those who win have the chance of a place on the Combined Services culinary arts team which competes at an international level."

Not only do they compete; they also win. Soldiers served in the Combined Forces team which scooped the Hotelympia international competition in London earlier this year and will be competing at the equally-prestigious Expogast '98 competition in Luxembourg this month.



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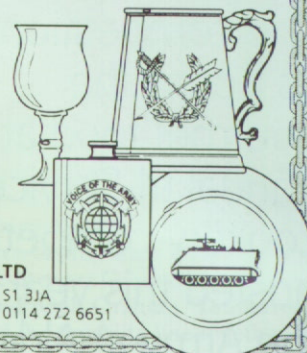
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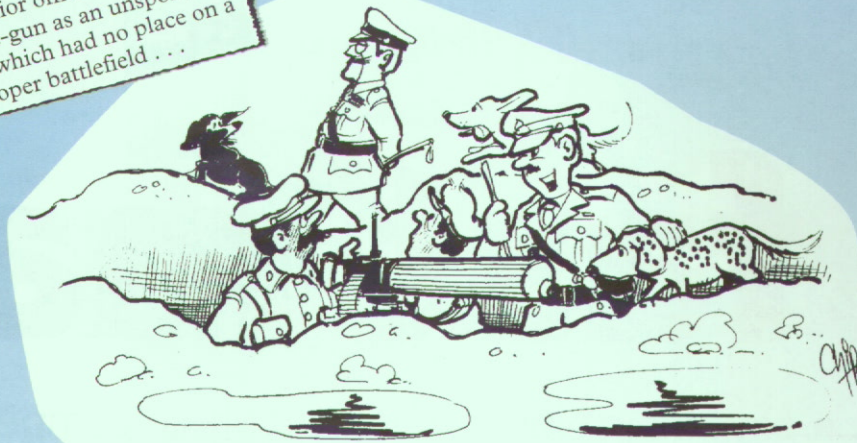
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"Kindly don't fire this thing again . . . it scares the dogs!"

Existence in the trenches required a high degree of improvisation . . .



"I could have sworn one of those new trench mortars was delivered here yesterday!"

# Chuckle with Chip

A very large proportion of the British shells fired on the Western Front failed to explode . . .



"See if there's another one like that . . . it actually went off!"

## In the trenches

The British struggled to maintain civilised standards of behaviour . . .



"We find the Bavarians make the best tin openers!"



"Not at all, old chap . . . after you!"



# The fast master

Pete's late, late decision pays off in Northern Ireland photo competition

IT WASN'T quite a one-man show, but for a time it seemed that WO2 Pete Bristo was going to hog the proceedings at the 1998 Northern Ireland photographic competition, writes John Elliott.

He was judged the professional Photographer of the Year, nabbed the *Soldier* £125 award, finished as runner-up in both the best monochrome and digital sections... and just for good measure organised the competition.

But before the whispers begin, we can give a



Top man: WO2 Pete Bristo, right, receives a trophy from Lt Gen Sir Rupert Smith, the GOC

categorical assurance that Pete was not on the tri-Service panel of judges and had absolutely nothing to do with the selection process. The tricky decisions of who won what in several closely-contested categories lay with Stephen George, the principal photographer at Headquarters Northern Ireland, Flt Sgt Chris Dickenson from RIC, RAF Aldergrove, and former Royal Navy "Phot" Bill Porter, now the principal photographer at the Ulster Museum.

Last year's Photographer of the Year, Sgt Brian Gamble, did not leave empty-handed. He was the runner-up in the main competition, won the

best monochrome and best image sections and was second in the *Soldier* own-choice category.

WO2 Bristo nearly did not enter. He took over as Master Photographer Northern Ireland a few weeks before the closing date and made a last-minute decision to compete "because I thought it was a good idea to lead from the front".

Thirty-two individuals submitted nearly 200 photographs, a big increase on the previous year. The best work from eight professional and 12 amateur portfolios was on show in the WOs' and Sergeants' Mess at Headquarters Northern Ireland when the GOC, Lt Gen Sir Rupert Smith, presented the prizes.

WO2 Bristo is keen to get as many province-based photographers as possible involved in next year's tri-Service event. To raise standards even further and increase interest in the event he is organising day seminars for unit-level snappers.

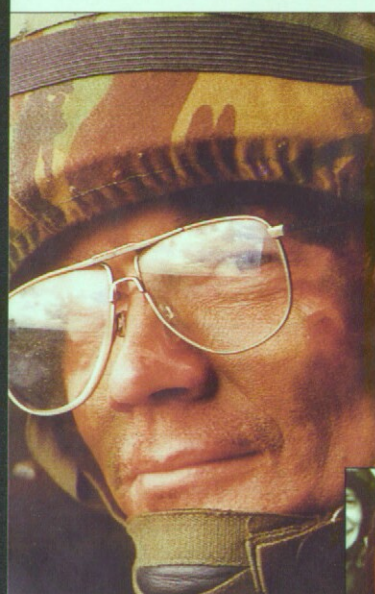
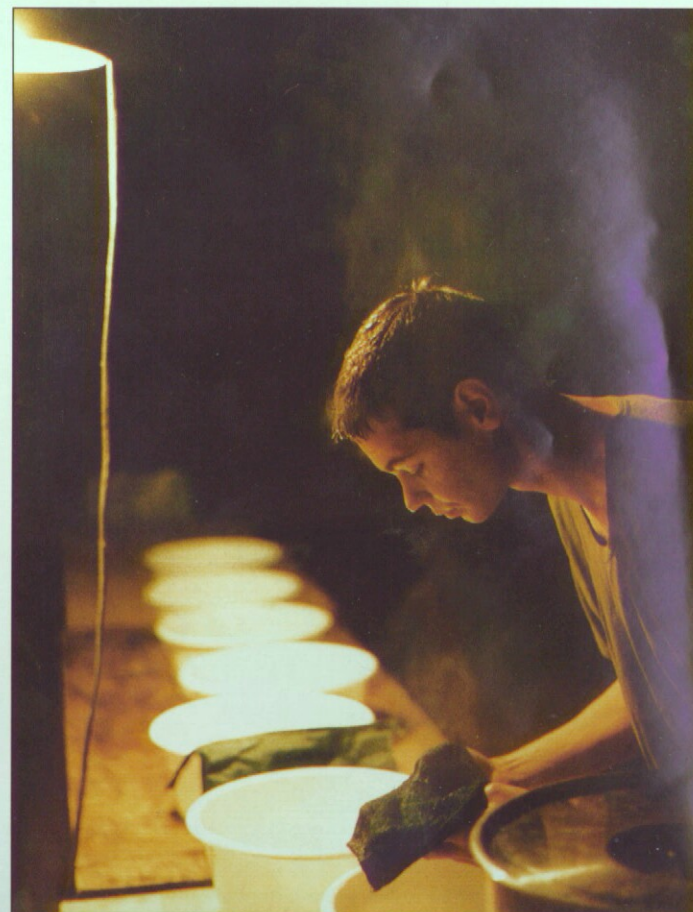


Image of the Year: a portrait by Sgt Brian Gamble, right. He also won the best monochrome category and was runner-up in two others

A bit of everything: LCpl Angel Moreno's winning digital image, below

Best military portrait: Capt Dave Chrystal cleaned up in this section, below right



Making a splash: This shot, right, by WO2 Pete Bristo won the category sponsored by *Soldier* and formed part of his winning portfolio in the professional Photographer of the Year competition



## ALL THE RESULTS

**Photographer of the Year** (sponsored by Kodak): WO2 Pete Bristo RLC (£250 and trophy); runner-up, Sgt Brian Gamble RLC (20 rolls of film); highly commended, Sgt Dave Bridges RLC.

**Best monochrome photograph** (Ilford): Sgt Brian Gamble (£150); runner-up, WO2 Peter Bristo (£50); highly commended, LCpl Mo Smith.

**Best colour photograph** (AGFA): Sgt Dave Bridges (£150); runner-up, Capt Dave

Chrystal, R Signals (£50); highly commended, Sgt Paul Taylor RLC.

**Best military portrait** (KJP Digital Solutions): Capt Dave Chrystal (Manfrotto tripod); runner-up, Maj Leo Callow, R Irish (Manfrotto monopod); highly commended, Sgt Dave Bridges.

**Amateur Photographer of the Year** (Fuji): LCpl Ian Woods, 1 Cheshire (£250, compact camera and film); runner-up LCpl Mo Smith (20 rolls of film); highly commended, Maj

Bruce Spencer and Maj Leo Callow.

**Own choice award** (*Soldier*): WO2 Pete Bristo (£125); runner-up, Sgt Brian Gamble (£50); highly commended, Mr Bill Homes.

**Best digital image** (Photo Services): LCpl Angel Moreno RLC (Manfrotto tripod); runner-up, WO2 Pete Bristo (Lastolite reflector); highly commended, Cpl Mark Jones RMP and SAC Al Clements RAF.

**Image of the Year** (GOC): Sgt Brian Gamble (£200).



Bright as a button: Sgt Dave Bridges's winning colour entry, above

On guard: Sgt Brian Gamble's winning monochrome shot, left

A nose for the job: LCpl Ian Woods, Amateur Photographer of the Year, got in close for this picture, right, taken from his winning portfolio

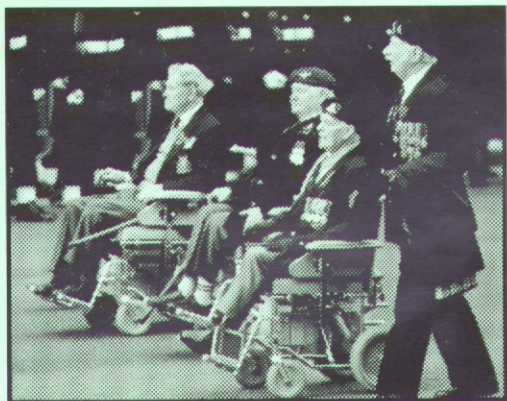




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## AFF conference

# New deal for families

### Strategic Defence Review throws its weight behind 'people' issues

Report: Anthony Stone

THE Armed Forces might be undergoing the biggest shake-up for generations, but the Government's commitment to Army personnel and their families is as strong as ever. That was the message Secretary of State for Defence George Robertson took to the Army Families Federation conference at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

More than 350 guests, including the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roger Wheeler, heard the Defence Secretary emphasise that "people issues" formed a key part of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR).

"In our future deliberations on the issues and challenges facing us, the needs of Service personnel and their families will be at the heart of the decision-making process," he said.

The Government had been quick off the mark, he told delegates. "Our first priority was to implement the operational welfare measures. These are virtually complete; those that affect the Army are already done."

He was referring to extended telephone calls for those on operations in Bosnia and Kuwait, implemented within three weeks of SDR, and new measures under which Service personnel deployed continuously for more than 11 months are entitled to an extra rest-and-recuperation flight.

The next priority was to implement non-operational welfare measures, he said. "The Veterans' Advice Unit is tangible evidence of our desire to adopt a cradle-to-the-grave approach in our dealings with the Service community."

Mr Robertson announced that a common leave allowance for all, irrespective of rank or geographical location, would be introduced in April.

He said the Government was also addressing the problems of the former and undermanning. Additional logistic and medical units would help to reduce overstretch in the areas most under pressure.

Mr Robertson said he was aware Service families often faced difficulties when dealing with outside organisations and departments, particularly when going to or from overseas tours, or as a result of frequent moves within the UK.

"You may sometimes wonder whether accompanied service is worth the effort. The Department believes it is," he said. Mr Robertson identified key areas of concern arising from accompanied service. These included:

- Current Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) guidance on schools admission policy in which the needs of Service children within the UK was not sufficiently recognised;

- Wives being ineligible for Job Seeker's Allowance despite having to move with their spouse on posting, putting at risk the entitlement to Service families accommodation;

- Army families being placed at the bottom of NHS and special-needs waiting lists following a posting;

- Difficulties in finding an NHS dentist and remaining registered.

Mr Robertson said the DfEE had formally acknowledged the position of Service children and from this should flow a more sympathetic approach.



This was Liz Sheldon's first conference in the AFF hot seat. She might be new to the chair but she is familiar with the problems facing Service families, having moved around with her husband over the past 20 years in Cyprus, Germany, Hong Kong, Kuwait and the UK. Liz, above, is a keen advocate of distance learning, having completed a Master's degree with the Open University. Her message to the conference was the need for effective dialogue. "This is a great opportunity to communicate our questions and concerns to the most senior policy-makers," she said.

### Why Army makes big investment in education

GEN Sir Alex Harley, the Adjutant General, told delegates of the importance the Army attaches to education to ensure Servicemen are given the best opportunity to gain skills and maximise career development.

- The Learning Forces initiative, linked to the Government's wider proposals for the Learning Age will give Service personnel the skills they need and equip them to return to the civilian employment market better trained and qualified.

- Help is available through the Service Children's Education organisation. SCE not only runs schools overseas but exists in the UK to assist families with transfer between schools on posting. Staff based at Upavon also support parents at appeals for admissions to schools and help with Special Educational Need tribunals.

- Since October, SCE has been funded to match the Government's Nursery Education Initiative by providing an additional 1,000 free nursery places throughout SCE schools and pre-schools, the vast majority of which are in Germany.

## Accompanied tours stay high on agenda

A MAJOR topic of concern at the conference was the issue of accompanied service.

Reminding his audience of the balance that needed to be struck between what the Army spent on conditions of service and what it spent on fighting capability, the Adjutant General, Gen Sir Alex Harley, acknowledged that families were of crucial importance to the human element of fighting power.

"We must cater for the needs of mobile families and particularly during periods of separation," he said.

He praised the AFF's march-out survey, which had highlighted the concerns of wives. A majority of those who responded wanted to see changes to the system and thought a

cleaning service should be introduced. Most indicated they would be willing to pay for it.

The Adjutant General said a study team, whose remit was to look at all aspects of support for accompanied service, would report back by Easter.

"Money, as ever, will be at the heart of it," he said. "It may well have a tri-Service dimension, too, and will also involve MoD and ministers."

### EASE OVERSTRETCH

The AG said a series of measures was being introduced to improve retention, which in turn would ease overstretch on those serving.

He admitted that not enough notice had been given to personnel issues in the past but told the conference that that had changed with

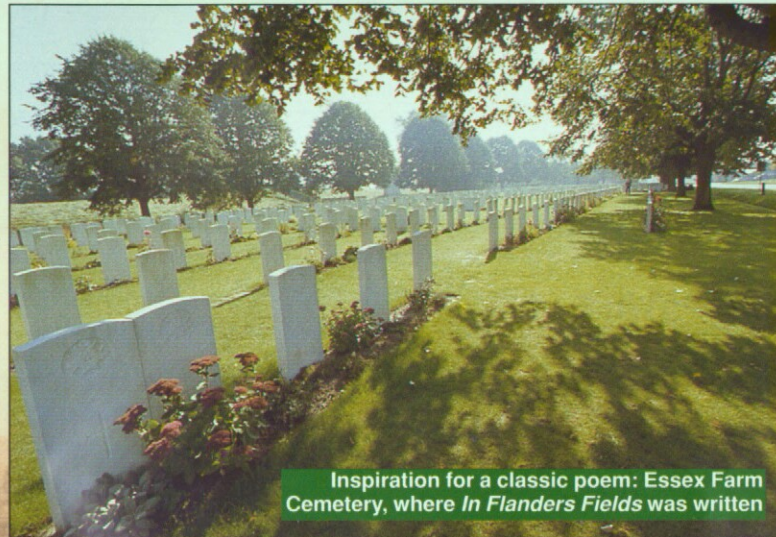
SDR. "The Families' Task Force was perhaps the most important initiative to emerge as far as families are concerned," he said.

Gen Harley believed the task force was excellent news because it would be based around a ministerial group involving other departments, and so would be in a much better position to take an integrated approach.

Gen Harley announced that because of the success of the Army Welfare Service, which has been running in Britain for two years, a similar service would be started in Germany. In partnership with SSAFA Forces Help, the initiative will facilitate as seamless a transfer as possible for families moving back and forth to Germany.



# Corners of a foreign field



Inspiration for a classic poem: Essex Farm Cemetery, where *In Flanders Fields* was written

IT was once a nightmare landscape of death and despair. Now, 80 years later, roses and weeping willows grow next to the graves of thousands of men who died in France and Flanders.

Side by side, regardless of rank, they lie; the soldiers of Britain and

her Empire, France and even Germany. The graveyards, maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, were designed to resemble English gardens, and are places of beauty and tranquility for those who come to remember.

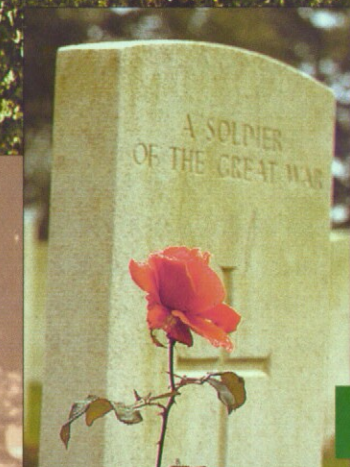
Pictures: Terry Champion and Mike Weston



"Wipers": Thousands of men died in defence of Ypres and crosses of sacrifice are dotted all over the fields of Flanders



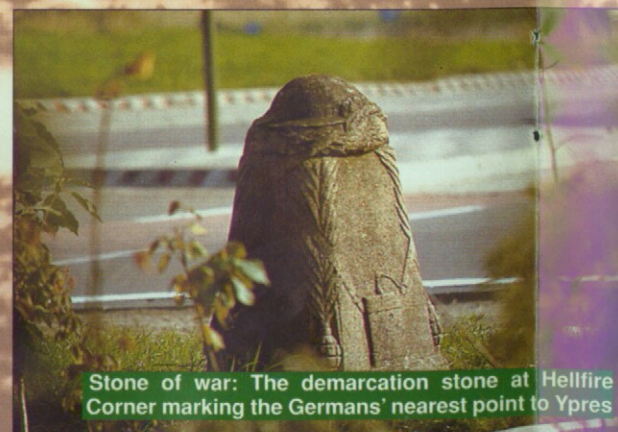
We shall remember them: Thiepval Memorial commemorating the missing of the Somme



A rose blooms by the grave of an unknown soldier



Symbols of remembrance: Poppies provide a splash of colour in front of a Somme bunker



Stone of war: The demarcation stone at Hellfire Corner marking the Germans' nearest point to Ypres



Time heals: Children play on a shell crater at Vimy Ridge



# Issues

08456 02 03 02

## Veterans get their very own hotline

A HOTLINE for ex-Servicemen and women will give them daily access, at local call rates, to a dedicated Veterans' Advice Unit provided by the MoD.

The long-anticipated initiative, which emerged from the Strategic Defence Review, is intended to provide a source of informed and practical advice to the estimated 15 million veterans and dependants in the United Kingdom.

Launching the unit last month, Armed Forces Minister Doug Henderson said some people found it difficult to adjust to life outside the Armed Forces and missed the support given by the Services' duty of care.

"It is often said that the hardest part of re-entering life in civvy street is not knowing who to turn to for that guidance or support," he said.

The VAU aimed to maximise the impact to ex-Service personnel of current healthcare, social, welfare and other services provided by Government departments, agencies and non-governmental organisations.

### STAFFED BY WOs

It would be staffed by experienced warrant officers chosen for their abilities to communicate across all sections of Service background.

"They have been specifically trained in telephone communication skills and have served attachments to the Royal British Legion's Legionline and the SSAFA Forces Help enquiry line to learn at first hand from their experience in this field," said Mr Henderson.

In setting up the unit, consultations had involved other Government departments, including the War Pensions Agency, local authority social services, and welfare bodies such as the Royal British Legion, Combat Stress and SSAFA.

The VAU will take calls on 08456 020302, charged at local call rates, from 0900 to 1700, Monday to Friday. An answerphone service will operate for out-of-hours enquiries.

08456 02 03 02

### In brief

THE drive to encourage all infantry soldiers to achieve vocational qualifications took a step forward with the opening of a **Flexible Learning and Qualifications (FLAQ)** centre at Catterick. The opening by Brig the Hon Seymour Monroe, Director of Infantry, coincided with news that more than 1,000 infantry soldiers

# Career moves

If you would like to share a problem or offer advice of your own, write to Cari c/o *Soldier*, or BFBS, BFPO 786.

**Dear Cari,** I've seen a lot about new arrangements for resettlement. Are they really going to make a difference? – Cpl M (BFG).

**Cari replies:** In a word: yes. The Career Transition Partnership will make a difference, even for those who already know what they want to do. As far as I can see, the CTP is an evolution of the service already available to Service folk. The range of support is wide and the appointment of a personal counsellor is a big advantage. The fact that he or she will also be on hand after you leave the Army is great. Even if you know what you want to do, the CTP may come up with ideas that have not occurred to you.

**Dear Cari,** My friend's husband died a little while ago and she isn't really getting over it. I want to help but feel I might say the wrong thing and make her worse. Every time she sees something about the Army in the papers or on TV it sets her off. – Mrs K (UK).

**Cari replies:** Losing a life partner is very

*The season of remembrance can be difficult for those whose loss is still fresh in the memory. It can also stir up memories in those whose partners were taken from them in conflicts long ago. I recall visiting a military cemetery in Germany as a young reporter and being overwhelmed by the sea of little white crosses.*

*A year ago I watched people gather in a tiny garden of remembrance in a Suffolk market town. Following the death of my own mother I sat with her mother, now nearly 100, and talked about the family's*

difficult and your friend may never "get over it" in the sense you mean. People learn to live with loss, but the hole will always be there. The most helpful thing you can do for your friend is to be there to listen. Birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas are specially painful, as is Remembrance Day for those who have been part of the Forces.

Your friend will come to terms with her loss and, until then, you must not be afraid of her tears nor to talk about her late husband. Many bereaved people feel everyone else has forgotten their loved one simply because no one talks about them. I recommend *The Samaritans' Book of What to Do When You Really Want to Help But Don't Know How*. It was written by a very experienced counsellor, Susan Quilliam, and is published by Transformation Press.



**Cari Roberts**

**Dear Cari,** I'm getting divorced and will be living on my own with the children so want to get the money side right. I might be homeless. I need advice. – Mrs B (UK).

**Cari replies:** Talk to SSAFA Forces Help among others. Barrister Sarah Staite has written a helpful, and detailed, pamphlet called *Divorce and its Financial Consequences*. If you are going to lose your home, ask SSAFA about their Stepping Stones project, which could provide a refuge while they help you establish a new life. Read *Housing for One-Parent Families* from the National Council of One-Parent Families, 225 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2LX. And do contact the Army Families Advice Bureau.

*travels with the Army. Even with so much time now passed, Grandma still needs to mention my grandfather's name to ensure he is not forgotten. I keep his diary, written in the trenches in the days leading up to*

*the Armistice, and a rosary given him by a French family, in my office. On the walls*

*are pictures of late friends – like Anne Armstrong – who have inspired me. No matter how small the act of remembrance, each is important for those who are not forgotten and those who remain to grow old.*

● Cari Roberts presents *Counterpoint* on BFBS Radio

## Cari comments

have started on a VQ programme in distribution and warehousing while on the Combat Infantryman's course at Catterick.

Cpl Joe Emmerson, serving with 7 REME Workshop in support of 4 Regiment AAC at Wattisham, Suffolk was awarded the two-mil-

lionth NVQ since the scheme started in 1987.

The Army's 2 (South East) Brigade has become the first such formation to achieve the **Investors in People** national standard, while 256 (City of London) Field Hospital (Volunteers) has also been accredited.



# Commutation scheme is 'not a free loan'

Mailbag

## Pension advance scheme 'rip-off'

LET'S hear it for Kenneth Wilson who ate housing of my family, and "Don't commute", June). I strongly echo the use of the word "rip-off".

Headline debate: How Mr Davies's letter appeared in *Soldier's* September Mailbag

**From Brig A S Ritchie, Director of Personal Services (Army)**  
I READ with interest Mr Davies's letter (Mailbag, Sept) concerning the Resettlement Compensation Scheme. As the officer charged with administering the scheme, I am grateful for the opportunity to correct any misconceptions about the scheme, and to give clear guidance to those approaching retirement who may be considering their options.

I fear that Mr Davies, and others who have expressed concerns about resettlement commutation, do not appear fully to appreciate the purpose of the scheme. The commutation option was never designed to be a free loan, but offers the equivalent of an "advance" to a soldier on retirement.

**And, as an advance, it beats the costs of taking out a commercial loan quite significantly.**

The commutation scheme is purely voluntary and provides a tax-free lump sum on retirement, which is then "repaid" over the period up to the individual's 55th birthday. As an example, let us look at a fictitious WO2 Smith who retires at the age of 40. At today's rates he would receive a terminal grant of £24,078 and an annual pension of £8,026.

Needing additional funding to purchase a house, he investigates the options

Figures  
reveal  
pension  
advance is  
attractive  
option

of applying for resettlement commutation, which would provide an additional lump sum of £12,801, or by obtaining a commercial loan of the same size. The figures below, produced by an independent financial adviser, outline the costs of the various options based on today's prices.

- Annual repayment of commutation works out at £1,532.14, against £1,880.28 on a 15-year bank loan at 12½ per cent APR and £1,547.40 on a 15-year mortgage at seven per cent, not including MIRAS relief.

- Total cost of the commutation loan is £22,982.10, compared with £28,204.20 on the bank loan and £23,211.07 on the mortgage. Interest on the three options is, respectively, £10,181.10, £15,403.20 and £10,410.

● Don't write off the 'rip-off' - Pages 62-63

These basic figures do not, of course, tell the whole story because the resettlement commutation repayments are tax free - tax is therefore paid only on the balance of the annual pension after the commutation reduction has been made. By contrast, the repayment of the commercial loans would have to be funded from income that has already been taxed.

To illustrate the additional benefit of commutation to our WO2 Smith:

- Taking the commutation option

would result in his annual pension being reduced by £1,532 a year to £6,494. After tax (at 23 per cent), it would leave him with £5,000 a year in hand.

- If instead he funded a commercial loan out of the full pension, WO2 Smith would be left with less in hand each year. After tax, the full pension of £8,026 would be worth £6,180. After paying for the bank loan of £1,880 a year, he would be left with only £4,300 a year. Alternatively, after paying the mortgage loan, the net figure would be £4,633 a year.

### ATTRACTIVE OPTION

While these figures clearly indicate that resettlement commutation is an attractive option, I would emphasise to those considering taking the commutation option that it is entirely voluntary and that it must be taken within a year of leaving the Army. More importantly, however, the value of the commutation option depends very much on the personal circumstances of the individual.

Although your regimental administration office will be able to advise on the procedure for applying for resettlement commutation, the decision to do so must be yours alone.

**My strong advice to anyone approaching retirement is to seek independent financial advice before applying for resettlement commutation. It is a good scheme, but it will not suit everyone.**

## Armed Forces pension to be reviewed

A MAJOR review of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme has been announced by the Government. It will be carried out by the MoD, with the Treasury and the Government Actuary's Department.

Armed Forces Minister Doug Henderson said: "The AFPS has stood the Services in good stead for many years, but

there have been no major changes to the structure of the scheme since the 1970s. In the last 20 years there have been important developments in the way that pensions are provided in both the private and public sectors, and we need to ensure that the AFPS is in line with best modern practice."

**Kingswood Grange**, the Combat Stress (Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society) home near Reigate, is to close by the end of September 1999. Its 40 residents will be rehoused. The decision was taken because money from Social Services fell far short of the average weekly cost per resident of £350, and

income from donations was insufficient to make up the shortfall to maintain the society's standards.

**Celle Station kindergarten** in Trenchard Barracks, Celle, has been accredited by the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

### Useful numbers

Army Benevolent Fund 0171 581 8684  
Army Families Federation 01980 615525  
Confidential support lines:  
UK 0800 731 4880  
Germany 0131 827 395  
Cyprus 080 91065  
Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society (Combat Stress) 0181 543 6333  
Gulf Veterans Association 0191 230 1065  
RBL's Legionline 0345 725 725  
Samaritans 0345 90 90 90  
Service Children's Education 01980 618244  
Services Cotswold Centre 01225 810358  
SSAFA Forces Help 0171 403 8783  
Veterans' Advice Unit 08456 020302  
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## BOXING



Picture: Terry Champion

Blond ambition: Cpl Chris Bessey with the Commonwealth light-middleweight gold medal

# Gold strike

WITH his hair specially dyed blond for the occasion, light-middleweight Cpl Chris Bessey proved he was head-and-shoulders above the competition with a stylish victory in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Bessey (27 Transport Regiment RLC), who captained England's boxing team, has proved himself one of the finest amateur fighters of his generation. He has been Combined Services champion seven times and won four national titles. His Commonwealth medal ranks among the peaks of a career that has already earned him an MBE for his services to boxing.

Back at Aldershot after defeating Canadian Scott Macintosh in the final, Bessey told *Soldier*: "I watched the final on TV and it looked different from how I remembered it. I was behind after the third round but it didn't feel like it. When I got to the end of the bout I was not that tired. I am

not saying it was not a hard bout, but it was more tactical than physical."

The judges scored the final 4-4, 8-8, 11-13, 16-14, 20-15. Bessey had already had a tough draw in the competition, but could count on vocal support from his father and brother who travelled from home to cheer him on.

"The first bout was difficult because I boxed against Kevin Short who is a Welsh Guard and on the Army team," he said. "It was awkward."

When Bessey returned to the Maida Gym at Aldershot, a pile of congratulatory cards were waiting for him. Among them was an invitation to box in America in mid-November. By the look of anticipation on his face, you'd think he had just received a party invitation.

"That means getting back into training in the next couple of days," he said. You could tell he just could not wait.

## SHORTS

### Champion again

THIS year's British Army Water Ski Association competition at the national water sports centre at Nottingham had an inter-Service feel about it with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines being represented. The overall title was taken by Capt Gavin Whitehead (AAC) for the third consecutive year. Next year there are moves to organise a proper tri-Service event.

### Runners wanted

A CHARITY which raises funds for deaf people is looking for unsponsored runners in the 1999 London Marathon. The charity also has a few guaranteed marathon places for runners who can raise at least £750. If you are interested, write to Jan Harris, giving brief details about your running experience and a bit about yourself, at Hampshire, Isle of Wight, and Channel Islands Association for Deaf People, 18 Augustine Road, Southampton SO14 0PL (tel 01703 226803).

### Sevens kick off

THE Light Dragoons held a seven-a-side competition at Sipovo in Bosnia and attracted 12 teams from eight units across the MND (SW) area. The final of the plate competition was fought out between MND (SW) and 1 Royal Horse Artillery, with 1 RHA running out the eventual winners. The final of the cup competition was fought out between the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets and The Light Dragoons, with the Greenjackets winning by the narrowest of margins.

### Marathon efforts

TWO teams from 38 Engineer Regiment entered the Royal Engineers' half marathon at Long Marston Engineer Park. Both teams completed the course within 1hr 33min. The regiment's fastest man was LCpl Nick Ward, of 11 Field Squadron, who came in seventh overall with a time of 1hr 18min.

### Munster fun

THE Fun Run and Marathon Club of the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards was formed when the soldiers arrived in Munster earlier this year. Aptly named The Munster Flyers, the club is the brainchild of Maj Chris Davies (AGC (SPS)), who has 20 marathons under his trainers.



Don't you think that a donation, a covenant or a legacy to the Army Benevolent Fund is an appropriate way of saying to our soldiers – thank you for being there when you were needed?

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## RUGBY LEAGUE



Full charge: Loose forward Cpl Eddie Dean races through the 38 Engr defence. QDL came close to victory but their kicking let them down

# Sappers engineer Lancashire misery

38 Engr Regt 30, QLR 28

A DOUBLE-headed finals day produced high drama and passionate emotions on a great day of rugby league at Chatham, writes WO1 Steve Tranter.

The team from 38 Engineer Regiment made it through to the final by beating the holders of the Army Cup, 1 Royal School of Military Engineering in the semi-finals. Their opponents were the 1st Battalion, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment, who overcame The Royal Dragoon Guards to book their place.

A great final was in prospect and the crowd was not disappointed. Two well-matched teams got stuck in from the whistle, with 38 Engr the first to settle into their stride. They made the initial breakthrough, catching 1 QLR out in their own 20 metres and scoring after five minutes.

The Lancshires responded well, but after concerted pressure conceded another try which was converted to make the score 10-0. The infantrymen responded with two tries but failed to convert either, a weakness which was to prove their undoing.

It seemed the pattern of the match had been set, with the sappers managing to

keep their noses in front while the QLR were on the back foot. But with five minutes of normal time remaining, and with 38 Engr in front by three points, forward pressure from the QLR paid off and Pte Chris Buckley burst through to score the try of the match and square the score at 20-20. Crucially, the conversion was missed.

The next few minutes were crucial to the outcome of the match as 38 Engr's man of the match, Sgt Andy Fell, led the way with outstanding defensive play.

Just before extra time, QRL's Sgt John Sherriff had a chance to win the game with

a drop goal – but it floated inches wide. In view of the earlier failures to convert tries it would be cruel to say that the match hinged on that kick. By the final whistle they were to rue the fact that they had missed every conversion.

It was the first time an Army Cup final had gone into extra time and it was a testament to the fitness of both sides that the pace never let up. The sappers dug deep into their reserves of grit and determination to score the winning try for a final score of 30 - 28.

The Army Cup was presented to 38 Engr by Lt Gen Scott Grant.

## Paras prevail to win Army Shield

THE Cup Final crowd was treated to a curtain-raiser for the Army Shield between the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and 2 Signal Regiment.

The signallers had been unlucky last year when they reached the semi-finals only to be knocked out by the eventual winners, 1 QLR. Formed this season, 2 Para's team had already announced their arrival with a victory over one-time Army

Cup winners and current infantry champions, 1 Para, on their way to the final.

The Army Shield match was a see-saw affair with neither side gaining a significant advantage. The paras held on to win by a try and a conversion, with the final score of an evenly-contested match standing at 44 points to 38.

Maj Gen Simon Lytle, Director, Army Sport Control Board, presented the trophy.



## PARAGLIDING



High-flier: Maj (Retd) Richard Bellamy-Brown launches in the picturesque Allgäu region

## View to a thrill

THE Army have been flying high all year since winning the Joint Services Alpine paragliding championships.

But their dream of retaining the title was grounded when their arch rivals, the Royal Air Force, pipped them.

The action took place at the British Forces Paragliding Centre at Kranzegg in the Allgäu region of Bavaria.

Twenty-six competitors travelled from within British Forces Germany and from Northern Ireland, Kinloss and Chatham.

Entrants competed as individuals in their own class and as Service and corps teams.

Paragliding is a comparatively new sport. Clubs were initially known as ascending parachute associations, as the canopies were originally derived from

those used in free-fall parachuting. Canopies have now developed and can be flown several hundred kilometres with flight times of up to eight hours.

The competition, sponsored by Rover Deutschland GmbH, opened with groups allocated tasks related to their ability and experience.

For the open class this involved flying cross-country to a series of checkpoints using thermals to gain the height required. The intermediate class completed a similar task, with the emphasis on staying airborne for as long as possible. The novices' task was to carry out set exercises required to gain the club pilot rating with points allocated accordingly.

Team positions were: 1, RA; 2, REME; 3, RLC; 4, R Sigs; 5, AGC.

## CANOEING

## Army paddlers sink RAF's hopes

THERE was a renaissance in Army fortunes at this year's Inter-Service canoe slalom championships, staged at Grand Tully on the River Tay in Scotland.

Since 1974 the championships at this level have been dominated by the Royal Air Force.

Although they achieved a tie in 1990 Army paddlers were unable to consolidate and during the following years the airmen continued to master the event.

This year was very different. Under the captaincy of Lt Peter Francis, the Army

fielded its strongest, most competent team for many years. The top paddlers were expected to do well, but the key to success lay in the middle and lower fields, and it was here that the two-day event was won.

The Tay at Grand Tully was very high and provided outstanding conditions, with a series of intimidating rapids favouring the aggressive Army paddlers.

Lt Francis took the men's kayak title for the second year in succession, which he hopes will boost his Olympic team aspirations.

## MARATHON

## Paras do it with their boots on

RUNNING the Manchester marathon did not present enough of a challenge for five determined blister-busters from A Company, 1 Para. They decided to do it carrying 35lb in rucksacks, while wearing combat trousers and boots.

"The course was not too bad, but it was a bit cheeky," Lt Nick Hook told *Soldier*. "We weren't used to tabbing on concrete. Towards the latter stages, we were getting a bit stiff but there was fantastic support from the crowd."

The runners were doing it as part of a curtain raiser for a KAPE tour of Manchester and surrounding areas. The other four members of the team were Cpl Joe Madden, Pte Stewart Gardner, Pte Simon Patterson and Cpl Graham Tomlinson. They crossed the finishing line together in 5hr 41min.

The Army marathon was run within the Manchester race. There were 115 entries and 89 finished. Sgt Andy Arrand (Depot Trg RLC) won the men's race in 2hr 23min. Sgt Sonia Hurst (SEME Bordon) took the women's race in 3hr 25 min.

## ANGLING

## Hooked on fishing

CAPT Catherine Bell has been bitten by the angling bug hook, line and sinker, and is proving herself at the highest level.

She took part in the World Carp Classic at Lac du Madine in the Champagne region of France and finished 13th in a field of 140 of Europe's top carp anglers. She was the only woman taking part.

Capt Bell, a member of the Army Prosecuting Authority based at RAF Uxbridge, said: "It becomes a question of tactics and of cunning and endurance, of knowing how to locate that one fish and, having found it, how to get it to pick up the one bait that has got my hook attached."



Lt Francis, Inter-Services kayak champion



## SHOOTING

# Target marksmen have world in their sights

ARMY marksman WO2 Paul Quilliam (QMSI), who competed in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, has already set his sights on the next games, in Manchester in 2002.

Quilliam, who represented the Isle of Man in open full-bore target rifle shooting, is now looking for a partner so he can also compete in the pairs.

"The problem is the Isle of Man doesn't have a full-bore range any more," he said. "The only hope of filling a Commonwealth Games team with full-bore shooters is picking someone from the Army who is interested in shooting."

Quilliam's was a successful sortie to the East, considering the very high standard of competition.

"I was 19th in a field of 44. As that is the top 50 per cent, I was very happy. The facilities in Malaysia were second to none, although it was very hot – 34C with 95 per cent humidity."

Back home, Quilliam keeps up a rigorous practice schedule, getting in as much shooting as he can.

"From the first time I picked up a rifle, I could shoot," he said. "It is like people who can play the piano at a young age. It was the same with me. I had the ability to shoot. I was leagues above other people and it's just carried on from there."

"A lot of it is to do with temperament. If you throw your hand in after the first two shots because you have not had a bullseye, that could ruin it. You have to carry on with dogged determination. If you drop your first point you have to say to yourself 'I will finish with a 49 out of 50.'

"You get 45 seconds to fire each shot so you are under a little bit of pressure."



Hot shot: WO2 Paul Quilliam with one of the targets he used in the Commonwealth Games

## We are the team to beat

ARMY target shooting is a great success story. Lt Col (Retd) Patrick Chambers, captain of the Army combat shooting team, told *Soldier*: "In the combat shooting world we are at the top. We are the team to beat."

"We don't win everything we go in for but we win 75 per cent of our competitions, individual and team."

"We are still setting the standard on the world combat shooting circuit, which has about 35 nations competing at various venues around the world."

"As far as the target shooting is

concerned we are up there. It's arguably the only sport which has a regular top-grade international shooting programme."

"Both on the combat shooting side, and the target shooting side, we are regularly competing against the England team. And on clay target we are regularly competing internationally."

"The huge kudos that the British Army gets by competing and winning abroad at these international shooting competitions really does enhance our reputation as a professional army."

## SKYDIVING

# Skydiving team has head in the clouds but feet on the ground

THE Army four-way skydiving team might have their heads in the clouds a lot of the time – but they know the importance of solid preparation.

So before the team took part in the Formation Skydiving World Cup in Evora, Portugal they went to northern Spain to get in some training.

The team comprised Maj Dave Tyler (RLC), Capt Brad Reader (ACF), Lt Alastair Macartney (RLC), Sgt Ian Cashman (PWRR) and LCpl Wayne Thomas

(RGJ). The Army jumpers were up against the best in the world, with 33 four-way teams and ten eight-way teams registered.

Lt Macartney said: "We scored 16 points in the official practice round and looked set to have a good meet. At the same time we teamed up with the Dutch to enter the eight-way event. We did this without any training jumps together."

"It proved to be great fun mixing with another nation like this, especially in the

skydive phase. There was a great atmosphere throughout the whole competition, with ex-world champions and other great skydivers eager to share their knowledge and helping where possible."

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Picture: Mike Weston

**Cross purpose:** Sgt Joyce Reid (17 Port and Maritime RLC) lines up a cross during the Army women's football team's 2-1 victory over the Royal Air Force at Aldershot in the Crown Services competition. Team manager Maj Mark Haley said: "This is usually a tough fixture so it was good that the team managed to get off to a winning start to the season."

# Army has clear vision in Hayes

## Middlesex 2, Army 3

THE Army produced probably their best performance of the season to overcome a useful Middlesex side at Hayes. The game got off to an electrifying start with goals at both ends in the opening three minutes, writes **Derrick Bly**.

Middlesex attacked down their left and as the cross came into the crowded box, the Hayes striker slammed the ball into the Army's net, with Army goalkeeper Sgt Daisy May a spectator.

Sgt Tosh Williams's long ball reached Cfn Chris Ashurst, who fired home to provide the perfect Army response.

Williams suffered an injury towards the end of the half and was taken off.

With five minutes of the first half remaining, Middlesex took the lead after an uncertain clearance from May caught the Army back four out of position. The

'keeper atoned for the mistake by saving superbly from the Middlesex striker.

After the break coach WO2 Steve Cotter introduced LCpl Dave Hope and Pte Steve Carter for Sheldon and Ashurst and the Army got back on level terms straight from the kick-off. A long ball out of defence reached Carter who sprinted forward to head the ball over the Middlesex 'keeper.

Carter was now in rampant mood and got on the end of a couple of long balls. But despite creating openings for himself he could not finish the job and blasted his shots wide. His hard work eventually paid off on 70 minutes when he was clean through, only to be brought down by the goalkeeper.

The referee pointed to the spot and Cpl John Wills coolly tucked the penalty away to earn the Army an upset win.

# HM Prison Service locked out

## Army 3, HM Prison Service 1

THE Army chose their first appearance this season at the Military Stadium, Aldershot to chalk up their first win in a fixture which is traditionally a stiff test. This encounter was no exception.

Prison Service opened well and were in front after 17 minutes when a mistake at the back left 'keeper Sgt Daisy May picking the ball out of the net. This was the jolt the Army needed and from that point looked the better side. Cpl Shelly Sheldon had a superb shot saved, which sounded a warning of things to come. Ashurst broke down the right, cut inside and hit an excellent shot into the corner of the Prison Service's net to level the scores.

After the break the Army maintained control and Cpl John Wills, Cfn Chris Ashurst and Sheldon received good support from Sgt Tosh Williams, Pte Lee Badrock and Sgt Paul Tagg in midfield.

The Army went ahead on 65 minutes when a Wills free kick saw Tagg rise above the visitors' defence to power home an unstoppable header just under the bar. Tagg repeated the dose eight minutes from time, bulleting his header from a Wills corner into the net.

# Experiment founders

## Army 0, Carshalton 3

CARSHALTON took the lead on the half hour against an Army side that was experimenting with a number of trialists. Lee Kirby scored with a well-struck shot from outside the penalty area following a corner from the right. The Army forwards posed little threat and LCpl Ginge Lynch produced the only shot to trouble the Carshalton goal.

The Army made several substitutions at half-time and had much more of the game as a result. But their forwards failed to capitalise on several good chances. Carshalton made sure of the game, scoring twice in two minutes towards the end.

# Cheshire wins sixes

A SPIRITED team from 1 Cheshire beat 9 Sup Regt RLC 3-2 to win the Army six-a-side football title at Aldershot. Fifteen teams produced 192 goals between them and 9 Sup Regt won the Thorpe Trophy by scoring 23 goals in seven group games.





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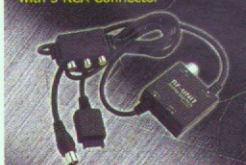


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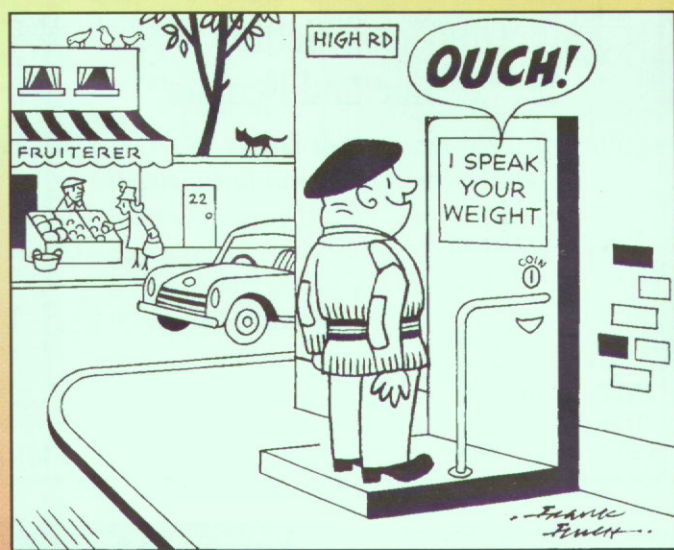
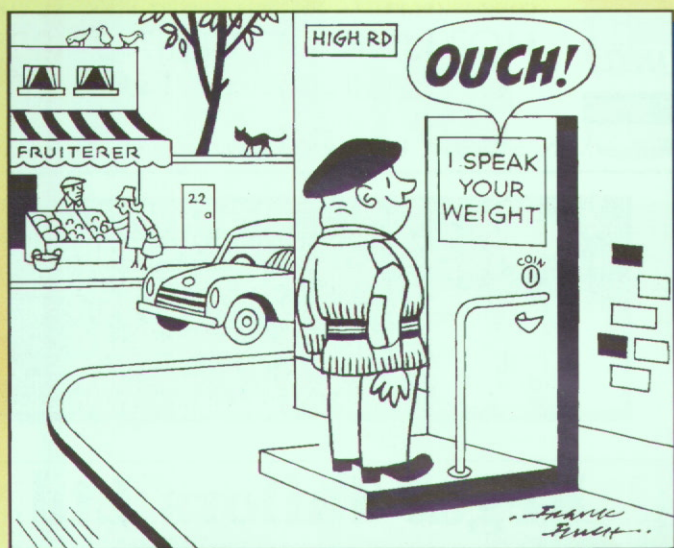
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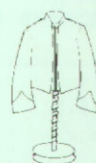
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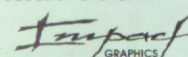
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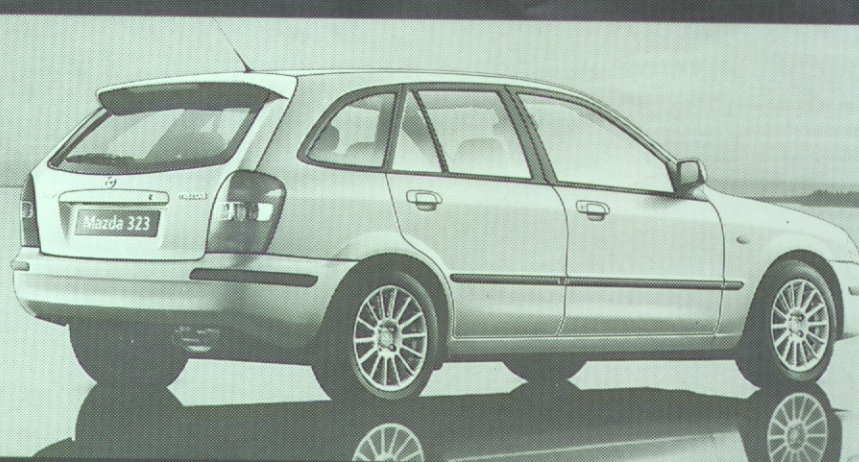
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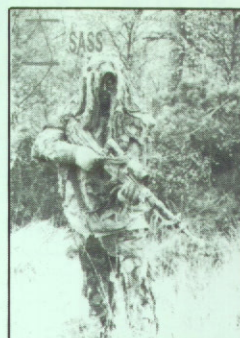
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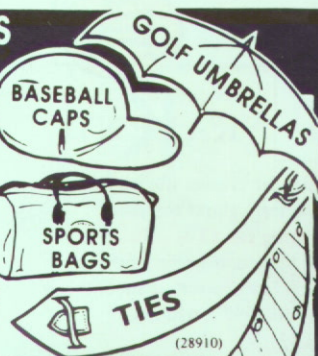
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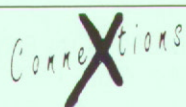
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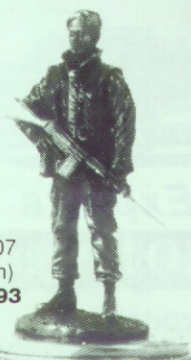
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### PEN PALS

**REPLIES.** To reply to a pen pal, write a letter and send it to *Soldier Magazine* at the address below. The box number **must be CLEARLY written in the TOP LEFT CORNER** of the envelope. Your envelope must be no larger than 8" x 4" and should contain only a letter plus a photograph if requested. Replies received more than three months after the cover date and **large, heavy, or poorly addressed envelopes will not be forwarded.**

**TO ADVERTISE FOR A PEN PAL.** Please send for details enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: *Soldier Magazine*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU.

**Jean Marie, 5'5", 39, slim blonde** divorcée with light blue eyes. A full-time trained psychiatric nurse who enjoys walking her dog, camping in Wales, local history and being with her children. Seeking pen pals, late 30s-40s. **P345**

**Alison, 34, 5'1", blue-eyed blonde** with GSOH who likes to socialise, cook, go to the gym and travel. Seeking genuine, male pen pals, 25+. Photo appreciated. **P346**

**C.J. I am a 33-year-old Midlands girl - 5'6", blonde hair and blue eyes.** Divorced with one son. I enjoy reading, pubbing, clubbing, the cinema, having fun and letter-writing. Seeking male and female pen friends and looking forward to any replies. **P347**

**Lin, a blonde, very young, slim 44, 5'10"** with green eyes. A fun-loving police officer and ex-military with GSOH. Interests include reading, aerobics, horse-racing, travel, gardening, wines and whisky. Seeking pen friends, 40-48, as an additional interest. **P348**

**Jennifer, 32, 5'2", single, blonde** with blue eyes. A nursery nurse who enjoys spectator sports, music, animals and the cinema and would like to write to sincere, genuine pen pals, 28+, in the Army. **P349**

**Linda, a 5'3" blue-eyed blonde** is looking for a professional who is fit, tall (5'10"+), confident and hedonistic and who, of course, can leap tall buildings in a single bound. Age 37+. **P350**

**Elsbeth, a very young-at-heart 43-year-old** with VGSOH. Tall with shoulder-length fair hair and enjoys music, driving, reading, dinghy-sailing and animals. Seeking very young-at-heart male pen pals, 37-47. **P351**

**Maureen, 40, 5'8" - an attractive,** blonde, single mum of one with GSOH and whose interests include sport, going to the gym, music and socialising. Seeking pen pals, 28-40. **P352**

**Elly, 5'10", light brown hair, 49 and** Scottish. I have lived in London for a long time, have a good sense of humour and lovely personality but sometimes get lonely. Would like to hear from genuine and caring pen pals. **P353**

**Anne, 30+, 5'6", medium build.** A British/African who is friendly, likeable and honest and whose interests include having fun, animals, eating out, wine, the cinema and writing and receiving letters. Seeking tall, fun-loving, and sincere pen pals, 30-40. **P354**

**Maggie, 30, 5'6"** with long, curly hair. Likes science-fiction, socialising, most types of music, reading and trashy novels. Would like to hear from pen pals, 25+. **P355**

**Jan, 47, 5'9", a blonde, blue-eyed,** slim divorcée with GSOH. Likes socialising, music, reading and having fun and is seeking intelligent soldier pen pals at home and abroad. Genuine replies only. Photo appreciated. **P356**

### BOOKS

**Good military books** always required by Albion Books of Birmingham. Please telephone 0121 328-2878 or 0121 422-6411.

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## ARMY SPORTS LOTTERY RESULTS

SEPTEMBER 19, 1998

**Four-way tie for first prize (20 goals, £1,725 each):** Capt RH Carter, 1 RGJ, Bulford; Sgt DD Green, 6 Sup Regt RLC, Gütersloh; Bdr PA Keane, 26 Regt RA, Gütersloh; Cpl (name withheld), HQ Hereford Garrison.

**15-way tie for fifth prize (19 goals, £140 each):** Cpl DJ Back, 9 Fd Wksp REME, Bordon; LCpl N Collins, 14 Signal Regt (EW), Brawdy; Brig T Dalby-Welsh, HQ RLC Trg Gp, Deepcut; LCpl LA Delorme, 3 Para, Dover; SSgt RR Dykes, 2 PWRR, Tidworth; WO2 R Elsworth, SSO Mönchengladbach; Col DTI Glyn Owen, ITC Warminster; Maj RJT Hill, 100 Regt RA (V), London; WO2 MJ McKenna, 280 (UK) Signal Sqn, Krefeld; Col CW Paskell, SEME, Bordon; Lt Col PJF Schofield, JACIG, RAF Henlow; WO2 KR Scott, HQ 3 (UK) Div, Bulford; Capt JT Stremes, MoD, London; Maj DR Wilson, Royal Defence Medical College, Gosport; Cpl PAM Young, ATR Lichfield.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1998

**Two-way tie for first prize (17 goals, £2,400 each):** Sgt P Jaynes, 6 MI Coy, Bulford; Cpl BV Reese, 8 Fd Wksp REME, Colchester.

**Nine-way tie for third prize (16 goals, £446.67 each):** Sgt W Bastable, QRH,

Sennelager; Cpl KD Bebbington, 1 Regt AAC, Gütersloh; Lt Col GJ Binns, 1 PWO, Chester; CSgt M Delaney, 1 A and SH, Edinburgh; Gnr SP Imiela, 19 Regt RA, Colchester; Sgt N Land, HQ REME TA, Bordon; Sgt GW McBain, 70 AC Wksp REME, Middle Wallop; Sgt N Pearce, HQ York Garrison; SSgt P Rood, 3 Fd Wksp REME, Tidworth.

OCTOBER 3, 1998

**Three-way tie for first prize (19 goals, £2,085.71 each):** LCpl SJ Bushell, KRH, Münster; Lt (QGO) Hemchandra Rai, 1 RGR, Church Crookham; SSgt DI Paynter, RAC Centre, Bovington.

**Four-way tie for fourth prize (18 goals, £685.71 each):** Sgt AP Callaghan, HQ 5 Div, Shrewsbury; Cpl JE Cox, 5 AB Bde CSS Bn, Aldershot; Sgt TJ George, RDG, Tidworth; Sgt JD Gillham, 3 Bn REME, Paderborn.

Note: Only seven prizes this week; rule 9 applies.

### Important Notice

Owing to the non-participation of English and Scottish Premier League clubs over the weekend October 9-11, the following team substitutions were made. Delete all English and Scottish Premiership clubs and replace with the following international teams in column X on the chart on tickets:

16 Albania	34 France	48 Poland
17 Andorra	35 Georgia	49 Portugal
18 Armenia	36 Germany	51 Romania
21 Austria	37 Greece	56 Russia
27 Bulgaria	41 Iceland	2 Scotland
28 Cyprus	42 Italy	3 Slovenia
29 Denmark	43 Latvia	4 Switzerland
30 England	44 Luxembourg	9 Turkey
32 Estonia	46 N Ireland	11 Ukraine
33 Finland	47 Norway	14 Wales

OCTOBER 10, 1998

**20-way tie for first prize (16 goals, £450 each):** SSgt DHN Bustin, 22 Regt RA, Kirton-in-Lindsey; Maj RW Cawson, APC Glasgow; Sgt (name withheld), PATA, Hereford; Capt GA Evans, AFV Gunnery School, Lulworth; Cpl P Garner, ATR Basingstoke; SSgt A Garven, RMA Sandhurst; Pte PG Gilley, 16 Tk Tpr Sqn RLC, Fallingbowl; Maj RJ Herring, Sp Bn HQ ARRC, Rheindahlen; WO2 PJ Highfield, 39 Regt RA, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Cpl A Homes, 15 Fd Wksp REME, Catterick; WO2 PJ Leebold, 1 Grenadier Guards, Pirbright; Pte MA Lewis, 2 PWRR, Tidworth; WO2 JA McCracken, HQ 1 (UK) Armd Div, Herford; Capt JR Millard, Royal School of Mil Svy, Hermitage; Tpr SP Percy, The Light Dragoons, Hohne; Maj I Sanderson, HCMR, London; Cpl DB Shaw, 22 Engr Regt, Perham Down; Sgt CR Smith, BAD Kineton; Sgt JE Talbot, 7 Para RHA, Aldershot; WO1 G Thompson, MoD.

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12/98

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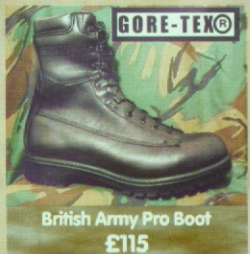
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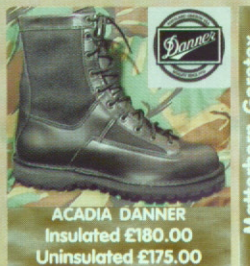
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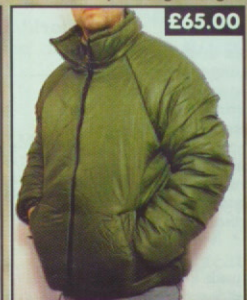
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The visual pleasures of the Boxster extend to the ergonomic design and all-round comfort of the two-seat cockpit, yet the bold simplicity of the fascia, with its large central rev-counter, and the single-colour leather seats (leather is optional) give an exciting edge to the workmanlike interior.

### EXACTING STANDARDS

The seats – with built-in headrests – are comfortable and supportive and the driver's seat features electric adjustment for rake. Appointments and trim are executed to exacting standards in a smart and well-specified cabin. There's plenty of room for two people to take all their luggage with them in the two boots – one at the back and one in front – and small items can be stowed in the deep door bins or the nets behind the seats.

Standard specification includes driver and passenger airbags, remote central locking, electric windows and mirrors, an alarm and immobiliser, anti-lock brakes and power steering: air-conditioning and traction-control are optional. The hood is, of course, power-operated and to lower it you hold down a switch. With perfect choreography it arches back and folds



### Road test: Porsche Boxster

**ENGINE** Water-cooled, six-cylinder horizontally-opposed aluminium unit. 2480 cc, 204 bhp at 6000 rpm.

**TRANSMISSION** Five-speed manual. Tip-tronic optional, Rear-wheel drive.

**SUSPENSION** Front and rear, McPherson design - optimised by Porsche.

**STEERING** Power-assisted.

**BRAKES** Inner-vented discs front and rear.

#### Tech Spec

ABS standard. Optional traction control with switch-over to Automatic Brake Differential (ABD).

**WEIGHT** Unladen 1250 kg.

**SIZE** (mm) Length 4315, width 1750, height 1290.

**PERFORMANCE** Maximum speed 150 mph. Acceleration 0 - 62 in 6.9 sec.

**MPG** Average 31.5 mpg.

**PRICE** £33,950.

itself away over the enclosed engine bay behind you in a matter of seconds.

Once you've settled in, the adjustable steering-wheel fits snugly into your hands, the gear lever is within easy reach and the pedals have just the right amount of feel and movement. It's a comfortable place to be and tailoring a good driving position is easy. You feel immediately at home and instantly confident.

The tranquillity of the cabin is soon changed as you start the engine, set amidst to give the car superb handling balance. A touch of the throttle fuels a sense of exhilaration as the tachometer dances into life. There's a unique timbre to the exhaust-note and as the revs rise a delightful howl is the dominating noise.

As you snick into first, the gear lever is right there against your thigh. There is a precision rarely felt in today's changes – engineered as they are for lightness – and

the gate is superbly defined so that you enjoy a fast, free action like a rifle-bolt. The clutch is strong and firm in take-up and the bite is rapid, allowing really fast changes and smooth take-offs in traffic.

The engine has a fine spread of power, but is at its best when revved enthusiastically by utilising the five gears. Under full throttle it has a hard-edged urgency. Exhilaration is the keynote of the Boxster and its intensity of character recalls the Porsche racing bloodline.

### DIFFERENT REALM

The suspension is unexpectedly compliant, giving a good ride quality and there's no unruly thumping or agitation of the kind that often afflicts high performance sports cars.

On the open road the Boxster provides the feedback that the enthusiast needs to enjoy the extraordinary handling and road-holding which are in a different realm from most road cars. Steering is the last word in accuracy and sensitivity and is extremely sharp and responsive.

Broadly speaking this car just goes where you point it and the grip of the low-profile Bridgestones is tenacious and even as the cornering forces rise you never put a foot wrong.

The Porsche Boxster gives a fun factor and synergy seldom encountered in a modern car. It's brawny but not brutal, delightful but not dainty, but most of all it is irresistible and unforgettable.

## Bobby-dazzler

RADAR, lasers, cameras. Just how far will the police go to catch a speeding motorist these days? Further than you'd expect if you live in Germany.

Last year the Bavarian police added a BMW M3 saloon squad-car to their fleet. Capable of reaching 62 mph in 5.5 seconds from standstill and with an electronically-limited top-speed of 155 mph the traffic policemen, eager to take their new car out onto the autobahn, had first to complete a special M3 driving training course on the Sachsenring race track.





# Mailbag

## You can have my Vietnam War medal

I NOTE with interest Mr Moroney of Bedfordshire's comments (Sept) regarding the lack of recognition for his service in Thailand during the Vietnam War.

From one cousin to another, he can have my medal and my hassles with the (American) Veterans' Administration if he wants it that bad.

Where were you guys when we needed you? – **SSgt S Sandberg, Co C, 961st Engineer Bn (Combat) (Heavy), (late of the 1st Aviation Brigade), Milwaukee, USA.**

PS: Thanks for the airstrip – "Spooky" probably appreciated it.

## Actively retired

CAN anyone clarify the use of the word "retired" for officers who have left the Service? I note that the Association of Royal Naval Officers states: "... 'Retired' need not be used after the name of an officer on the Retired List. This is because officers retain their commissions in the RN. Retirement is the transfer from the Active List to the Retired List and both are lists of the RN." – **Maj (Retd) W R Williams, Brighton, W Sussex.**

## Canoeing deaths

YOUR witty and informative article on white-water canoeing (Sept) suggested that the sport incurs up to ten deaths a year. Perhaps the writer should have checked with the British Canoe Union rather than give out false information. Canoeing deaths average only four a year, and since 1995 there have been only two. – **L M Spencer, BCU instructor, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.**

● We based our article on information made available at the time, but accept that our figure may over-estimate the average number of people killed each year in canoeing accidents. However, whether ten or four, the message remains the same: canoeing, particularly the white-water variety, is a potentially dangerous sport for which training by a qualified instructor such as Mr Spencer is vital.

**SOLDIER** welcomes your letters, whether you are an officer or other rank; serving or civvy; nine, 19 or 90. All we ask is that you keep them brief and to the point. We'd prefer them to be typed but if they are handwritten, please put names, addresses and in block capitals (not necessarily for publication).

A prize from the *Soldier* gift collection (see Page 24) will be awarded each month if we judge that a letter, serious or humorous, merits it. So get writing!

● Acceptance or rejection of letters is the decision of the Editor, who reserves the right to amend for length, clarity or style. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

## No sign of NI memorial

ABOUT four years ago you were kind enough to publish a letter of mine in which I called for a memorial to members of the Security Forces who have given their lives in Northern Ireland.

At the 1995 national conference of the Royal British Legion a proposal was carried unanimously calling upon the executive to approach the Government of the day to have a memorial erected in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

The project seems to have withered on

### Prize letter

the vine. Is it not now time for such a memorial to be erected or are we going to have a situation immortalised by Kipling when writing about soldiers?

*When peace is over and war is nigh  
God and the soldier is all their cry,  
When war is over and peace proclaimed  
Back you go to the Devil again.*

The politicians who sent regiments to Northern Ireland should now honour their debt . . . and not only with weasel words. – **Ron Bishop, Stroud, Glos.**

## Don't write off this 'rip-off'

I AGREE fully with G Davies's caution (Mailbag, Sept) over whether to commute. However, contrary to his contention, the commutation scheme is not a "rip-off".

Taking the current resettlement commutation rates, a sum of £4,500 over 15 years would result in a reduction in the annual pension of £538.60; a repayment over the period of £8,079. This compares favourably with a capital repayment mortgage over the same term with an APR of 9.2 per cent, which would incur a monthly repayment of £45.33, totalling £543.98 annually and £8,159.59 over the full term.

Additionally, as commutation repayments are deducted before tax while mortgage payments are net of income tax, the commutation equates to a mortgage repayment of £34.90 a month (£6,292 over the period) . . . less if you are taxed at 40 per cent.

At the time that Mr Davies commuted his pension, the rates in use were less advantageous, but so were the mortgage rates (considerably so as I remember).

People looking to commute should always weigh up the alternatives – what they want to use the money for and what it would cost them to obtain the capital by other means. Members of the AGC(PS) – and the RAPC before them) – always

recommend seeking the assistance of a professional financial adviser: good advice for all Service leavers. – **SSgt I P Littler, AGC(PS), 1 RSME Regiment, Chatham.**

● See Issues, Page 39

## Left, right, left

I write in respect of chevrons and badges of rank worn in the Middle and Far East. I have just watched *The Hill* for the umpteenth time and noticed that all senior NCOs and the RSM in the film wear their rank insignia on the left arm only.

I served in Egypt, wearing KD, and Singapore and Malaya, wearing OG, and my recollection is that all rank badges on tropical uniform were worn on one arm only . . . the RIGHT arm. Was there a change of policy after the war? Or did the film's technical advisers get it wrong?

I joined in 1948 and went to Egypt in 1949 so it must have changed; if at all, between 1943 and 1948. – **T M Brown (ex-WO1 (ASM) REME, Nottingham).**

## Role model . . .

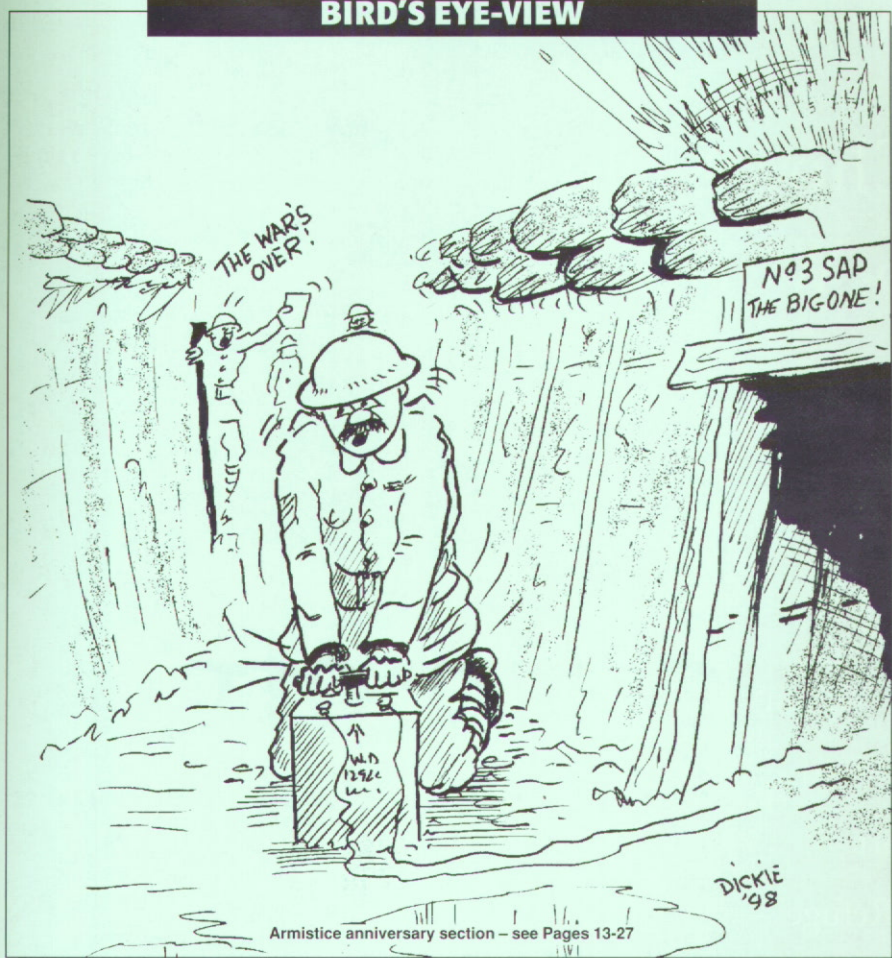
IN the *Vox pop* feature (Oct) Lt Jo Nissen RE said she would like to stay in the Army and get her chartered qualifications, which "no other woman has done yet". My daughter, Maj Gill Prowse, MBE, CEng, REME, achieved it some time ago.

Jo also stated that the Army and having a family don't mix. She will be encouraged to learn that my daughter has two sons, aged seven and five, has served in Northern Ireland, received the MBE for services during the Gulf War and is a keen sportswoman. Go for it, Jo. – **Ted Gibson, South Wirral.**

## Write us a prize letter



## BIRD'S EYE-VIEW



Armistice anniversary section – see Pages 13-27

# Dunkirk's heroes deserved better

IN the PS column (Sept), Henry Power of Queensland asked if anyone possessed a copy of *Gentlemen of Dunkirk*. Among my collection of some 60 books about Dunkirk I have a copy, albeit slightly dog-eared, written by war correspondent James Lansdale Hodson shortly after his return to England in 1940.

In his foreword he writes: "The BEF in France and Flanders endured much ill-fortune, always undeserved, carried out retirements to conform with the French line or to safeguard its existence after King Leopold's surrender, finally by skill and courage of the highest order, the bulk of it reached Dunkirk."

An undermanned, poorly-equipped army, the British Expeditionary Force fought against overwhelming odds. It suf-

fered thousands killed and wounded, and many holding the Dunkirk perimeter – allowing their comrades to escape – were captured and spent five years in PoW camps. To add insult to injury, an ungrateful Government refused to grant a medal for this campaign, the only major campaign of the Second World War to go unrewarded. A small bar inscribed "Dunkirk 1940" to attach to the 1939-45 medal would have been appreciated.

We have heard the one about no medals being issued for defeats, but what about the 1914 Star awarded for the retreat from Mons, or the Pacific Star for Singapore in 1941, to name but two?

Finally, Mr Power referred to the "now-defunct Dunkirk Association". It might be in Queensland, but the Dunkirk Veterans Association not yet defunct in the UK. The DVA is, however, proposing to wind-up after its final pilgrimage to Dunkirk in the summer of 2000. – Ken Clarke, Hon Sec, Henley-on-Thames Branch, DVA.

### For the record

Your reference to the Royal Canadian Rifles (Page 12, Aug) was incorrect. The title is the Royal Canadian Regiment. – F Tyrrell, Montreal, Canada.

## PS...

### Uniform approach

I LIVE in Italy, where soldiers often travel in uniform. In fact, soldiers never have any problem when hitch-hiking and people are generally respectful and courteous towards them. Even in cities such as Rome or Milan, soldiers are rarely hassled. – Richard Jones, Nottingham.

Wear those uniforms all the time. The British Army is the best in the world. – Cpl Jeff Wheeler, US Marine Corps.

● No sooner had our Vox Pop feature (Sept) addressed the issue than the MoD relaxed its rules. See Page 7.

### Cook made his mark

NOWADAYS everyone has a posh moniker. I learned recently that meals are now "prepared" in the Army by "chefs". In my days in the ATS they were lucky to be called cooks. On one monthly inspection our colonel caught an old chef making a pattern around a mince tart with his false teeth. On looking back, I must say they were the happiest days of my life. – Rosa Kinder, Alfreton, Derbyshire.

My grandad was amazed to read that Army cooks are now called chefs. During his many stories about Army cooking in the Second World War he has called them by many other names but never once by this glorious title. – John-Paul Walsh, Leyland, Lancs.

### Proud day on Rock

MY wife and I were invited to the presentation of new Colours to The Gibraltar Regiment by the Duke of Kent. The parade discipline was high, the uniforms smart and the ceremony faultless. Marker soldiers from the UK were a credit to their regiments. We wish the Gibraltar Regiment every success. – A J Lovegrove, Romford, Essex.

### We were fork-less

THE 350cc Matchless illustrated (battle-bikes, Aug) could not possibly be a veteran of the desert war as the model has telescopic forks which were first manufactured in 1949 when I purchased one of the first available. All wartime Matchless bikes had solid forks, as do the Royal Enfield and BSA in the pictures. My unit was using the Matchless 350cc with solid forks in 1956, and up to that time I had not seen any military bikes with telescopic forks. The BSA 500cc looks identical to one issued to me in Palestine in 1947. – Capt J F Mapstone, Northampton.

### Long-server

I WAS posted as a Regular soldier to Malta in 1939 and served overseas for the next 5½ years. During that time I met an RQMS in the Devons who was in his tenth year of overseas service. If anyone has made a claim to the longest period of continuous overseas service by a Regular soldier I would be interested to learn about it. – R J Shears (late RASC), Leicester.



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## Reviews

# Birkenhead: Ship of iron discipline

**Stand Fast** by David Bevan. Traditional Publishing, paperback, £6.95.

ECHOES of the *Titanic* pervade the tragic story of HM Troopship *Birkenhead*, which struck a rock and sank with the loss of 445 lives off the coast of South Africa.

Too few lifeboats were launched for the 638 people on board the all-iron paddle-steamer, who included soldiers from ten British regiments . . . and some soldiers either drowned in their bunks or were killed by the toppling funnel.

But the *Birkenhead* disaster occurred in 1852, 60 years before the *Titanic*, and on the earlier occasion the phrase "Women and children first" was coined – and carried out to the letter.

The incident also led to another phrase – Birkenhead Drill, or heroic self-sacrifice – adopted in military circles.

Only three boats could be lowered from the *Birkenhead* and the captain insisted on


the women and children going first before shouting "Every man for himself!"

But as the 20 women and children made for safety, the senior Army officer on board, Lt Col Alexander Seton, 74th Highlanders, feared the boats would be swamped and ordered 200 or so soldiers to "Stand fast" on deck, knowing they were heading for certain death in shark-infested waters.

Among tributes paid to the soldiers on the *Birkenhead* was the King of Prussia's order that the official account of the story should be read to each of his regiments as an example of true Teutonic military discipline and virtue.

Further tribute has now been paid by author David Bevan, who did National Service in the Army, in *Stand Fast*, his brilliantly-researched and absorbingly-told factual account of the episode.

There are whispers that the story may be filmed, so the *Titanic* echoes continue to reverberate. – CH



**Reveille Sustained by laughter**  
& Retribution

Classic tongue-in-cheek articles by Sustainer such as "The Thruster's Guide" culled from 25 years of contributions to various military journals deserved a more lasting form and here it is – a large-format paperback, *Reveille and Retribution* and other stories. To be entertained by retired brigadier Tank Nash's irreverent pieces, illustrated by Piscator, and help the Army Benevolent Fund into the bargain, send cheques for £10.95 per copy (inc p&p) to Bulldog Publishing Ltd, Freeport KE8669, Cambridge, CB1 5YE.

## Blessed are the music-makers

ON NOVEMBER 11, 1920, two years after the Armistice, the funeral of the Unknown Soldier took place in Westminster Abbey.

Immediately following the two minutes' silence, in what must have been a spine-tingling moment, *Kontakion of the Dead* soared to the heavens from the choir.

The Russian Liturgy, translated into English by W J Birkbeck and set to a Kiev melody, is one of the powerful and inspiring anthems on the CD and cassette *Peace In Our Time: Music of Peace and War*, by the students' Choir of Lincoln College Oxford (Guild Music Ltd, see advertise-

ment for details). Fourteen tracks, including Arvo Part's 1990s setting of *The Beatitudes*, Vaughan Williams's *Valiant-for-Truth*, Kodaly's *Agnus Dei*, and *A Peace Prayer*, set to St Francis of Assisi's words by Philip Wilby especially for the choir, are framed by trumpeter Christopher Millington's haunting *Last Post* and *Reveille*.

Director and organ soloist Benjamin Nicholas, in his early 20s, writes in the accompanying booklet: "We know how blessed we are. This disc is issued in thanksgiving that two world wars have not been followed by a third". – CH

MUSIC/Gordon Turner



## Quality from the few

A hundred years ago, the county regiments of Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Middlesex and Hampshire could boast 14 Regular Army bands between them. Today, after a century of cuts, amalgamations and restructuring, just one regiment – The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – remains, and its only band is a Territorial Army unit.

Given the fact that the band normally practises just once a week, the quality of its new CD, *The Kohima Band* (Bandleader STACD 70008), is greatly to its credit. The first half concentrates on popular concert works such as *Vanguard Overture*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Post Horn Gallop*, while the second reflects the band's heritage, with the quick marches of the old regiments.

The CD is available only from the Kohima Band, Leeds TA Centre, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1HR.

### CLIVE IN CONCERT

Typical of the new breed of Regular bands is the Band of the Prince of Wales's Division (Clive), which also has a new release, *In Concert* (Plantagenet CD PMRD 9410). Maintaining the traditions of the Welsh regiments, it has included a male voice choir alongside the military and dance bands in a programme of light music that includes *The Welshman*, *633 Squadron*, *Going Home* and a brace of Mozart pieces: *Rondo* from the Horn Concerto and themes from the 40th Symphony.

In my last column I wrote of Trooping the Colour recordings; this month it is the turn of that other star attraction, the Royal Tournament. Many traditionalists frown on the inclusion of items such as TV's *Gladiators*, but the music at least is always of a high standard and the two recordings now available should satisfy most enthusiasts.

### HOUSEHOLD DIVISION

*Royal Tournament 1997* (Bandleader CD BNATL 1097) is a live recording of a performance by the Massed Bands of the Household Division in the presence of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh. In their honour, 100 Scots Guards pipers, past and present, were on parade, which adds enormously to the occasion. But be warned: the crowd sometimes comes close to drowning out the music.

For a clearer recording you are directed to *Music from the Royal Tournament 1998* (Bandleader CD BNA 5098), a studio recording by the Royal Air Force bands. The two releases are complementary: the 1997 captures the atmosphere, while the 1998 version is musically the stronger.

If you have any problems obtaining recordings mention here, or any queries about military music, please write to me c/o *Soldier*.



# Bulletin Board

## SEARCHLINE

Belgian historical society dedicated to the history of the **Battle of the Ardennes**, 1944-45, is preparing a study of the operations of the British XXX Corps in the Ardennes. It seeks British veterans, especially former members of the 1st Highland Light Infantry, 7th Royal Welch Fusiliers, 4th Welch and the 144th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, willing to share personal memories of the battle in Jan 1945. Replies to Pieter Stolte, CRIBA, Aasterbergstraat 21, 6845 Gx Arnhem, Netherlands.

Former ship's company of **HMS Unicorn** (a one-off aircraft repair carrier), including battalions of Argylls and Middlesex Regiment, and others, who were on board during the second commission, 1949-51, sought for reunions. Write to HMS Unicorn Association, 3 Arundel Close, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4QR (tel 01442 255821).

Philip Hugh Morgan seeks fellow inmates of **Stalag 8C, Sagan 1944-45**, namely Fus Sidney Pugh of the Royal Fusiliers, Pte Tommy Atkins of the Queen's Regiment or Royal Fusiliers, and Alan, surname and regiment unknown. He also wishes to trace Capt Donald S Murray, ex-Scottish Horse, who was captured at Anzio and was an inmate at Oflag

## REUNIONS

**Royal Regiment of Artillery Association, Exeter Branch:** Annual dinner-dance on Dec 12. Tickets from John Seatherton, 8 Seabrook Avenue, Exeter (tel 01392 874072).

**Canal Zoners:** Suez Canal veterans' organisation spring reunion at Stoke on Trent has been re-arranged to take place on Jan 16-18. Details of this and Victory Club luncheons from The Canal Zoners, 16 Bridge Way, Twickenham TW2 7JJ (enclose sae).

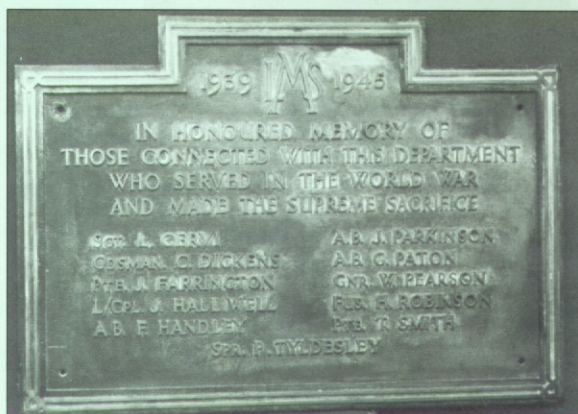
**16/5 L, QLR and 17/21 L:** The 1999 Aliwal dinner-dance will be held at Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford on Jan 30. For details send sae to Maj Cook, RMLY, Bridgeman House, Dawley Bank, Telford TF4 2BQ.

**Coldstream Guards, 3rd Bn, No 4 Coy (1950-1955):** Seventh reunion dinner to be held in Birmingham on April 10, 1999. Details from Harry Westgarth, 49 Rokeby Park, Hull HU4 7QE (01482 503649).

79. Replies to Bay View, Glan Y Mor Road, Goodwick, Pembrokeshire or tel 01348 873415.

**4th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment** has an annual reunion at Exeter and is keen to trace anyone who served with the unit in Austria, Gibraltar and Anglesey. Details from Ken Coles, 43 Roping Road, Yeovil BA21 4BE.

## Plaque puzzler?



If you know the story behind this bronze memorial to 11 railwaymen killed during the Second World War, Railtrack would be delighted to hear from you. The company also wants to find an appropriate home for the memorial.

It is not known where the 30in by 24in plaque, commissioned by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, was first displayed, and the men who it commemorates are listed only as being from "this department".

Railtrack estates manager John Pengelly believes the plaque originated in the Manchester area and adorned the wall of a station at one time. He is hoping one of our readers might recognise it or the names of the men it honours.

They are listed as Sgt L. Cervi, Gdsm C. Dickens, Pte J. Farrington, L/Cpl J. Halliwell, A.B. F. Handley, A.B. J. Parkinson, A.B. G. Panton, Gnr W. Pearson, Fus H. Robinson, Pte T. Smith and Spr P. Tyldesley.

John said: "One clue we have got is that it was presented before the nationalisation of the railways in 1945 as the plaque is dedicated to men of the old LMR."

He can be contacted on 0161 228 4410.

## Minister pays tribute to Suez Medal campaigner

COLONEL P S (Pip) Newton, who after a distinguished career in uniform devoted much of his time to campaigning for a General Service Medal for the Suez Emergency (1951-54), has died in his 80th year.

He suffered a stroke shortly after leading a Suez Medal delegation to Whitehall in March this year to present a 20,000-signature petition to Defence Under-Secretary John Spellar.

In a letter to Col Newton's widow, Mr Spellar has paid tribute to "the tremendous contribution he made to the Army, his regiment and to other military matters in which he took such a passionate interest".



Col Pip Newton

Since retiring from the Army in the early 1970s Col Newton had been secretary of the Army Museums Ogilby Trust and latterly honorary curator of the Army Staff College Museum at Camberley. He also reviewed many books for *Soldier*, signing-off with the initials "PSN".

Commissioned into the Royal Sussex Regiment in 1939, he became at 21½ the youngest lieutenant-colonel to serve in the British Army when he set up a battle school, reverting to captain when his battalion was mobilised.

### SOE AND SAS

He served at El Alamein and, after parachute and sabotage training, with the Special Operations Executive, 2 SAS, and in 1944 on the staff of 21 Army Group in Normandy and Brussels.

After becoming at 24½ the youngest Army Staff College student this century, he rejoined 21 Army Group and was involved with the disbandment of the German Army. Service in the Canal Zone in the early 1950s resulted in his being made MBE.

Later he joined The Parachute Regiment and saw more operational service in Malaya and Borneo.

● Our October Mailbag pages, which went to press before Col Newton died, included an appeal for get-well messages. We thank the many readers who responded and have passed all those received to his widow.

**ALDRESHOT Military Museum** has a new permanent display devoted to the development of flying. It opened 90 years to the day after pioneer aviator Samuel Franklin Cody made the first successful aeroplane flight in the UK, at Farnborough in 1908.

**FRIENDS of War Memorials** has a new address, 4 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LA (0171 259 0403) and a new worldwide web site - [www.war-memorials.com](http://www.war-memorials.com)

## New DMT workshop offers the lowdown on managing civvies

ARMY officers and SNCOs with management responsibilities for civilian staff are being encouraged to make use of a new course aimed at giving an overview and general awareness of civilian management matters.

The "Managing Civilian Staff" workshop designed by Defence Management Training includes sessions on the Civil Service, conditions of service and essential legislation, discipline and restoring efficiency, employee

relations, training and development, and performance appraisal.

The workshop can come to you, depending on the facilities available and number of participants. A shorter presentation for larger audiences can also be offered. To apply, use the DMT booking form (MoD Form 691) and sent it to your nearest DMT regional training centre in London, Bath or Glasgow. A helpline for all DMT modules can be reached on 0171 305 0195.





Picture: Evening Argus, Brighton

On parade: Lt Col Rory Steevenson, Reg Goding, RSM Mike McDonald and Capt James Coote

## PWRR put the smile back on Reg's face

BLIND war veteran Reg Goding did not have long to wait for a new set of medals when his were stolen from his home at Rottingdean, near Brighton.

Big-hearted Territorial Army soldiers serving with the 6th/7th Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment learned about Reg's loss from a news report on local television and contacted him through the police.

The battalion, which has bases throughout Sussex, had a whip-round to buy replacement medals and contacted dealer Raymond Holdich, who pulled out all the stops to come up with the appro-

priate set in time for 6/7's Salerno Day parade two days later. There his new African Star, Italian Star, Atlantic Star, Victory Medal and Defence Medal were presented to a beaming Reg by the commanding officer, Lt Col Rory Steevenson.

The veteran, who was blinded by shrapnel from a land mine while serving with the North London Fusiliers in Italy during the Second World War, said: "I feel very honoured and I could not have wished for more."

Lt Col Steevenson commented: "We felt we had to do something. We could not leave an old soldier without his medals."

## Try a weekend in the trenches

TO mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War, the National Army Museum in Chelsea is holding two days of special events over the weekend November 21-22.

Visitors will be able to try on and handle original 1914-18 uniforms, weapons and artefacts while uniformed interpreters from the Great War Society will demonstrate aspects of military service during the conflict.

There will also be advice on how to visit the battlefields today, and illustrated talks on life in the trenches, the horse at war and medicine.

Some of the events will take place in the museum's First World War gallery, which features life-size reconstructions, including a section of trench, archive film and scale models.

Admission is free and the programme runs from 11am to 5pm each day.

● **Treasures of the NAM** – see Page 69

A series of lunchtime lectures to commemorate the Armistice is also planned at the National Army Museum. They start at 1.15pm, are free and will last for about 30 minutes. No tickets are required.

Subjects include weapons of trench warfare (Nov 5), trench life (Nov 9), the Indian Army on the Western Front (Nov 10), the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (Nov 11), Flers – the first tank battle (Nov 12), the battlefields today (Nov 13), the German Army on the Western Front (Nov 19), and living with the legacy of the Great War (Nov 26).

To check on lectures, which may change, or the special weekend timetable, ring 0171 0717 ext 2228.

### Latest video releases

## Vivid pictures of the Somme

TO mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War, four new titles have been released by DD Video.

● **The Battle of the Somme** features some of the best contemporary newsreel footage of an army "two years in the making, ten minutes in the destroying". It contains reconstructions, dramatised eye-witness accounts and 3-D computer-generated mapping techniques.

● **Gallipoli – Death on the Beaches** shows rarely-seen battle footage of this military débâcle which was supposed to be a quick, simple operation to knock out the Turks. Dramatised eye-witness accounts, expert comment and analysis bring the campaign to life and show the beaches and battlefields as they are today.

● **Kaiserschlacht 1918** is the account of the "Kaiser's Battle" – the great German spring offensive of 1918. A million German troops were committed to this final desperate attempt to win the war.

● **Dying in Verdun** was made with access to previously unrevealed original film from French archives, interviews with survivors, and soldiers' letters. The Battle for Verdun lasted almost ten months in 1916 at a cost of nearly a million men killed or wounded.

All five are priced at £12.99 and have an running time of 50-55 minutes.

### DESERT STORM

The highly-acclaimed BBC series **The Gulf War** (DD Video) is now on video. It features a step-by-step account of the run-up to the war and first-hand accounts of Operation Desert Storm. Every aspect of the conflict is covered, including the only film of an SAS column inside Iraq.

From another BBC documentary series comes **Decisive Weapons** (DD Video), which charts the story of weapons that changed the face of war. Narrated by Sean Bean and using dramatic combat footage and expert analysis, Volume One features the Soviet T-34 tank, the P-51 Mustang fighter and the Bell "Huey" helicopter. (Price £12.99, running time 85min.)

### HITLER'S HEAVIES

Following the theme of weapons are two videos in the Scorched Earth series, **Doodlebug! Hitler's Terror Weapons** and **Tiger! German Heavy Tanks** (DD Video). They feature rare archive footage and 3-D computer graphics. (£12.99, 52min.)

One for train enthusiasts is **Steam at War – Destination Victory** (DD Video) which looks at railways in Britain and occupied Europe during the Second World War. It includes rare footage from Britain and Germany and features wartime steam engines surviving today. (£12.99, 52 min.)

MT Videos, in conjunction with *Vintage Commercial* magazine, has issued its first two presentations compiled from 1940s film and video held at the Imperial War Museum. **Scammell Recovery** (77min) features the Scammell six-wheel recovery truck rescuing Churchill tanks in trouble, and **Vehicle Mastership** (56min) shows the Bedford QL soon after it came into service. (£14.95 each, black and white.)



# Diary

## Veterans to get Legion d'Honneur

ELIGIBLE British veterans of the Western Front will receive France's first ranking order, the Legion d'Honneur, following a decision by the French Government to pay tribute to them on the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Applications should be made to the French Ambassador at the French Embassy, 58 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7JT.

To qualify, candidates must have served in France on the Western Front during the 1914-18 war and they must reside in the United Kingdom. Veterans living outside the UK should apply via the embassy in their country of residence. No awards will be given posthumously.

Information forwarded to the embassy should include: surname and first names, date and place of birth, nationality, private address (of veteran or kin), last position in the Armed Forces, including rank, length of service on French territory (including dates), service records and dates, and previous honours (including French) and dates.

**Did you see . . . Maj Dick Strawbridge, Royal Signals, on Channel 4's *Scrapheap* programme? With two colleagues he had to build a traction engine from bits and pieces found in a junkyard and then out-pull a vehicle constructed by a rival team. Dick, who has an engineering background, upheld the honour of the regiment in fine style by winning by two pulls to one. He is currently working at the Procurement Executive headquarters at Abbey Wood, Bristol.**

Brig David Shaw, who has just retired from the Army as Commander 42 (North West) Brigade, was presented with a fireman's helmet to mark his departure from Fulwood Barracks, Preston and to record his involvement with military emergency duties during Fire Brigade strikes. His staff lined the road as he was driven away in a Green Goddess. Brig Shaw, who has now joined the Army Benevolent Fund as a regional director based in the Bulford area, handed over command of 42 Brigade to Brig Alex Birtwistle, late of The Queen's Lancashire Regiment.



## DATES

### NOVEMBER

20-21: Army Arts Society annual exhibition, Medieval Hall, Salisbury.

### DECEMBER

5-6: Tenth anniversary Birmingham International Tattoo, National Indoor Arena. Box office 0121 200 2222.

● To include public events in this diary, contact the Editor.

## Rory keeps it in family

A CARTOON colouring book which has already raised £6,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund is set to make even more money for the charity.

Written three years ago by Brig Peter Stewart-Richardson and illustrated by John Ryan of *Captain Pugwash* fame, *Piper's Tale* is the humorous picture story of Rory, a Scots boy who joined a Highland regiment during the Napoleonic wars.

Aimed at younger readers, who will also enjoy colouring-in John Ryan's cartoons, the book is being reissued in time for Christmas.

There is a story behind the story: Brig

Stewart-Richardson, late of the Coldstream Guards and The Parachute Regiment, named his characters, including "Uncle George", after his grandchildren. And the dogs, Swift and Bint, are the names of the Stewart-Richardson's lurcher and Springer spaniel.

The author, who retired in 1981 as Brigadier Infantry, knew illustrator John Ryan and approached him to do the book. "He and his daughter were a tremendous help," he says.

It is priced at £2.75, including p and p, and all proceeds go to the Army Benevolent Fund. You can find details of how to order the book on Page 57.



Rory, the Highland soldier

## Young people do care . . .



Louise Raikes, above, aged 12, when she wrote the poem, and, below, today



IF the surviving generations of 80 years of conflict needed any reassurance that today's younger generation care about the past sacrifices of war they need look no further than the poignant words of a teenage girl.

Louise Raikes, of Yeovil, Somerset, whose 18th birthday falls on November 8, was just 12 when she wrote her poem *Autumn Remembrance* as part of a school project.

Her words represent the thoughts and feelings of today's teenagers -

young men and women who, 80 and more years ago, would have been all too close to the horror and sadness of war.

### AUTUMN REMEMBRANCE

*Bitter cold wind  
during the minute of silence.  
People pray for the past  
as the leaves scuttle across the ground.*

*Poppies blow in the wind  
as the people gather around,  
To remember the eleventh hour,  
the deathly minute of no sound.*

*Kicking leaves with no care,  
or lying in my cot.  
Grandparents remember those dreadful days  
that are never to be forgot.*

*No time for playing conkers  
Watching over the field of blood,  
Fighting for our country's lives  
and when those last deadly words are said,  
"OVER THE TOP".*

## Publisher wants to hear from poets to mark 80th anniversary

To mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War, the publishers *Poetry Now* are looking for poems for inclusion in a book - *A Century of War* - due out in the New Year. Editor Andy Head wants to read about experiences or views on war, even if the author wasn't there. All those published will be entered into the Top 100 of

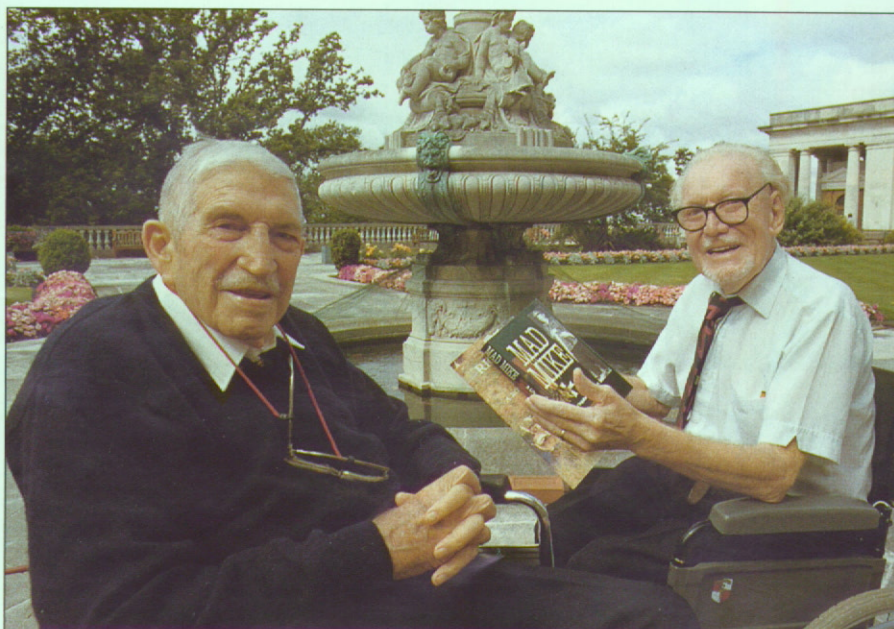
1999 award scheme, with poets standing a chance of winning anything from £50 to £3,500.

Send your work to Poetry Now, A Century of War, 1-2 Wainman Road, Woodston, Peterborough PE2 7BU or fax them to 01733 230751. Include no more than two poems (max 30 lines) to arrive before November 30.

**WAR STORY:** The museum in the famous Cloth Hall at Ypres has been redesigned as the first interactive museum exclusively dedicated to the First World War. Retitled the *In Flanders Field* Museum, it aims at keeping the story alive by using new tech-

nology, with interactive models, computers, video images and sound effects. Visitors can take the identity of a person who really existed in the war and follow them through to the end - not knowing whether they were injured, died or survived.





In conversation: Brig Mike Calvert, left, with Ted Tresise at the Royal Star and Garter Home

# Face-to-face with Mad Mike Calvert

SOLDIER "old boy" and Western Desert veteran Ted Tresise first met Chindit legend Brig "Mad" Mike Calvert in the back of a London taxicab.

Both men, now living at the Royal Star and Garter Home at Richmond, were guests of the London Taxi Drivers' Association on their annual seaside outing for residents. During the long drive to Worthing in a convoy of 120 taxis, the two

found they had much to talk about.

Back in the Royal Star and Garter library, Ted found several books on Mike Calvert's war against the Japanese in Burma, where he led the 77th Brigade. He also found a copy of Calvert's autobiography, *Fighting Mad*.

He says Brig Calvert, who arrived at the home for disabled ex-Servicemen and women in June, has made quite an impact on the many residents who knew of him by reputation.

Ted, who will be 82 in January, was *Soldier's* very first circulation manager. He served with the artillery from Tobruk to El Alamein, took part in the Sicily landings and was a war correspondents' conducting officer from D-Day to VE-Day. Soon after victory had been won in 1945 he joined the staff of the new magazine.

## Waterloo warrior rests at ease

DEREK Scholfield, secretary of the Royal Regiment of Artillery Association's Exeter Branch, tells us he chanced upon the following verse on a headstone in the tiny hamlet of Georgeham, North Devon.

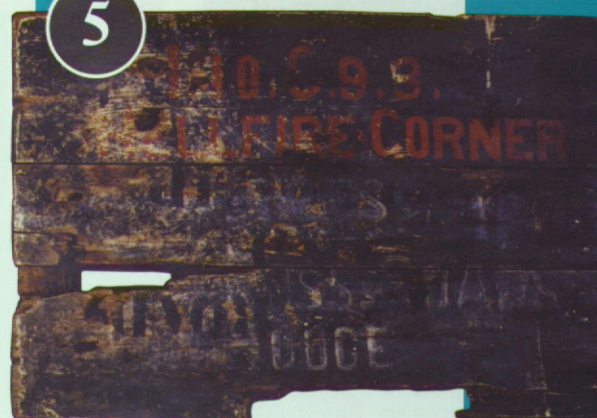
*Nor cannons roar, nor rifle shot  
Can wake him in this peaceful spot:  
With faith in Christ and trust in God,  
The sergeant sleeps beneath this clod.*

Buried beneath it is one Sgt John Hill of the 10th Regiment of Infantry, who fought at Waterloo, campaigned with the Duke of Wellington throughout the Peninsular War, and died on February 28, 1861. Derek reckons the clear lettering is a reminder of the old warrior's place in the hearts of the hamlet.

Treasures  
of the  
National  
Army  
Museum



5



The signpost from Hellfire Corner

## This way to hellfire

AT the end of the First World War Lt William Storie "liberated" a battered signpost from the notorious Menin Road and took it back to Edinburgh where it was placed in a Princes Street shop window.

Eventually it disappeared to the back of a cupboard in the family home and was re-discovered only recently, still in the original white canvas cover in which it had been transported from France.

It had marked a busy junction on the road from Ypres to the front and tens of thousands of Tommies had marched past it on their way to the trenches. Many were never to return.

### DANGEROUS

Hellfire Corner was a particularly dangerous spot. Within easy range of German positions, it had guns constantly trained on it and was very heavily shelled. Its nickname was conferred by troops who ran the gauntlet of Hellfire Corner.

Although hessian was suspended from long poles in an attempt to obscure the Germans' view of Allied troop movements, the enemy gunners were virtually certain of hitting something. In the spring offensive of 1918 the Germans, set on capturing Ypres, got as far as Hellfire Corner before being repelled.

The signboard was donated to the museum in 1996.

The signboard is in too fragile a condition at present to go on display in the museum.

## 50 YEARS AGO

From *Soldier*, November 1948

### GEN SLIM RETURNS

Confounding precedent, 57-year-old Gen Sir William Slim, who left the Army in 1947, has returned from civilian life to become the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff. He takes over from Fd Marshal Viscount Montgomery, who becomes defence chief of the Western Union.

## 25 YEARS AGO

From *Soldier*, October/November 1973

### WARMING UP FOR EVEREST

Two new names have been added to the map as a result of the Army's Himalayan expedition, a warm-up for the planned assault on Everest in 1976. The climbers were misled by a map and ended up climbing two new peaks, which have been named Bahuguna and Gurkha Parbat (the Gurkha's Mountain) in honour of Gurkha soldiers on the expedition.



# Vox pop

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on an issue

## Is it still important to remember those who died in the First World War?

Although the dead of all conflicts are remembered on Remembrance Day, there is still a strong emphasis on the First World War. We asked ten soldiers if the two-minute silence at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month and the wearing of poppies are still relevant to the modern world.

### Cpl Nev Armitage, AGC (SPS)

It is important to remember them. They were the ones who fought to put the "great" in Great Britain. People sometimes ask why we need an army but when they remember the soldiers of the First and Second World Wars they can understand what the Army today is really about.



### Pte Katie Tranter, AGC (SPS)

I think it is still relevant. If we had not fought in the war the Germans would have won, and there might not have even been a British Army today. It is a good idea to keep the tradition of remembering the 11th day. If I had been there I would have been terrified.

### WO2 Trevor Parry, RA

Everyone who fights and dies for their country deserves to be remembered. But I don't think we should go on too much about it. We have got to get rid of the hatred and meet one another half way.



### Maj Kate Weir, AGC (ETS)

It is desperately important to remember. It prevents us from glorifying war. My grandfa-

ther fought in France and survived, but had nightmares every night until he died aged 87. We're so used to seeing films with macho superheroes, but we must remember war isn't like that and we must prevent such madness and inhumanity from ever happening again.



### Pte Nicola Hawkins, AGC (SPS)



Anyone who learns about it would think it is important to remember them. I am 19 years old and to go out on a battlefield facing certain death at my age would take a lot of courage. When you think about it, we are still British because of them.

### Sgt Mark Dorn, AGC (SPS)

Remembering what happened is a way to make sure we never return to the atrocities of the First World War. It is something we have to pass on to future generations. My grandfather died in that war and my father visits his grave in France every year.



### Pte Sara Gill, AGC (SPS)

It's not something that people should be forced into and each person can make up their own minds about it. Before I joined the Army I did not think

about it that much, but now it's important to me. A lot of people died for what we have now; we should respect that.

### CSgt Michael Vincent, D and D

Young people cannot relate to people fighting for their country, so they ought to be informed and helped to understand what happened so it won't happen again. Everyone should be remembered, up to the Falklands and the Gulf, as well as the wars before the First World War.



### Maj Ian Waller, AGC (ETS)

I don't think we should ever forget. Remembrance Day gives us a bit of focus and reminds people that the Army is not just about standing on Horseguards in smart red uniforms. I think there has been a bit of momentum with more and more people observing the silence.

### Sgt Sharon Potts, 4 KOSB (V)

We should learn lessons from history rather than forget it. If you go to the Imperial War Museum and read about the First World War it is almost as if you were reading the news of today. It brought it home to me that this happened 80 years ago and now it is happening again. We must remember what those people did and not make the same mistakes.



Interviews: Karen Moseley Pictures: Mike Weston

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