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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



APRIL 2014
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SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Wyndham (Roche) Ltd. Print contract managed by Williams Lea.

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ARMY

The changes continue

So much is happening to change the Army's identity that it can often be hard to keep up.

As ever, restructuring continues at pace this month with the launch of Force Troops Command HQ (page 10) and details of further financial incentives for would-be Reservists (page 17).

Then, of course, there's the shift in focus from Afghanistan towards brand new operational scenarios – this month freezing cold ones (pages 30-33).

And that's before you consider the cultural shifts. Will women be fighting on the front line in years to come (pages 40-43)? How will the defence secretary deal with the influence of human rights law on future combat operations (page 15)? And what more is being done to tackle bullying and harassment? Answers to all these questions will no doubt materialise in time.

Despite the healthy scepticism expressed by those at the sharp end, it's certainly true that more is changing for the better than not. New, exciting equipment is always being progressed (pages 27-29) and the war on mind-numbing bureaucracy is, at least in part, under way (page 7).

With this in mind, I hope our extended feature on holidays (pages 45-57) helps to bring some calm to the storm of military life. Too broke to go away? Then turn to page 51 and enter our competition to win a UK break. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

S. Goldthorpe.

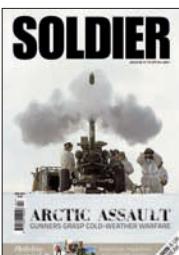


Top performance

Army optimistic after Doncaster cup defeat (page 96)

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**THIS IS
MUCH MORE
ROBUST THAN
THE HERMES
450 WE
CURRENTLY
USE**

1

**“Here you truly learn to be
an efficient soldier”**

Troops reflect on demands of Arctic job p30

**“I said to myself ‘I’m not
going to die like that’”**

Survivor recalls horrors of the Holocaust p35

**“To those of us living the
military life it actually
smacks of hypocrisy”**

Reader rants about drinking culture p59





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Picture: Steve Dock

Helping soldiers speak up

Overhaul of Service complaints system welcomed

PERSONNEL will soon be able to take their grievance to an ombudsman if they feel the Army has not dealt with it fairly, the MoD has announced.

The plan will see new powers given to the Service complaints commissioner, Dr Susan Atkins (pictured below), who has long been calling for changes to what she calls an "ineffective, complex and bureaucratic" system.

Under the proposed overhaul, the commissioner will become the Service complaints ombudsman, giving her the legal power to overturn decisions to exclude complaints, review the handling of them and recommend action to the Defence Council.

"The big change here is that the chain of command will investigate a grievance knowing that the independent ombudsman will be able to look in detail at how they dealt with it and whether they did the

right thing for the complainant," explained Chris Kirkby, a spokesman for the Service complaints commissioner.

"These changes will also shorten

the time a grievance is handled internally. Soldiers deserve to be treated fairly and when they have been wronged they should have confidence that action can be taken."

In her revised role, the ombudsman will continue to offer an alternative for Service personnel who do not wish to approach the chain of command with their concerns.

Commenting on the changes, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "We have worked closely with the Service complaints commissioner to ensure our personnel have the protection and support they need.

"The role is an essential safeguard and that is why I want to increase its powers to create the Armed Forces' first Service complaints ombudsman. We will legislate at the earliest opportunity to deliver this change."

Dr Atkins added: "Three years ago I said that the system was failing and the powers of the Service complaints commissioner should be strengthened and changed.

"I am pleased the MoD has now accepted that a simpler, faster and more accountable process is needed."

The current complaints procedure will continue until the government passes legislation for the new role.

● Army chief speaks out
– pages 40-43

LIVING COSTS TO RISE FOR SERVING TROOPS

■ MILITARY personnel will receive a one per cent rise in their salaries from this month as government-imposed pay restraint continues to hit the public sector.

The increase will apply to all Servicemen and women – regardless of rank – while the rates of longer separation allowance will rise by one per cent, with the addition of two extra levels at the top of the scale.

Recruitment and retention payments for all categories (except mountain leaders, aeronautical and escort duty and parachute jumping instructors) will also be granted a one per cent boost.

However, the amount of money being paid out by troops is set to grow as amendments are planned for the cost of housing and food.

Rental charges for Service families' accommodation (SFA) will increase by 2.2 per cent for all four grades, with those residing in single living accommodation (SLA) also paying more.

Individuals occupying grade one properties will shell out an extra 2.2 per cent, with grade two paying 1.5 per cent and grade three 0.75 per cent more. The rate for grade four dwellings remains the same.

Water and sewerage charges will grow by £14.60 per year for SFA and £7.30 for SLA and the cost of furniture hire for the former will increase by 2.2 per cent. Those with standard garages will pay a new daily rate of 95p.

In terms of dining, the daily food charge will rise by 29p to a new rate of £4.72 and the pay-as-you-dine daily core meal will now cost £4.82 – a hike of 30p.

For full details of the Armed Forces' pay award read ABN 029-14.

“
This will shorten the time a complaint is handled
”



IN NUMBERS: ARMY LIVING COSTS 2014

Rent increase for SFA occupiers **2.2%**

£7.30 Hike in water and sewerage charges for SLA residents

Rise in the pay-as-you-dine daily core meal charge **30p**

A TASTE OF
ARMY EVENTS
ACROSS THE
WORLD

GLOBAL SITREP

1 CANADA

SUB-ZERO ZEAL

PERSONNEL have been working in temperatures as low as -20 degrees Celsius to improve facilities at Batus.

Exercise Warpaint saw 130 soldiers from 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, 36 Engineer Regiment embark on a two-month deployment that included maintenance and construction of bridges and the refurbishment of training villages.



1 British Army Training Unit Suffield

British Army Training and Support Unit Belize

Falkland Islands

2 UK

BIKING BASH

SERVICE personnel are being urged to get involved with the Festival of Cycling at this year's Tour de France.

The world-famous race starts in Leeds on July 5 and the Army is planning recruiting activity at each of the UK spectator hubs.

As well as entertainment, the celebration will include a range of cycling competitions within the grounds of Harewood House, which will also welcome the peloton of the grand depart.

Service personnel are being offered discounted rates on camping at the site and entry into sports events.

For more information or to register for the recruiting drive contact Maj Stuart Reid on 01904 662183.



We have learnt so much from the Royal Irish team

3 BURUNDI

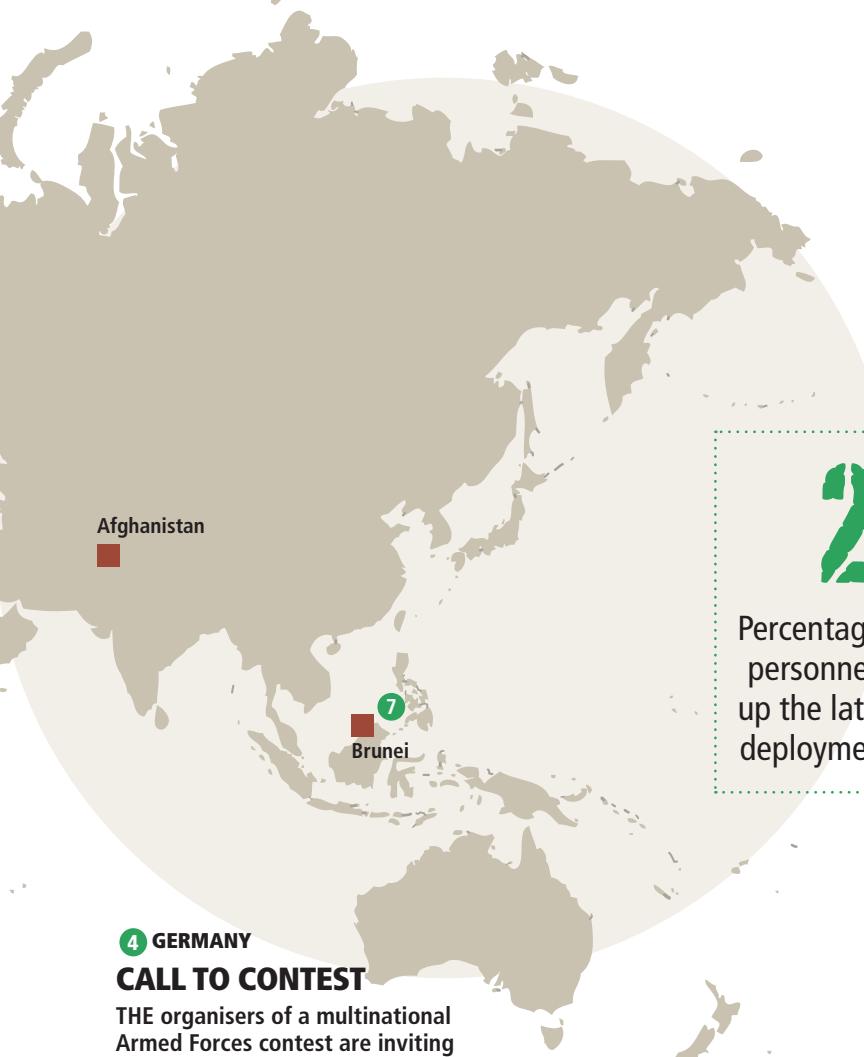
SOMALIA OP SUPPORT

RESERVE personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment travelled to East Africa to train troops from the Burundi National Defence Force ahead of their tour to Somalia.

The UK soldiers helped build a sense of teamwork within the foreign unit before focusing on low-level tactics and fieldcraft ahead of a final three-day exercise.

"We have learnt so much from the Royal Irish team, especially how to run company-level operations and help beat the insurgents in Somalia," said Capt Helmenegilde Niyondiko, of the Force's 26th Battalion.





4 GERMANY

CALL TO CONTEST

THE organisers of a multinational Armed Forces contest are inviting British troops to pit their skills against Nato colleagues.

Held in Moenchengladbach, Germany, on June 14, the International Military Skills Competition tests participants on a range of soldiering tasks including shooting, orienteering, first aid and an obstacle course.

Male, female or mixed teams of four from any Regular or Reserve unit can enter and the deadline for registration is May 19.

For further information email bfg-slo-rhine@mod.uk



“Through the tour we are working as one”

20

Percentage of Reserve personnel that make up the latest Op Tosca deployment in Cyprus

5 KENYA

SCHOOL SAVED

A SECONDARY school has been saved thanks to the work of UK soldiers.

Royal Engineers from the British Army Training Unit Kenya installed two holding tanks, piping and water pumps at the MOI Equator Girls' School in Nanyuki to deal with excess water at the site.

The institution, which educates more than 600 youngsters, had been under threat of closure because the water run-off had become a nuisance to the surrounding community.



6 CYPRUS

FIRST FOR FORCE

RESERVE soldiers from The London Regiment will become the first to deploy as a whole platoon fully integrated with a Regular unit as envisaged under the Army 2020 model.

Around 50 members of the formation have embarked on a six-month tour in Cyprus on Operation Tosca alongside 1st Battalion, The Irish Guards and the troops were readied together under the watchful eyes of UN assessors.

Preparations included public order training, should they be required to use it during the 50th anniversary of Turkish intervention on the island.

Lt Col Rupert Pim, the formation's CO, said:

“Throughout the tour we are working as one, whereas in the past Reserves have deployed to Cyprus both as formed groups in their own right or as an element within larger formations.

“We will represent around 20 per cent of the group alongside 200 Irish Guards. It is a great opportunity to learn from our Regular counterparts.”



7 BRUNEI

VIP BOOST IN JUNGLE

ENGLAND'S record try scorer Rory Underwood was the special guest at the inaugural Kukri Cup rugby union match in Brunei.

The game saw Army garrison team, the Flying Kukris, defeat the country's national side 29-7 but the main goal of the event was to promote the hard work of personnel in the local sporting community.

Underwood, who served in the Royal Air Force, spoke at a fund-raising dinner and made trips into the jungle with the Gurkha battalion stationed in Brunei.



ARMY 2020 UPDATE

Picture: Graeme Main



New structure: Force Troops
Command will bring together several support roles including engineering

Force Troops vision becomes a reality

THE HQ of Force Troops Command (FTC), one of the three main strands of the new-look Army under the 2020 restructure, will become fully operational from this month.

According to Maj Gen Tim Radford, general officer commanding FTC, the effects will be felt across the Army.

"We are, primarily, providing support and enabling functions to 1st (UK) Division and 3rd Mechanised Division as well as joint forces activity," he explained to *Soldier*.

"Those formations used to have their own support functions but under the Army 2020 construct we will have all the artillery, engineers, signals and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance units, so all

those enablers are now grouped together under our command.

"Previously, units would grab whatever support they needed – usually without question – but from now on the allocation of those resources will be prioritised by us.

"The Army is adjusting in size and this is the most efficient way forward because it means resources can be shared or allocated to much better effect," he added.

By 2015, when the majority of British troops in Germany have returned to the UK, FTC will have formed nine brigades, some of them brand new (see below), with around 38,000 personnel.

That will equate to roughly one third of the Army and nearly half of all the Reserves.

“It means resources can be shared to better effect”

'Adaptable Force will be war-fighting too'

THE role of the Army's new Adaptable Force has been set out by senior officers.

Due to reach initial operating capability in August and be fully up and running a year later, the formation will be responsible for a variety of tasks including providing headquarters for lengthy operations, overseas defence engagement, UK civil tasks and standing commitments in places like Cyprus and the Falklands.

Lt Gen Sir Nick Carter, commander Land Forces, explained that war-fighting abilities will remain a key part of life for troops in the Adaptable Force but added that its seven infantry brigades and one logistic brigade will have "a much wider use" as well.

"This marks an exciting departure from our current structures and approach," the officer said during a recent meeting of senior staff.

Maj Gen James Chiswell, general officer commanding 1st (UK) Armoured Division, added: "The Adaptable Force will be routinely engaged overseas, building its understanding, helping nations to improve their security, shaping and ensuring we're better placed to respond to the world's trouble spots.

"It will be a division with the cultural understanding, language skills and the right relationships to allow the Army to operate in tune with the complexities on the ground."

Alongside the Adaptable Force, the Reaction Force – which includes three armoured infantry brigades, an air assault brigade and a logistic brigade – will undertake short-notice, high readiness intervention tasks.



FORCE TROOPS COMMAND: THE UNITS

1ST ARTILLERY BRIGADE

- Newly formed to deliver close support artillery and precision fires, as well as leading in air-land integration with the Royal Air Force

1ST SIGNAL BRIGADE

- Providing information and communication services for the Joint Rapid Reaction Force and Nato's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps

11TH SIGNAL BRIGADE

- Supporting divisional and brigade headquarters, as well as UK resilience operations

8TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

- Expanded to command the close support engineer units, as well as explosive ordnance disposal and search, force support and infrastructure groups

104TH LOGISTIC SUPPORT BRIGADE

- Provides theatre entry combat service support

1ST INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE BRIGADE

- A new formation

2ND MEDICAL BRIGADE

- Its remit includes hospital care

THE MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE

- A new formation under FTC's umbrella but the command has no oversight of investigative activity

THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE GROUP

- Forging close links with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, its Stabilisation Unit and Department for International Development



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Picture: Cpl Ross Ferrie, RLC



BRIDGE BUILD BOOST

■ AFGHAN engineers took the lead in a multinational operation to repair a bridge on the Helmand River and improve trade links in the province.

The structure near Gereshk will offer an important crossing on Highway One – the main ring road around Afghanistan.

Insurgents damaged the bridge in 2012 and the Royal Engineers and US Marine Corps constructed a temporary replacement to maintain traffic flow.

But the short-term solution was recently removed to allow the Afghans to complete the project.

"A few years ago we would have been repairing the bridge," said SSgt Andy Bracey (RE). "But now we're removing Isaf equipment to let them fix it themselves."



SHEERAN'S SHOW

■ ED SHEERAN has performed two concerts for hundreds of British troops on a morale-boosting visit to Camp Bastion.

The singer – who described the trip as "an absolute privilege" – met with various units during his time at the base.

VOYAGER REPORT

■ INVESTIGATORS have found that human factors, not technical issues, were the cause of a sudden drop in altitude during an RAF Voyager flight to Camp Bastion.

After reaching cruising height on February 9 the aircraft pitched nose down and dropped 4,400 feet in 27 seconds, resulting in a small number of minor injuries to the nine crew and 189 passengers on-board.

The plane was diverted to Turkey, where the Military Aviation Authority began an investigation.

Their findings have revealed that a digital camera in the captain's side of the cockpit had jammed between the armrest and side-stick and prompted a small pitch-down command.

Picking up the pace: The departures mark the final stages of the mission in Afghanistan



Picture: Cpl Ross Ferrie, RLC

More bases left behind

Troops draw back to just two Helmand locations

BRITISH Forces have reached another milestone in the drawdown of operations in Afghanistan with the closure of three more bases in Helmand.

Main Operating Base Lashkar Gah and Patrol Base Lashkar Gah Durai have been handed over to Afghan control, while MOB Price has been shut down.

From a peak of 137 locations at the height of the conflict, just Camp Bastion and Observation Post Sterga 2 now remain under UK control.

Brig James Woodham, commander of Task Force Helmand, said the closures were a "historic moment".

"This was a complex and significant operation that required detailed planning and much hard work," added the senior officer.

The gradual removal of infrastructure from each base back to Camp Bastion took around six months with dozens of journeys via road and air.

In the final stages of the mission there were ten combat logistic patrols involving nearly 600 vehicles.

Brig Woodham continued: "While the Afghans are firmly in the lead, UK personnel will continue to serve in Helmand province throughout this year supporting the security forces where necessary."

Afghanistan's troops are now leading 97 per cent of all security operations across the country and carrying out more than 90 per cent of their own training.

● Pondering post-op tour leave? Find a holiday deal – pages 46-47

“This required much hard work”

MOVIES

“THE FILM IS PACKED WITH ACTION AND ADVENTURE”

300 II HITS THE SCREEN - PAGES 76-77

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“I AM NOT HERE JUST TO TRAIN; I WANT TO PLAY” - SOLDIERS STORM SWINDON, PAGE 93



Next stage in flood support

SOLDIERS have continued to assist local authorities and emergency services with the recovery operation following flooding across the UK.

In Surrey troops from 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery helped to remove a 600-metre dam between Chertsey and Kenley.

Elsewhere, Royal Engineers worked on a variety of tasks ranging from constructing metal sheet barriers in Romsey to repairing sea defences in Dorset.

More than 200 Armed Forces personnel have also been called up to help the Environment Agency with the assessment of flood protection across the country.

“The military will continue to support flood relief efforts for as long as their help is required,” said defence minister Mark Francois.



Fear in the line of fire: The threat of litigation should not hang over troops, Mr Hammond said



Picture: Steve Dolk

“
They will continue for as long as help is required
”

MoD considers a ‘remedy’ to the human rights issue

THE government is becoming increasingly concerned that human rights laws are hindering military operations, the defence secretary has hinted.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Philip Hammond said new legislation could be introduced to protect soldiers from civil litigation on the battlefield.

“There are issues about the encroachment of judicial processes into the operation of the Armed Forces,” the politician explained after being asked what could be done to exempt troops from certain laws.

“A number of cases currently before the courts, or pending, could have a significant impact and we are watching them closely.

“We are clear that once we commit our military to combat, they must be able to carry out missions without fear of constant review in the civil courts.

“If we find that the current cases develop in a way that makes that difficult, we will come back to the House of Commons with proposals to remedy the situation.”

A recent study by the Policy Exchange found that the MoD faced 5,827 claims in 2012/13, with lawsuits costing the department some £36 million a year.

In 2013 the Supreme Court ruled that the families of soldiers killed in Iraq could make damages claims against the department under human rights legislation.

SALISBURY SPRING

A RESERVE unit has teamed up with the Royal Air Force for the first time in more than a decade.

Exercise Spring Warrior saw troops from The Royal Wessex Yeomanry shift their focus from the flood relief effort in Dorset to working with 27 Squadron, RAF on Salisbury Plain training area.

As well as coordinating the air delivery of personnel and Wolf Scout Land Rovers by Chinook, the soldiers got their hands on the Challenger 2 Main Battle Tank.

In their new role within the Army’s Reaction Force the Reservists will be responsible for crewing the platform.



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IN MEMORIAM



SPR ADAM MORALEE (23)
32 ENGINEER REGIMENT
ROYAL ENGINEERS
DIED MARCH 5 – AFGHANISTAN

PERSONNEL in Afghanistan are mourning the loss of a soldier who was fatally injured while preparing engineer plant equipment for redeployment out of Camp Bastion

Spr Adam Moralee, 23, joined the Royal Engineers in 2008 and was posted to 26 Armoured Engineer Squadron the following year.

He deployed on operations in March 2011, where he crewed a Trojan armoured vehicle clearing legacy minefields and defeating IEDs.

Due to be promoted to lance corporal later this year, the Serviceman undertook his second tour last September as part of a close support troop within 39 Armoured Engineer Squadron.

"Quietly determined and utterly dedicated, Spr

Moralee was an outstanding soldier," said Lt Col Steve Davies, CO of 32 Engr Regt.

"An armoured engineer through and through, he had proved himself on both the icy prairies of the British Army Training Unit Suffield in Canada and the IED-riddled deserts of Afghanistan.

"We will remember him as the dedicated, professional and likeable sapper he was."

The avid Newcastle fan leaves behind his parents, Lynn and Darren, and fiancee Emma.

"Adam touched everyone's hearts who came into contact with him," a family statement said.

"He loved his job and the friends he made from his time in the Army, and he would never have swapped those experiences for the world."

'IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SEX CRIME'

■ THE coroner overseeing a second inquest into the suicide of a Royal Military Policewoman in 2011 has called for the MoD to improve its support for victims of sex crimes.

Cpl Anne-Marie Ellement was found hanged at her barracks in Bulford after being bullied for reporting that she had been raped by two colleagues.

Delivering a verdict of suicide, coroner Nicholas Rheinberg ruled that the harassment had played a role in the 30-year-old's death and said the military should review its policies towards vulnerable soldiers.

Speaking for the Army, Brig John Donnelly, Director of Personal Services, apologised to Cpl Ellement's family for the failures highlighted by the inquest.

"Our priority is to study the coroner's conclusions and then identify what further steps can be taken, to help prevent a recurrence of this kind of tragedy in the future," he added.

A separate statement released by the MoD said a new police investigation was being conducted into the original allegation of rape.



TOURNAMENT AXED

■ THE British Military Tournament is to close its doors after four years, ABF The Soldiers' Charity has announced.

A statement from the organisation said that a declining trend in ticket sales for the annual event, which was staged at Earls Court in London, meant its organisers had no other choice.

It was
fascinating
to see a
site used
more than
100 years
ago

“

Cash for commitment

Bonus increased to boost Reservist numbers

■ NEW financial incentives have been introduced in an attempt to increase the number of Reservist recruits and bolster experience across the integrated Service.

From this month, Regular personnel up to the rank of captain who want to extend their military careers with the Army Reserve will receive up to £10,000 split over four payments – double the amount offered under the previous Territorial Army commitment bonus early years scheme.

The new arrangements apply until March 31, 2017 and include those who have left the Service during the last six years.

Civilians who sign up to part-time military life between the start of this year and March 2019 will also benefit to the tune of £300, in addition to the two £1,000 payments that troops get on completion of phase one and two training.

All the bonuses will be backdated to the start of this



You do the maths: Regulars who wish to extend their career with the Army Reserve could pocket up to £10,000

year and although taxable, they will be awarded to Servicemen and women in addition to the existing tax-free bounties and Reserve salaries.

For further details on the incentives read ABN 31/14.

ENGINEERS UNEARTH PRACTICE BATTLEFIELD

■ MEMBERS of the Royal Engineers have helped to unearth the remains of a First World War practice battlefield.

Used for training troops before they were sent to the front line, the site is roughly the size of 17 football pitches and has two sets of opposing trench systems with a no-man's-land between.

The find was made after a Gosport Council worker spotted the network on a 1950s aerial photograph.

"It was fascinating to see a site used for pre-deployment training more than 100 years ago and compare it to the proving grounds of today," said Cpl Mark Short of 42 Engineer Regiment. "It brings home the gravity of what soldiers faced."





**"I REMEMBER THEM PUTTING ROPE
ROUND THE NECK OF A 14-YEAR-OLD"**
- HOLOCAUST HELL RELIVED, PAGES 35-38

Fighting chance in Jordan



MEMBERS of the British Military Assistance Training Team in Jordan have helped the country's Armed Forces to run their first-ever combined arms company commanders' course.

The four-week pilot, which was modelled on the UK's combined arms tactics package, saw five UK Servicemen assist in preparing the nation's combat officers for future roles as sub-unit leaders and battlegroup staff.

For most of the 25 Jordanian troops who took part, the serial was their first experience of training in a joint arms environment.

"Many students were surprised at the intensity of training and the unusual weather conditions during the final exercise, including sleet and snow, which added further stresses," explained

Maj Nick Foulerton (Scots DG), who led the course.

"Nonetheless, they demonstrated considerable progress throughout.

"During the exercise the officers operated at a pace with which many British commanders would have been proud."

Military platforms that supported the serial included the Challenger 1, the YPR armoured tracked vehicle and Cobra attack helicopters.

UK Armed Forces personnel have been on loan to the Middle Eastern country since 2009 at the request of King Abdullah II.

The troops are there to assist with creating a more professional and modern military in Jordan and, as part of that vision, have been helping to develop a collective training capability.



Combined arms: British troops with their counterparts during the serial

4-3

Winning score for the Army men against the Royal Navy at this season's **Inter-Services hockey championships** – page 98

NEW RULES ON RISK

■ CHANGES have been made to the way the Army manages activities that could endanger troops' lives.

The policy follows recommendations made in a review of the 2006 crash of the RAF Nimrod MR2 in Afghanistan, in which 14 British personnel were killed.

Known as duty holding, the new process will see senior staff – principally commanding officers and those of major general rank – given responsibility for keeping risk "as low as reasonably practicable".

Designated duty holders will be briefed on their obligations and for more details read **ABN 27/14**.



THE LYNX EFFECT

■ CREWS flying the recently upgraded Lynx Mk 9a can now be brought up to speed with in-flight operational procedures in a virtual environment.

A digital recreation of the aircraft (pictured above), which is currently deployed on operations in Afghanistan, has been introduced to add realism to Armed Forces' training serials on the Virtual Battlespace 2 system (VBS2).

Mark Bentley, a senior developer at NSC, the company that produced the technology, said it would make collective training more authentic.

"The model is not a pilot or helicopter simulator – it is controlled using a keyboard and mouse within VBS2 – but it does allow a crew to get used to working together and communicating with each other," the expert commented.



WIN

...a pair of stylish spring shoes worth £90

DID last month's spine lines competition make you snap? Inspired by our feature on Army photography, (David) Bailey, (Cecil) Beaton, (Roger) Fenton and (Simon) Norfolk are all famous British cameramen.

This month we have teamed up with Ridgemont Adventure Outfitters (www.ridgemontoutfitters.com) to offer two lucky readers a pair of these sleek Mesa shoes, made from waterproofed oiled suede and available in a choice of three designs. To be in with a chance of winning them tell us what links the words on the spine of this issue. Send your answers on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30. Good luck!

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Sun⁺



“FOR THREE YEARS I DIDN’T HAVE A DAY OFF WORK”
- SECOND CAREER SLOG, PAGE 54

UK troops ‘more resilient’ claims mental health study

DESPITE ten years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, UK troops remain mentally healthy and more resilient than their US peers, according to a new study.

The findings by the King’s Centre for Military Health Research suggest that intervention strategies introduced by the British Armed Forces have helped mitigate the impact of trauma.

But the report also highlights particular groups who are at greater risk – namely Reservists and those deployed in a combat role – and warns that alcohol misuse and violence remain areas of concern.

Researchers reviewed 34 published studies on the psychological impact of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan on UK troops and compared them with similar papers in the US.

The rate of post-traumatic stress disorder among UK Regulars ranged from 1 to 4.8 per cent, a similar level to the general population, but was recorded as between 21 and 29 per cent among American troops.

Factors such as younger soldiers and longer tours were highlighted as contributing to this difference.

Common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression were found to affect between 16.7 and 19.6 per cent of British personnel but rates of suicide and self-harm were lower than the general population.

However, in the US, despite preventative measures, suicide has become one of the leading causes of death in the military in recent years.

Dr Deidre MacManus, the study’s lead author, said: “Overall, UK personnel have remained relatively resilient in spite of the stresses endured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Armed Forces have made considerable efforts to improve access for deployed personnel to high quality mental health services and implement mitigation measures.

“These include third location decompression and trauma risk management, which are routinely used in the British military but not in the US.”

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK AND WIN A £500 JACKET

● FOR those who missed it last month, there’s still time to fill in *Soldier’s* short reader survey and enter the draw to scoop this NFTO insulated waterproof jacket worth more than £500.

To take part, visit the link below before April 30 and answer ten simple questions about the magazine.

Leave your email address to be in with a chance of winning. Details will not be shared with third parties.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/5KXSV3H



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GOOD DRILLS

STAGE PRESENCE STUNS

A PLAY starring wounded Service personnel has won five-star reviews from theatre critics on its latest UK tour. *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* is based on the real stories of its cast. In *The Telegraph* Dominic Cavendish described Bravo 22 Company’s portrayal of the war in Afghanistan as “a tightly drilled exercise”.

THE UK’s Armed Forces have been ranked second in the world’s first league table for the most gay-friendly militaries. A new index from the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies revealed the Services narrowly missed out on the top spot to New Zealand but received high scores for putting the gay community at the forefront of various policies and practices. The survey rated the military forces of 100 countries by their inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender troops.

SECOND BEST

IN NUMBERS

16,000

Top altitude, in feet, reached by *Watchkeeper*, the latest addition to the Army’s *eyes in the sky* – pages 27-29



ALLOWANCE CHANGE

■ THE Ministry of Defence has extended the criteria for claiming disturbance expenses and the movement and storage of personal effects allowance.

Policy has been rewritten to remove inconsistencies. It now includes improved entitlements for single personnel, those being medically discharged and troops required to move mid-assignment.

For details read 2014DIN01-039.

‘DUTY DIMINISHING’

■ BROADCASTER Jeremy Paxman has claimed today’s young generation is too “self-obsessed and materialistic” to become involved in a conflict like the First World War.

Speaking at the Emirates International Airlines Festival of Literature in Dubai, the *Newsnight* presenter suggested such events could not be repeated in the modern era due to a decline in the traditional notion of “duty”. He added that people would not put up with a world war in an era of 24-hour, high definition news.



"WE KEPT GOING UNTIL THE FINAL WHISTLE AND GOT THE WIN"

- ARMY WOMEN GRAB LATE TRIUMPH, PAGE 88



CONTRACT TO IMPROVE SITES AND SERVICES

■ OUTSOURCING firm Capita is set to lead a long-term project to overhaul the running of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the government has announced.

The company was named alongside URS and PA Consulting as the MoD's preferred bidder for a ten-year, £400 million contract that will improve the delivery of facilities and services to military personnel.

By bringing in private sector expertise, the department aims to provide troops with the same level of service they would receive on the high street, as the organisation's chief executive said last year.

"Dealing with the DIO should be like dealing with a bank," Andrew Manley told *Soldier*. "You should be able to go into a branch anywhere and get the same service."

The MoD says the initiative has the potential to deliver substantial savings for the taxpayer, which could reach more than £300 million a year.

The DIO will now consult further with trade unions and it is expected the contract will be awarded later in the spring.

FITNESS TEST CHANGE

■ THE way in which the British Army records soldiers' fitness performance has been simplified.

Results from the second military annual training test are now entered just once into the Army fitness information software system, which will then automatically log the details in the operational deployability record (ODR), reducing the burden on unit admin staff.

The ODR tool has also been upgraded to allow users to group and search data more easily.

For further information read ABN 24/14.



WALKIES WAKE-UP

BEMUSED dog walkers were blown off their feet when a Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter touched down in Ruskin Park, London. Civilians were making their way home from work when the twin-rotor aircraft took them by surprise. "When I first heard it I thought there was something wrong with my car," one eyewitness told *The Telegraph*. The RAF responded by saying: "The park is a designated helicopter landing site for King's College Hospital and the RAF was granted permission to land. There was no danger to the public."



"WE KEPT GOING UNTIL THE FINAL WHISTLE AND GOT THE WIN"

- ARMY WOMEN GRAB LATE TRIUMPH, PAGE 88

War on acronym use

Initiative will aim to promote plain English

■ ABBREVIATION of military phrases is to become a thing of the past, it has been revealed.

A team has been set up within Army Headquarters to tackle falling standards of grammar across the organisation and as part of its brief, will work to eliminate acronyms from Service life.

Brig Marc Snoy, the officer leading the initiative, explained that the overhaul would stop potential Reservist recruits being put off military careers by the "overuse and abuse" of shortened terms.

"Although words like SITREP and ISTAR have found their way into common usage, we are finding that such phrases are causing significant confusion among those joining us from the civilian world," he explained. "Over the next 18 months we will be working to halt acronym use across all Army formations, with the clear exception of unit titles.

"Initially that will mean making sure all personnel know the full translation for each phrase.

"This will not be an easy task but drawdown in Afghanistan presents us with a unique opportunity to address such presentational issues."



Speaking sense: Troops will soon be expected to use military terms in full

Picture: Steve Docks

The acronym rationalisation strategy (ARS) will see briefing packs distributed to all formations in May to help soldiers adjust to the change.

Spot checks will then take place alongside military annual training tests to ensure abbreviations are no longer being used, with a full ban coming into force in 2016.

"Plain English is crucial if we are to remain the respected organisation we are," the brigadier continued.

"It's a slippery slope from a MATT to a FLOPSY – and when you realise that GANDALF (general algorithm for numerical determination of aerofoil life and failure) is an accepted military acronym, the potential for battlefield confusion becomes obvious too."

WARCOP WARRIORS

■ RESERVISTS from 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery honed their skills on the L118 light gun.

More than 130 volunteers took part in Ex Northern Strike at Warcop training area, supported by their Regular colleagues from 4th Regiment.

For some it was their first live-firing exercise since the unit's new close support role was announced under the Army 2020 structure.



A US Army sergeant has been found in possession of more than ten kilograms of marijuana inside a camouflage duffel bag, *The Advocate* newspaper has reported. The find came after police stopped the Serviceman, who was travelling in uniform, for a traffic violation. He was subsequently arrested on charges of possession with intent to distribute cannabis and improper lane usage.



DUFFEL-BAG DOPE

BAD DRILLS



"I WOULD GO TO NEW ZEALAND NEXT TIME THE RUGBY WORLD CUP WAS THERE"

- TROOPS TALK TOP DESTINATIONS, PAGE 102

HOME TRUTHS



A personal view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation...



Looking out for you

REPRESENTING family issues to the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Anna Soubry (our first female defence minister), and housing issues to the Minister for International Security Strategy, Andrew Murrison, is just one of the channels we've used to highlight your views recently.

Of course, this is not the only avenue for sharing your thoughts – we have an impressive network of contacts throughout the MoD and across government to ensure we can track down a fair deal for troops and their loved ones.

Among the topics that we discussed with the ministers was the need for a comprehensive plan for garrison areas affected by rebasing, citizenship issues for babies born to foreign and Commonwealth soldiers when posted overseas and ensuring access to childcare is increased to support spousal employment.

Education discussions included the schools admissions code and Service pupil premium as well as the need for the Department of Education to ensure that institutions understand how post-operational tour leave is vital after periods of separation. As such, permission for children to be absent under these circumstances should be approved without parents risking a fine.

The media has understandably reported heavily on the recent

inquest into the circumstances surrounding the death of Cpl Anne-Marie Ellement (page 17).

The coroner's report highlighted areas for improvement which it is hoped will prevent such tragedies happening again.

I am encouraged by measures being put in place to improve the Army's handling of such cases. A rape and sexual assault study day held in Army HQ for Royal Military Police, lawyers and policy makers included an eye-opening presentation by a highly experienced psychotherapist. It is clear that the need to train and educate personnel on how to handle victims of sexual assault is being taken seriously.

Finally, AFF launched our volunteer programme earlier this year and we need help with publicity to ensure everyone knows how to contact us and access our support.

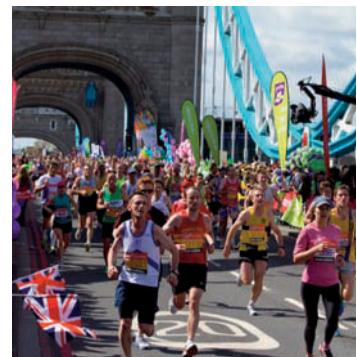
For time-pressed families, this opportunity requires minimal commitment but will allow more people to know about us.

Think you could help? Then please visit the link below.

This year we are asking volunteers to promote our "big debate" Army Families Federation 2014 Conference which will take place in October.

www.aff.org.uk/volunteer/index.htm

“
The need to train on this is being taken seriously
”



MILITARY MARATHONS

■ BRITISH personnel are gearing up to run the Virgin London Marathon this month.

Musn Kate Challinor (CAMUS), a 23-year-old Army musician, will be among those taking part on April 13.

Hoping to raise £2,000 for wildlife charity WWF, the Servicewoman signed up after completing the Royal Parks Half Marathon.

"I applied for a place thinking I would need something that I truly believed in to keep me motivated," she commented.

Other troops running for the first time this year include 38-year-old Maj Ben Horne (QRL), who will be raising money for BLESMA.

"Having seen first-hand how this charity can have such a huge positive impact on our injured personnel, I really wanted to support them," explained the officer, who has been attracting support on Twitter via the #GoBen hashtag.

Two of his soldiers – Sgt Andrew Carlton and Cpl Andy Garthwaite – were injured in Afghanistan during 2010 resulting in loss of limbs.

PARENT PROVISION

■ A FREE advice service for troops with children who have special educational needs is extending its support to cover the drawdown period in Germany.

The Parent Partnership Service in Bielefeld covers all garrisons across the country and can assist with transitions back to school services in the UK.

For details contact bfg-hq-g1-ppo@mod.uk



GURKHA MOVE

■ THE headquarters of the Brigade of Gurkhas will this month move from Trenchard Lines, Upavon, to a new location in Camberley.

From April 4, the HQ's base will be the Former Army Staff College at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Latest research* shows sharp fall in pension satisfaction!



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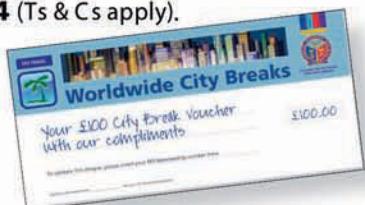
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THE BIG PICTURE



> SETERMOEN, NORWAY

ARCTIC ROLE

GUNNERS from 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery returned to Norway for their first large-scale cold weather training package since 2008. Held deep within the Arctic circle, Exercise Cetus 14 put troops through their paces in temperatures as low as -26 degrees Celsius. For a full report on the demanding serial turn to pages 30-33.

Picture: Steve Dock



FIND OUT THE TRUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME

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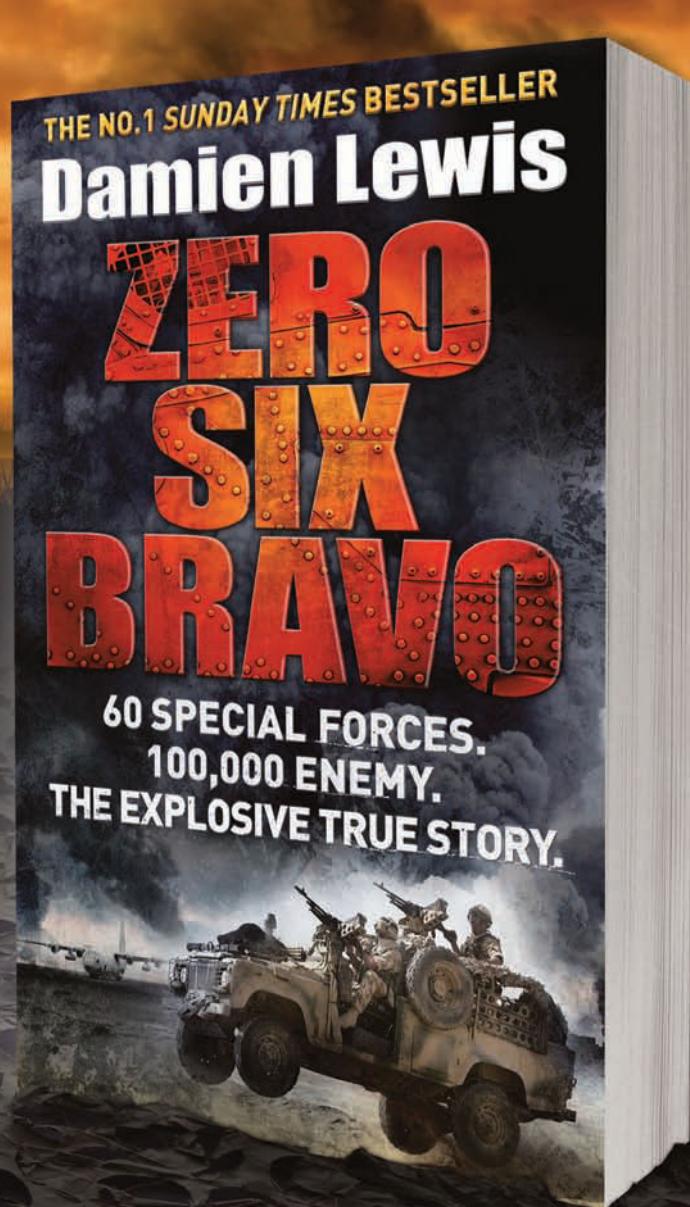


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LOITERING WITH INTENT

THE ARMY'S LATEST UNMANNED AIR SYSTEM WILL GIVE TROOPS ONE OF THE CLEAREST PICTURES YET OF THE ENEMY THAT AWAITS THEM



Keeping an eye: The Watchkeeper WK450 hovers over the UK during a test flight

Picture: Richard Seymour, Thales UK

Report: Joe Clapson

After four years of test flights and an investment of more than £1 billion, the Watchkeeper tactical unmanned air system (UAS) has taken to the skies of Salisbury Plain. Set to be a regular sight over the training area, this new asset, operated by the Royal Artillery, can fly at altitudes of up to 16,000 feet for a maximum of 16 hours at a time.

The platform provides intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (Istar) for ground troops but unlike previous UAS models, it has some new features that will allow it to relay information in virtually all weather conditions.

Equipment on-board includes an optical day and night sensor that produces high-definition images as well as a synthetic aperture radar to capture a high quality picture of the scene below – even through heavy cloud.



Explaining the benefits of Watchkeeper, Col Mark Thornhill, commander of 1st Artillery Brigade, said: "Just like manned aircraft these air systems can provide high quality optical, infrared and radar imagery."

"The difference with this model is that the sensors on-board can loiter for significantly longer periods over an area of interest and the resulting intelligence picture is more detailed."

The UAS will be operated by troops from 47 Regt, 32 Regt and the newly formed UAS Support Battery (RA) at Boscombe Down.

Images captured by the aircraft's cameras are relayed in real time to a control station – effectively its cockpit – to give ground commanders a major advantage in understanding the lie of the land.

Watchkeeper can be assembled by skilled crews in about 25 minutes and launched from almost any sort of terrain by activating an autonomous take-off and landing system.

It does not need a runway but can be sent up from a semi-prepared strip.

"This is much more robust than the Hermes 450 we currently use; it can operate in far more challenging areas," continued Col Thornhill.

"It's very exciting that we have this asset that can be used on military deployments but it has not been decided where it will go first – that is of course an operational decision."

Emphasising that the craft will function purely as an "eye in the sky", the officer added: "We haven't looked at the capacity to arm it and at the moment there are no plans to do so."

Under the Watchkeeper programme the UK will receive 54 of the air vehicles and 15 ground control systems over the next four years.

The initiative will see 115 pilots trained in that time, with each undergoing a six-month induction period.

According to Nick Miller, Business Director of Istar at Thales, the investment will pay dividends on the battlefield.

"The difference between Watchkeeper and what has gone before is really the radar and its ability to take

images through cloud – that is important as it provides intelligence in all weathers.

"The other crucial part of the aircraft is transportation as we can pack it all up and put it out on the ground, anywhere in the world."

One of the soldiers to be taking control of Watchkeeper is Sgt Matt Long (RA, pictured below right).

"This is the first time we've had our own asset so now we can do our job in the UK, which means we can work with battlegroups on Salisbury Plain – troops will be on the ground while we are above it," he said.

"We can give lads the ability to look over a hill and when they know we're there we see their body language change because they are reassured.

"When they receive higher quality images it lets them make decisions more quickly."

Watchkeeper will line up as the big brother among the Army's current UAS fleet – Desert Hawk 3, Tarantula Hawk, Black Hornet and Hermes 450 – to create an impressive surveillance suite.

And although the fixed-wing plane will cruise through the air without a pilot on-board, those involved in this new frontier of aviation are keen to point out that UAS are certainly not pilotless.

In fact, to mention Watchkeeper in the same sentence as the term "drone" causes much consternation among its controllers.

"There are the same rules and regulations for a UAS pilot as for a pilot in the sky, we just stay on the ground," commented Sgt Long.

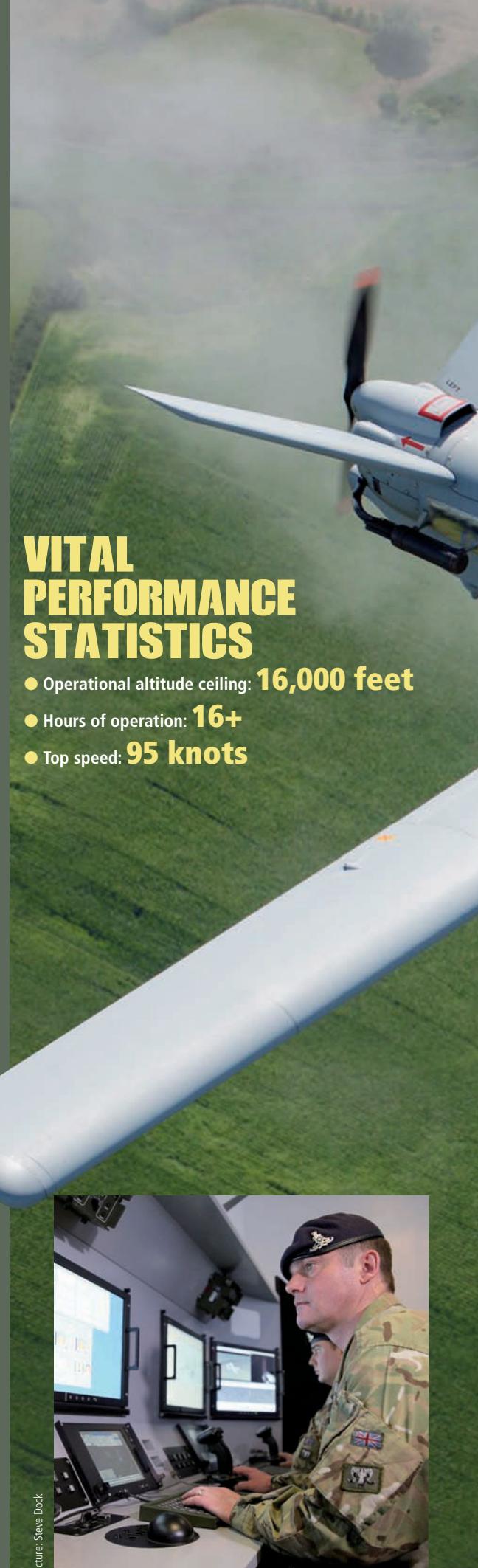
"Watchkeeper is absolutely not a drone – in terms of aviation it's exactly the same as a Typhoon or Tornado."

"This is not a computer game, it is flying an aircraft."

After undergoing flight tests in Wales since 2010, this new asset is scheduled to become fully operational with the Army some time in 2016.

Thales experts are due to complete their handover training with Royal Artillery personnel later this month – ushering in a brand new chapter in sky-bound intelligence gathering. ■

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OPTICAL SENSORS

High definition camera

- Allows daylight observation, detection and recognition
- Can direct and track by day and night
- Transmits high definition still images and real time video

Infrared camera

- Ideal for night observation and detection

Laser system

- Comprises a laser designator and marker for providing precise locations

RADAR SENSORS

Synthetic aperture radar (SAR)

- Radar data can produce high quality ground-mapping images when processed by the ground control station

Ground moving target indicator

- Detects and tracks objects travelling at low speed and fast moving ones such as speeding vehicles and under-flying aircraft

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

COMMANDO GUNNERS HONE THEIR COLD-WEATHER CAPABILITY IN NORWAY'S ARCTIC REGION

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE British Army has certainly proved its credentials on desert operations in the past 13 years but the ability to fight in cold climates remains a crucial skill, especially for a contingent force.

And few personnel will be more aware of the versatility required of today's troops than the soldiers of 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, whose recent duties have taken them from the baking temperatures of the Middle East to the frozen wilds of northernmost Europe.

As the formation's current high readiness unit, last autumn members of 8 (Alma) Commando Battery served on the Cougar 2013 deployment, a UK Response Task Force naval manoeuvre spanning the Mediterranean, Red Sea, Indian Ocean and Gulf.

This year has seen the same troops heading to Norway for two months of specialised cold-weather training alongside Royal Engineer and Royal Marine colleagues from 3 Commando Brigade.

Held on Setermoen training area, Exercise Cetus 14 was the first time since 2008 that the formation had rehearsed in such an environment on a large scale.

Battery commander Maj Dave Glendenning explained how, with the recent focus on Afghanistan, the majority of his men were getting their first taste of the Arctic climate.

"Eighty per cent of the unit have not deployed to Norway before but with the return to contingency, to me that means being able to operate in austere conditions and this area offers the perfect stage," said the 34-year-old.

"It's the adage that 'if you can soldier here you can soldier anywhere' and the guys have progressed brilliantly.

"It's quite a proud moment to see them

giving 100 per cent to learn basic skills and put them into practice – their admin and survival drills are now second to none.

"Couple that with their artillery expertise and they're really at the tip of the spear if they were tasked to go anywhere globally on ops."

The serial began with a three-week novice Arctic survival course where troops learnt basic cold weather administration, the art of constructing a snow shelter, emergency drills for falling through ice into freezing water and how to navigate the terrain on telemark skis.

An eight-day field package known as Exercise

THE MINUTE YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON THE WEATHER IT WILL KILL YOU



Clockwise from left: An L118 light gun crew practise direct fire drills; Norwegian BV206 vehicles move the weapons into position across the snow; the gun position safety officer checks the coordinates and bearings for a fire mission with his assistant; Gnr Jason Argent uses his ski poles to adopt the standing supported fire position



Alma Wolf then tested troops' specialist capabilities on the L118 light gun, from basic fire missions up to complex joint manoeuvres alongside a mortar platoon from 42 Commando, Royal Artillery.

Finally, half of the battery took part in a major Norwegian-led multinational exercise to rehearse high intensity operations in winter conditions.

Commanding officer Lt Col Ed Dawes said the process had begun to help personnel relearn lost skills.

"The depth of experience is not that great so we've had to regain quite a lot," he commented.

"We haven't conducted training on this scale for a few years and the capability can disappear quite quickly."

"This exercise has been a bit of a journey for everyone. It's a fantastic place to soldier both in terms of its scale and hostility."

Despite temperatures dipping as low as minus 26 degrees Celsius, Gnr David Owen, a signaller in the battery's command post,

said it didn't take long to adjust to his first Arctic assignment.

"I particularly enjoyed the survival phase and sleeping in a quinzee, or snow hole," said the 26-year-old.

"We all mucked in to build it – it's about two metres high and takes four to five hours then you have to let it set and dig out the middle."

"The daily routine is the same as anywhere in the field really but when it's sub-zero you just need a bit more about you to get yourself out of your sleeping bag in the morning."

"Little things are bit of a mission. For example, when you're dealing with your kit your hands get cold so it takes a while to warm them up again."

"It's just more time-consuming than it would be in a temperate environment."

As well as affecting the regiment's human assets, low temperatures impact upon its military hardware. »



IN NUMBERS

1,000

rounds of high explosives fired during Exercise Alma Wolf

17.5
km

maximum range of the L118 light gun

1/5

proportion of 3 Commando Brigade that is made up of Army personnel



» For gunners this means adapting techniques so that fire remains accurate.

"The weather is the biggest influence on where the rounds go," said battery sergeant major WO2 Matt Midwinter.

"You have to think about the calibration of the gun, the temperature of the charges and even the type of oil you use in the recuperators and buffers – the weapon's shock absorbers.

"You also have to modify the fuse settings to get the round to detonate at the right height.

"In dry places like the desert there is less reflection from the environment to the sensors that read altitude, so the shell will explode later. But when there is a lot of moisture like here there is more reflection and that means the round will go off further away from the ground unless you compensate for it."

The unstable platform provided by the snow can also compromise precision, which gun crews have to overcome by digging down to the permafrost underneath to give the weapon a steady base.

Similarly back-breaking is the task of hauling equipment over snowy terrain on skis and with temperatures unseasonably warm for much of the exercise, repeated freezing and thawing made the ground even icier and more treacherous underfoot than normal.

Commenting on the harsh conditions,

WO2 Midwinter added: "Keeping yourself warm, dry and motivated in this Arctic environment requires an altogether different kind of soldier.

"In my opinion you're not really commando trained until you've been to Norway on exercise.

"This is where you truly learn to be efficient and the minute you turn your back on the weather here it will kill you."

With operations in Afghanistan now drawing to a close, troops from 3 Cdo Bde are once more set to take the lead as the UK's cold-weather warfare specialists.

And for the formation's Army assets, exercises such as Cetus 14 and others like it will see them take part in training that other elements of the Service rarely get a chance to do.

Lt Col Dawes was in no doubt about the appeal of the commando role for UK soldiers.

"There's great diversity in what we do and we're

rediscovering what it means to be a very high-readiness force," said the officer.

"To deploy anywhere at five days' notice means that you have to be able to cope well with jungle, desert, temperate and Arctic conditions.

"That gets the lads to lots of interesting parts of the world – ones that they wouldn't necessarily see in any other segment of the British Army.

"It's as exciting as it is rewarding."

YOU'RE NOT REALLY COMMANDO TRAINED UNTIL YOU'VE BEEN TO NORWAY

SETERMOEN SPECIFICS

Salisbury Plain may be renowned for its unpredictable weather but Norway's equivalent is a different ball game altogether, as these statistics show:



number of
daylight hours
in January when
Exercise Cetus
14 began



degrees
north, some
160 miles
within the
Arctic Circle



the average daily
temperature in
degrees Celsius
during winter

260

size of the
training area
in square
kilometres



● AMONG the many challenging environments that British troops operate in, the Arctic is arguably the one that will kill you the fastest if you lack the right skills. To survive, each soldier needs to look after himself and his team. Here, troops from 8 Battery describe what it takes to keep going in sub-zero conditions



GNR LEWIS HARVEY

Hydration

"Keeping well hydrated is a difficult task in the cold as you can't carry water around with you because it will just freeze. Instead you

must collect snow and melt it, which takes longer but warm drinks will always help to heat you up."

BDR CHRIS WOOD

Stay dry

"Making sure you stay dry is key because if snow gets into your kit and melts, that's when you get into trouble. You have to constantly brush snow off yourself and your equipment."

Be quick

"Try not to be in the open longer than you have to be. Everything you do, do it quickly – that way you stay warm and you minimise time spent outside."

Keep an eye on each other

"Watch each other's faces, hands and feet to make sure there are no signs of frost nip,

which could become frostbite. Things to look for include numbness and pale or waxy-looking skin, which means the capillaries aren't refilling properly. If you do get cold you can run about to try and warm up, put your hands in your armpits and as a last resort when your toes are cold you can put your feet in someone else's armpits."

LIFE IN THE DEEP

COLD WEATHER WARRIOR

The kit keeping troops warm when the mercury plunges...



A waterproof Rutherford smock made from the latest lightweight Gore-Tex fabric delivers water resistance and breathability. The jacket features a snow skirt and hood for additional protection when operating in heavy snow or blizzard and avalanche-prone environments

An MTP suit known as a high insulated garment is worn underneath to provide warmth. Made of highly water and wind resistant outer fabric and G-Loft insulation, it is designed to withstand temperatures as low as -25°C. The kit can also be worn in static positions as an outer layer

Lightweight, waterproof trousers featuring a zip from toe to hip for ease of slipping on and off over boots. A tailored fit and articulated knee provide added comfort

Alico ski march boots with insulated footbeds and a square toe for use with the Riva 75mm Nordic ski binding. Wool and nylon arctic socks afford additional insulation



In extreme cold a cotton face mask can be worn to protect the soldier's skin (see page 31)

Mitchell Cap, a cold weather hat with MTP waterproof outer, a fleece lining and ear flaps that can be worn up or down

Three-layer glove system, with waterproof moisture vapour permeable outer mitts worn over separate Gore-Tex three-finger mittens. Windproof, waterproof, fire-retardant MTP contact gloves also prevent hands sticking to metal in freezing conditions and provide protection from burns

Standard-issue webbing and SA80

Lightweight camouflage whites to help troops blend into snowy landscapes, worn over and in combination with MTP camouflage depending on vegetation cover

Skis with telemark bindings. Only the wearer's toe is secured, allowing them to navigate uphill and downhill slopes more easily

Berghaus Gore-Tex Yeti gaiters, which provide some insulation and keep snow and water out

FREEZE



BDR JAMES FEASEY
Eat to keep your energy up

"The daily ration packs contain about 6,000 calories. It's hard work living and moving around in the snow so you need that fuel. Also, if you're cold and start shaking that uses more calories too. It's more difficult to operate out here than in the UK but if your admin's good you'll be ok."



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The day of days

Holocaust survivor recalls the date British troops ended years of Nazi torture and terror

Interview: Richard Long

WITH 2014 proving to be a landmark year in terms of recognising the Army's feats in the World Wars, April will forever be remembered as the month in which UK personnel made one of their most shocking discoveries in Nazi Germany.

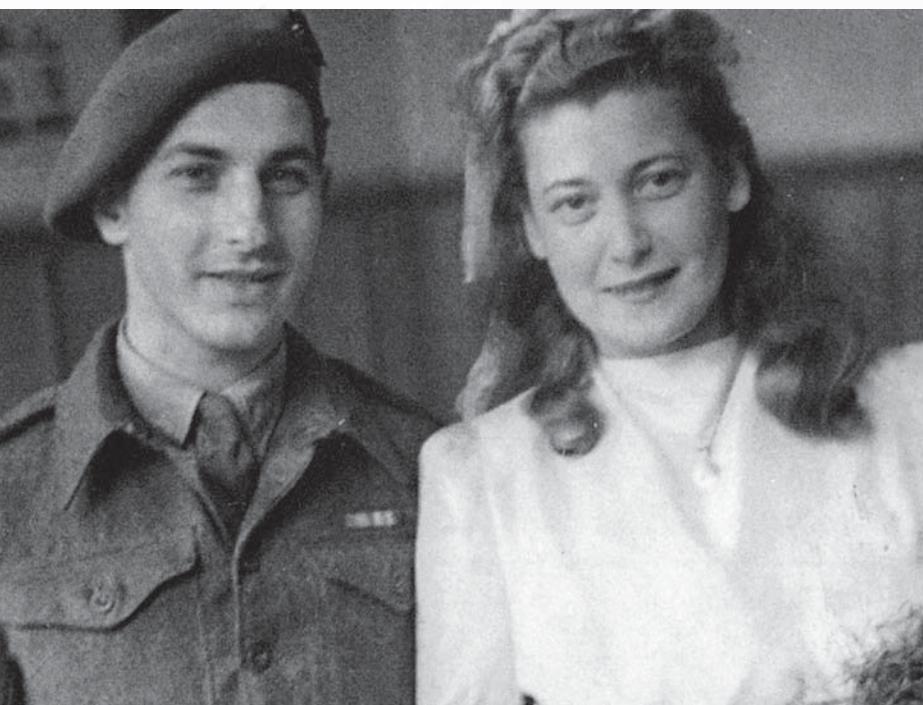
On April 15, 1945 soldiers from 11th Armoured Division liberated the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp near Hanover where they found piles of rotting corpses and thousands of sick and starving prisoners living in severely overcrowded and filthy conditions.

Among those offered freedom by the troops was a young Jewish woman by the name of Gena Goldfinger who, like so many others, had endured a six-year campaign of systematic abuse and torture at the hands of a brutal regime.

Her remarkable story of survival found a happy ending when she married Sgt Norman Turgel (Int Corps) just months after he and his British colleagues arrived at the camp.

After finding love in such harrowing circumstances she went on to forge a new beginning in England but the 91-year-old has never forgotten the horrors suffered at the hands of the Germans and has dedicated her life to ensuring the mass murder witnessed in the Holocaust remains in the public consciousness.





» "I go round schools, colleges and universities to speak to young people about what happened," Mrs Turgel told *Soldier* during an interview at her Middlesex home. "The feedback is tremendous."

"When I look at children with tears pouring down their cheeks I feel I have done something to broaden their horizons."

"I also do a lot of charity work and I hope God gives me the strength to carry on."

"I remember walking in the snow and gasping for water and the German people would come up with buckets and pour the water out in front of us."

"I often feel the younger generations carried the guilt for what their parents and grandparents did. I just hope in the future there can be peace; but these days that is difficult to achieve."

Mrs Turgel stemmed from a large family and had a pleasant upbringing in Krakow, Poland. But when the Germans bombed the city on September 1, 1939 her world was turned upside down.

"I was a very happy child, I was going to school and I enjoyed activities like ice skating and skiing," she recalled. "That was until war broke out."

"From then on my childhood disappeared. There were no schools or universities, everything closed. It became torture, hunger and segregation – it was the most terrible time we went through."

As the Nazi reign of terror began, Jewish people were thrown out of their homes and moved to the ghettos, where families were pulled apart.

Mrs Turgel's brother Janek was separated from his wife and young child and he later learnt they were included among the first arrivals at the feared Auschwitz camp.

"To tell him that news was very difficult," she said. "When he heard what happened he was determined to fight the Germans."

"He wanted to join the French resistance. He got some Christian papers and went down the sewers to flee the ghetto. But the Nazis were waiting at the other end and that was the end of him."

The Germans shot another brother, Willek, as he helped his wife's friend move a wardrobe in her home and sister Miriam perished as she attempted to bring

food to her family in Plaszow concentration camp.

"Our job was to repair Nazi uniforms and she used to come up in the evening to give us bread and soup," Mrs Turgel said.

"Then one day I heard some shots, I walked towards the window and there were more shots followed by a sudden silence."

"A group of girls walked in and I asked what had happened. Eventually they told me 55 men and one woman were told to undress and dig their own graves; then they were shot. That was the last I saw of her."

"Telling my mother what happened was so tough. We then had to carry wood for the bodies to be burnt, it was very difficult."

Sister Hela suffered an agonising death after she was injected with petrol as part of a Nazi medical experiment and life at Plaszow became a battle of survival for Mrs Turgel and her mother Estera.

"Whatever food I could obtain I gave to her to eat," she explained. "We worked and worked – sometimes I considered throwing myself against the electric wire as the torture was horrendous."

"But then I thought 'who would look after my mother?' She was very special to me."

"People were hanged for no reason. I remember them putting a rope round the neck of a 14-year-old boy and torturing him before a Nazi shot him."

"On another occasion we saw an SS woman hauling something towards us."

"It was a beautiful blonde girl who was being dragged by her hair. We were told 'this is what happens if you try to escape'. She threw her around the square, beating and kicking her as if she was a blanket."

"It is impossible to describe how terrified we were."

The Plaszow camp was wound up in December 1944 and the prisoners were sent on a gruelling march to Auschwitz in thick, deep snow and temperatures as low as -20 degrees Celsius.

There was no food available and people were suffering from severe malnourishment. They marched in rows of ten and if anyone tried to escape every tenth person was shot.

Mrs Turgel said: "We walked through villages and slept in stables. On one occasion there was not enough room so I slept on a stack of logs in the farmyard along with my mother."

"I woke up in the middle of the night and my legs felt like they were made of ice – I could not move. Snow had been falling and it had covered me up to the knees."

"I shook my mother but she did not respond, I shook her and shook her and eventually she woke up."

"We decided to get up and walk and we saw a light in the distance. At that point I was thinking it would be better if the Germans just shot us. The hunger, frost and fear was terrible."

"But we reached the little house. We opened the door and saw so many people sleeping there. The farmer's wife took us in and sat us in front of the oven."

"She brought dry socks, hot coffee and bread. Even today I wish I could go back and say thank you."

On reaching Auschwitz the duo were among many who were stripped naked and marched into the camp's

From top left: Mrs Turgel's siblings – Janek, Miriam and Willek – who all perished at the hands of the Nazis; Sgt Norman Turgel and Gena Turgel on their wedding day. **Right:** Mrs Turgel with her memoirs; British soldiers distributing food to the former prisoners

Pictures: Steve Dock, Imperial War Museum

“

Whenever I see the camps on television I touch myself and ask ‘am I alive?’

”



infamous shower rooms.

“I saw openings in the ceiling and it was bitterly cold,” Mrs Turgel recalled.

“We waited and waited and then showered in ice-cold water. We drank as we did so because we were so thirsty.

“The doors opened and some of the women who worked at the camp embraced us, they could not believe we were there.

“I asked why they were so excited and they said we had been in the gas chamber. I instantly lost my voice; God had saved my life as well as so many others.

“Luckily we didn’t stay long and were soon marching again but hundreds of people died.

“There was so much blood as we walked in the snow and the bodies just lay there.”

The punishing journey continued as the inmates headed to Buchenwald concentration camp before reaching their final destination of Bergen-Belsen.

On their arrival squalid barrack rooms confronted them while evidence of the Nazis’ brutality was plainly obvious.

“There were openings for windows but they did not have any glass,” Mrs Turgel said. “There were no mattresses, just bare floors, and we were packed in like sardines.

“I remember waking in the early hours of the morning and looking out. There were heaps of bodies – I couldn’t believe my eyes. I said to myself ‘I’m not going to die like that’.

She managed to get a job working in the hospital and the constant quest to find food for her mother and others continued.

Potato peelings were transformed into “delicious” soups and the prisoners maintained their survival mission until the day they so passionately longed for finally arrived.

Mrs Turgel explained: “I remember sterilising some instruments and the commandant’s wife approached with a doctor. In German she said ‘they should be here very shortly’.

“As she said it I saw tanks coming by and a woman came in and said ‘I never thought British troops would enter German soil’.

“A young boy then declared the war was coming to an end. I put two and two together and thought maybe this is it.

“We heard British voices saying they had come to liberate us and tears of joy poured down my cheeks.

“The Nazis and guards were told to lay down their arms and then we finally felt we were free.”

The plight of the prisoners was almost



impossible for the arriving soldiers to comprehend but the aid effort started immediately.

There had been no food or water and disease was rife, with hundreds of people dying each night.

“The British troops were crying with us and could not absorb what they were seeing,” Mrs Turgel said. “They could not understand how human beings could do something like that.

“I was working day and night to do my utmost to help and the soldiers were fantastic. They brought in food and installed water pipes. They were giving bread to people who didn’t even have the strength to hold it.”

Despite being surrounded by utter devastation the would-be nurse made an

instant impression on a certain Sgt Turgel.

He later invited her to a dinner at the officers’ mess, which transpired to be an engagement party for the unlikely couple.

“I thought he must be crazy,” Mrs Turgel explained. “He made up his mind when he saw me in my white overalls and thought ‘this is the girl I want to marry’.

“Well, I did not want to spoil the dinner.”

With romance blossoming a wedding date was set for October 1945 and the bride arrived at the ceremony in a dress made from a British parachute.

The couple then embarked on a new life in England and Esteria later joined them as their escape from the Nazis was finally complete.

In the subsequent years Mrs Turgel started a family of her own and regularly accompanied her husband on business trips as she set about returning to normality.

But the horrors of her past are never far from her mind and in 1995 she published her memoirs in the book *I Light A Candle* to ensure her story – and that of so many others – lives on.

She said: “When I look back I think it is unbelievable. Whenever I see the camps on television I touch myself and ask ‘am I alive?’

“I remember hearing screams in the middle of the night. I looked out of the window and saw German soldiers standing with cigarettes in their mouths and they were laughing as some dogs tore a man to pieces.

“Is that human? How could they just stand and watch that?

“When the British arrived it was like something from heaven. We saw the parachutes coming down and thought it was a miracle.

“April 15, 1945 is the most important date on my calendar as it is the day we were liberated. I was so grateful to the troops that saved my life and that of so many others. I am now so proud to be British.”

The British liberation



■ Bergen-Belsen was the only concentration camp taken by UK personnel during the Second World War

■ On their arrival troops found an estimated 10,000 unburied bodies and around 40,000 barely living prisoners



■ They liberated the site on April 15, 1945 with a mass evacuation beginning on April 21

■ It took a staff of 68 a fortnight to eradicate a typhus epidemic but historians say as many as 28,000 prisoners in the camp when it was taken, subsequently died



■ The last hut at the camp was burned to the ground on May 21, 1945. The site now features a memorial to those who perished



■ The camp commandant, Josef Kramer, was found guilty of war crimes at Luneberg and hanged in December 1945

■ Anne Frank, one of the most talked about Jewish victims of the Holocaust thanks to her wartime diary, died of typhus at Bergen-Belsen in March 1945



Pictures: Imperial War Museum, Anne List



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‘The future as I see it’

Interview: Steve Muncey

The Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, ruminates on redundancy, recruitment, Reserves and the role of women in the Army

● HOW do you see the Army's role changing over the next few years?

Now our time in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, we are training for a much broader range of deployment options.

There'll be more training and advisory work; there's considerable demand for British expertise in organisation and leadership, much of which was developed and honed during our recent operations.

For example, we've become far more aware of the importance of learning about foreign countries' cultures and languages in depth to maximise our effectiveness abroad.

UK resilience work will continue to be vital and our engagement with British society is important in making sure the Service is supported by the public and well manned.

We face the prospect of significant questions being asked about what we've achieved in Afghanistan, despite the public's fondness for the Army, and that's not a good place to be.

● AFTER learning valuable lessons in Iraq and Afghanistan, are you frustrated that a scaled-down British Army may not have the capacity to put them to good use on future campaigns?

Not at all. Everyone knows the Army has shrunk by 20 per cent and that will be compensated in part by the expansion of the Reserves.

Those were, essentially, economic choices made by the government. We are not doing this because the threats around the world to British interests are diminishing.

We have the most experienced Army since the Second World War but we've got to be absolutely honest about our capability and the Army 2020 structure delivers most of what we can currently do, albeit with slightly less resilience.



We face significant questions being asked about what we've achieved in Afghanistan

We've had to decide where to put our efforts and which elements have to be held at a lower readiness or have slightly less capacity because that is the way we are reading the battlefields of the future.

As we know from our time in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can adapt quite fast if we suddenly find we need more of a certain capability and less of another.

● HOW do you feel about moving troops back from Germany?

Such an efficiency measure is necessary in these more austere times and it's also the right thing to do at the moment for our people.

Most of them – if they're married – rely on more than one income to achieve the lifestyle they want. It's difficult to sustain that if you're moving back and forth to Germany on a regular basis.

The military covenant will give our families more security about plugging into local health and education services in British communities and all this adds up to more stability for our personnel.

● HOW confident are you that all the infrastructure will be ready for the thousands of troops returning from Germany in 2015?

Well, we need it to be ready, both for the troops and because there are significant financial savings tied to the schedule.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is bringing in a strategic business partner from the private sector (page 21), which will enhance the chances of this plan coming together.

I'm confident that we shall get to our target by the year 2020 if not slightly before.

UK industry is more than capable of achieving that if we get properly organised and get our planning applications in.

And we need to achieve this for the efficiency savings that are an intrinsic part of the overall budget.

● IS there a contingency plan if certain projects aren't ready on time? We all know what

builders are like.

The only contingency plan we have is to move more slowly but if we do, it will cost us more.

Also, I would not welcome the uncertainty that this would bring to the many regiments coming back from Germany, who will inevitably want to move mainly during the summer holidays.

We are conscious of the timeline and we have a strong team working with the DIO, who are very aware that in order to relinquish infrastructure in Germany we have to get facilities built over here.

We want to make sure they are completed to the right quality and if I have one worry it is that too much attention will be paid to the new garrisons and not enough to established ones that aren't necessarily in the best nick. We need to watch that.

● SPEAKING of the future, what do you say to critics who believe the Reserves shouldn't make up 25 per cent of the British Army?

With 30,000 Reserves on-board eventually, they may be right about the numbers in absolute terms but volunteers won't make up 25 per cent of a deploying force initially.

It's going to be closer to about ten per cent, which it has been for most of our time in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If we found ourselves on enduring operations it might climb to 25 per cent because many of our support functions would be provided by Reserves and even contractors, which could be another source of cynicism.

However, there's not a lot of point in us retaining huge capacity and the manpower costs that go with it for capabilities we're only going to need perhaps once a decade.

Looking ahead, if we're clever we'll eventually redo our terms and conditions of service to blur the lines between what we think of now as Regular and Reserve soldiers.

We will allow much more flexibility for individuals to dip in and out of Army careers and that would be particularly important for females who want to take a break to have families, for example.

We're not very good at making it easy for talented women who want to have a family and sustain a Service career. If we were better at that we'd have a better Army.

● WHILE we're talking about women in the Army, do you think they should be





‘

There will always be people who say the close battle is no place for females



➤ permitted to take up close combat roles?

We've got to take a view on that fairly soon.

We're in a minority of armies now in that respect.

It's definitely something that we need to be considering seriously but we need to go about this with great care, especially with all the other changes going on.

● IS it really likely to happen?

We have always said that we will look at the evidence and base our decision on what impact it will have on operational capability.

This isn't just about getting more females into the 30 per cent of roles that are combat trades but getting more of them into the Army per se.

I want every woman in the country to know the Service is open to them and we need to make sure we get that message across.

Women need to see they have equal opportunities right throughout the organisation.

Allowing them to be combat troops would make us look more normal to society but there will always be people who say the close battle is no place for female soldiers.

● WHAT you've just said highlights the importance of getting recruiting right. How do you feel the arrangement with Capita has gone?

I deeply regret the situation we've ended up in but we are through the worst of it now and our recruiting statistics are coming up nicely as a consequence of our recent campaign, "More Than Meets the Eye".

The partnership with Capita is a good one and we must accept our share of responsibility for the problems in the past.

Initially, we made it too difficult for people to get their applications in quickly and they were then put off but we've rectified that.

● LOOKING back, do you regret partnering with Capita and not

handling the recruitment process completely in-house?

No, I don't. We simply couldn't afford to handle it in-house, from manpower and cost perspectives.

Also, Capita are much more knowledgeable than we are about digital media and how young people access information and enlist. The most efficient option was to go down the contract route.

● THE cap badges have been forming new core recruitment teams and staging their own events. Are these a response to the previous shortcomings of the Capita partnership?

Yes, in part they are but it was going to happen anyway and, to be honest, I think that the Army engaging and communicating with the public in that way, showing them what we do, is a great thing if our personnel have time to get involved.

● ON the flip side of all this is job losses. We've received letters alleging that soldiers about to qualify for their pension were singled out for redundancy to save money. What do you say to this?

‘
We're not very good at making it easy for talented women who want to have a family and sustain a Service career
’





I can absolutely assure people that nobody has been made redundant in order to cut pension costs.

Eligibility for pensions was not, and is not, a discriminator in our selection process for redundancy.

Were it to be, then it would be inexorably unfair on the people who would have had to leave the British Army instead.

So this was an extremely awkward and undesirable product of the situation we found ourselves in.

We had legions of experts helping us minimise the number of people who were close to a pension point – the so-called “unpensionables” – being made redundant.

But I totally understand their feelings. If I was one of them I'd be just as bitter as they and their families no doubt are.

The fact remains, though, that most of the people made redundant had applied for it.

We had to let some personnel go not just to cut the numbers but also to achieve the right manning structure to restore promotion prospects and the pull-through of the individuals we still have, who are the future of the Army. ■



CGS talks sport...



I can absolutely assure people that nobody has been made redundant to cut pension costs

● **YOU'RE** well known as a big sports fan so how important to you is it that soldiers are involved in sport?

It's very important and the reasons why are not difficult to comprehend.

There's the fitness, stamina, leadership, teamwork and the ability to cope with success and failure. In a sense, sport is a paradigm for life and, in particular, for military life.

We should be making it as easy as possible for our people to get involved in sport.

Some regiments are a bit wary about certain less traditional activities like sailing, paragliding or winter sports but nothing is more inspiring than seeing soldiers who maybe as recently as a year ago weren't even in the Army suddenly throwing themselves down a mountain as part of a regimental ski team.

● **DO** you have time to play much sport?

Yes, I do a bit of cricket and I need to get back into golf as I've got a fixture against my American opposite number soon.

I also ride horses and I'm the president of quite a few different Service sports.

Such activities are a great way of reinforcing the fact that the Army is a meritocracy. We can be proud of our participation levels but I'd like to push it further.

● **HOW** exactly?

By making sure we can sustain the right facilities and find the people to referee and organise.

We shouldn't be put off by bureaucratic barriers either; we must push on with developing our various sports within the Service.

Team Army is a great example of that attitude. The way it funds our activities through sponsorship is a really good model, one that the Service has introduced through its own initiative.

● **I PRESUME** you have to maintain your own physical fitness like everyone else?

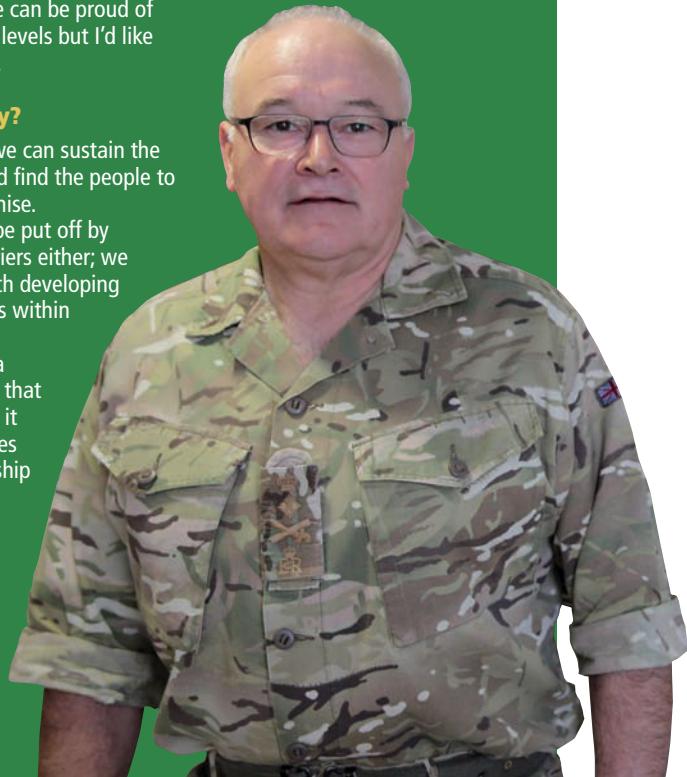
Of course, can't you tell?

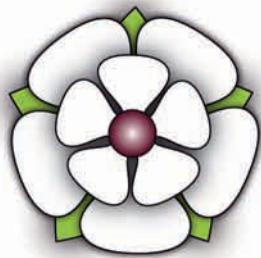
● **ER... yes, it's obvious** General now you mention it. So how do you keep so fit?

I run four kilometres, three times a week. I've got a rowing machine, which is like being on a hamster's wheel but is extremely good exercise, and I swim regularly.

● **SO** what's your current time for the personal fitness test's 1.5-mile run then?

The best I've done is 7min 45sec but I can't remember how long ago that was... and the most recent one I'm prepared to admit to was just over 10min 30sec.





The Duke of York's Royal Military School

An Academy with Military Traditions



The Forces' best kept secret is out...

- The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a full boarding academy for forces families' children aged 11 to 18, as well as those buying into our military ethos and traditions.
- Established for over 200 years, and sponsored by the MoD, we understand the demands of military life and will ensure your child is well looked after.
- Our military ethos, ceremonial parades and Combined Cadet Force will help your child to develop essential life skills including character and resilience.
- They will enjoy an active lifestyle with sport, music, drama and activities all playing a key role while studying for their GCSEs and A Levels.
- Every student is actively encouraged to **achieve the very best they can** - developing their self-confidence, teamwork and leadership skills while living and studying in a friendly and supportive community.

Our fees are £3,500 per term (£10,500 per year)* If you qualify for CEA, you will pay just over £1,000 per year. You are welcome to visit us for a hosted tour.



This is a Dukie community, we look out for one another



Ministry
of Defence

sbsa
State Boarding Schools' Association

www.doyrms.com

admin.office@doymrs.com

Tel: 01304 245073

* Our fees are reviewed annually

DO MORE WITH YOUR DOWN TIME

Holiday heaven



COMBAT operations may be drawing to a close but overseas training missions, routine exercises and short-notice deployments such as the flood relief efforts mean the pace of Service life is as frantic as ever.

All the more reason for troops to make the most of their precious leave.

However, with all but the lucky few limited to a tight budget, the decision about which holiday to spend your hard-earned cash on is far from easy.

Here, *Soldier* investigates how the military community can make their money go further.

From our Forces discount guide to details of inspiring family breaks and the chance to win a fantastic UK trip, we have made it our mission to help you out this summer.

And for those whose down time may be dominated by planning for civilian life this year, we even have some inspiration for tourism-related careers.

Read on to get the holiday season rolling...

P46-47 SUMMER DEALS
How to bag a bargain break



P48-50 ULTIMATE ADVENTURES
Afghanistan and other unlikely destinations



P51 WIN A UK BREAK
Kick back closer to home



P52-54 TROOPS TAKE ON TOURISM
Could your holiday inspire a new career move?



P55-57 QUALITY TIME
Family focus for Forces charities



FIRST STOP: GET A GREAT DEAL ▶

Bag a bargain break

FROM Groupon to Travelzoo, the internet age has bred an endless world of holiday deals. So where should serving soldiers turn to get the best out of their break budget? Read on for a helping hand

9 top tips FOR GETTING A GOOD DEAL ON YOUR HOLIDAY



By Bob Atkinson, travel expert at www.travelsupermarket.com

1 Book early

The sooner you book for school holiday dates, the better the chance of getting an offer on the destination and accommodation of your choice. Be cheeky and ask for money off. Early booking for families means things like free child places, discounts and low deposits, which allow you to secure your holiday for a small outlay and then save up to pay your balance later in the summer.



2 Be flexible

Try and book mid-week dates if you can and in the main summer holiday avoid the first and last weeks of the getaway as these are the busiest of all. Flights in particular are generally cheaper midweek, even in the peak months.



3 Shop around

It really pays to shop around for deals, with the best bargains usually being found online, including via comparison sites. However, it's a great idea to also speak to a high street agent as they sell lots of traditional package holidays and you can try and negotiate a higher discount with them. Consider booking separate flights and hotels as this can sometimes be cheaper than a package.



4 Look at the total cost

Examine carefully what is included, particularly in regards to airline charges, baggage allowances, credit card booking fees and seat reservations, as well as meals in resort and spending money. Try to pre-book all of the little things that add up – travel insurance, airport parking, transfers, car hire and activities in resort.



Choose your destination carefully

With the lower value of the pound you can make your holiday money go miles further by looking at non-euro countries. Best value destinations include Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Turkey, Cyprus and Greece. Or for long haul try Bali, Gambia, South Africa, Mexico and Thailand. And don't forget UK options either.



These holidays are a great option for troops watching their budget and wanting a hassle-free experience with meals, drinks and many activities all included in the price. Be careful to look at the details though as many all-inclusive options do not include branded alcoholic drinks, for example.

6 Consider all-inclusive





7

...and don't forget self-catering

These trips allow you to keep food costs down in resort by picking up bargains in the local supermarket and cooking them back at the apartment rather than eating in restaurants every night. Portugal and Spain, including the Balearic and Canary islands are among the cheapest overseas destinations for this type of break.



8

Do some checks

Always research a travel company via online forums and review sites before booking. If you opt for a package including flights, make sure the travel company has bonding from ATOL – their logo should be displayed so you can check the validity of their membership – and that your trip is covered.



9

Get backup



Pay by credit card so you have consumer credit backup – or in worst case by debit card for chargeback protection. Never pay by cash, cheque or bank transfer unless you are 100 per cent confident in the business.



Savings for Soldiers

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE TO SERVING TROOPS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

WHATEVER sort of trip you might be taking this year, it is always worth asking for an Armed Forces discount – as acknowledged by our expert. But by signing up to the free Defence Discount Service (www.defencediscountservice.co.uk) troops can get access to even more unique savings. Here are a taste of the deals available to those who sign up:

UK HOLIDAY PARKS

- **Butlins** UK holiday camp chain. *Save an extra £10.*
- **Cornish Holiday Lodges** Purpose built Cornish holiday lodges on the Cornish coast in Cornwall. *Ten per cent discount.*
- **Forest Holidays** A variety of luxurious log cabin or tree house accommodation across the UK. *Ten per cent off at nine locations.*
- **Haven Holiday** Owns and operates 35 family holiday parks, providing caravan, touring and camping facilities across Britain in predominantly coastal locations. *Between five and ten per cent off.*
- **Hoseasons** A one-stop-shop for family holidays, bargain short breaks and self-catering holidays in the UK and abroad. *Ten per cent off.*
- **Juliet's Well Holiday Park** Self-catering accommodation in country cottages, chalets, lodges and modern caravans in north Cornwall. *Various savings.*

- **Park Resorts** UK caravan park holidays. *Up to an extra ten per cent off.*
- **Pontins** Half-board and self-catering trips at UK holiday parks. *Various savings on 2014 family holidays.*
- **Seaview International Holiday Park** Picturesque holiday homes park in Cornwall. *Ten per cent off.*
- **Waterside Holiday Park & Spa** Self-catering holiday park in Weymouth, Dorset with bay views. *Ten per cent off any holiday booking.*

OVERSEAS TRIPS

- **Alfresco Holidays** *Ten per cent off your holiday.*
- **Apartments 4 You** Website offering thousands of holiday apartments in more than 100 destinations worldwide. *Ten per cent off apartments.*

- **Club 18-30** A holiday company owned by Thomas Cook that offers cut-price holidays for young men and women. *Five per cent off.*
- **EasyJet Holidays** Discount offered on holidays only and not on flights. *Four per cent off.*

- **Europcamp** Company with various camping sites across France and other European locations. *Up to 50 per cent off.*

- **Extraordinary Africa** Unique adventure holidays and honeymoons across the continent. *Five per cent off an African safari or honeymoon.*

- **Military Breaks** Scheme offering discounted holiday apartments.

- **Virgin Holidays** All inclusive package holidays and family trips. *Up to five per cent off.*

- **YourtTravel Rewards** A scheme that provides savings on holiday packages from well known brands. Use the DDS search tool to find your holiday. *Up to five per cent off Virgin, Thomson, First Choice, Thomas Cook and more.*

HOTEL STAYS

- **Brook Hotels** Hotels across the UK. *15 per cent discount.*

- **Cottages4you** Firm offering cottage holidays across Europe. *Ten per cent off.*

- **Cottage Stay UK** Cottage break discounts. *Ten per cent off cottages across the UK, France and Italy.*

- **Choice Hotels** Hotel rooms and reservations company. *Ten per cent off.*

- **Hilton Worldwide** Global hospitality company. *Up to 40 per cent off.*

- **Hotel Exclusives** Various hotel offers. *Up to a further five per cent off.*

- **Hotel Stay UK** Company providing hotel and short break offers. *Between ten*

and 60 per cent off hotels and short breaks worldwide.

- **Superbreak** Provider of short breaks, city breaks and weekend stays across the UK. *Save ten per cent on holiday breaks.*

- **Malmaison Boutique Hotels** Hotels in 13 UK cities. *Special Armed Forces weekend rates.*

- **Travelodge** Cheap hotels across UK and Ireland. *Save £10.*

INDEPENDENT B&BS, VILLAS AND COTTAGES

- **Ashstead Farmhouse** Kendal, Cumbria. *Discount available on request.*

- **Cloud Holiday Homes** Worldwide locations. *No admin fee on bookings.*

- **Highland Club Direct** Near Inverness. *Discount available on request.*

- **Keepers Bower** Lincolnshire. *Discount available on request.*

- **Marlborough House Bed and Breakfast** Carlisle. *20 per cent off.*

- **Shires Florida Villa** Florida, USA. *Ten per cent off.*

- **Turtle Crossing Villa** Florida, USA. *Ten per cent off.*
- **Villa Carolina** Lanzarote. *Ten per cent off.*
- **Villa Kecah** Cyprus. *Ten per cent off.*

SPECIALIST HOLIDAYS

- **ActivityBreaks** *Five per cent off.*

- **Battlefield Select Tours** *Ten per cent off.*

- **Golfsbreaks.com** *Five per cent off.*

- **Private Expeditions Limited** *Five per cent off all treks and climbs.*

- **Regal Dive** *Five per cent off diving holidays.*

- **Spa Breaks** *15 per cent off.*

- **Superbreak** *Ten per cent off spa breaks.*

NEXT STOP: THE UNKNOWN, WORLDWIDE ➤

Journeys into the unknown

WANT AN ADVENTURE RATHER THAN A HOLIDAY THIS SUMMER? EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL MAY HAVE THE ANSWER

LIVING off rations in the wild deserts of Afghanistan or Iraq might sound like the preserve of a soldier serving on a combat operation.

But for some, stepping way off the beaten track into untouched territories without the luxury of running water is the best way to spend well-earned time off work.

Tom Bodkin and Levison Wood, both ex-Servicemen, fall into that category and decided to set up Secret Compass to satisfy like-minded travellers – those who prefer to break new ground rather than laze on a sunlounger by a pool.

"We try to run pioneering experiences to remote areas," explained Tom, a former Parachute Regiment officer.

"Pretty much all of our trips involve doing something that hasn't been attempted before – going to remote places that have yet to be visited by tourists."

One of the organisation's recent expeditions ("we don't call them holidays," emphasises Tom) saw travellers hit Madagascar and venture into territories that human life had not touched upon since the 1960s when the Foreign Legion pitched up.

On another trip, the team wandered through The Darien Gap on the border between Panama and Colombia. According to locals, they were the first tourists there for some 35 years.

These seemingly extreme excursions are not just for weathered adventurers, though.

"Trips are suitable for ordinary people who are active and fit," Tom continued. "You don't have to be a seasoned explorer or an extreme athlete – we just had a 70-year-old woman do the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan.

"Those signing up are mainly in the 30- to 50-year-old age bracket and 40 per cent come from overseas; they are either well-travelled people looking

for something different or individuals searching for adventure."

Packages do not come cheap, costing around £3,000 for three weeks of tough trekking – excluding flights – and anyone hoping to join the close-knit group needs to fit the right mould.

"It's not so much a vetting process as making sure people understand exactly what we're about," added Tom.

"Everyone sends in an application form detailing their fitness routine and previous travelling experience and they'll also chat to our staff about what to expect."

Aside from allowing its customers to say "we were here first", Secret Compass embraces post-conflict zones with the aim of changing opinions and boosting developing economies.

"The people in these places are very interesting and outsiders haven't been there for a long time," Tom explained. "Tourism is a really good way to start an income stream within developing nations."

"Our cash goes directly to the market traders, taxi drivers and people who own the plots of land we camp on."

The veteran of Afghanistan added: "We're looking at changing the perceptions of tourists who assume places are dangerous without knowing the truth and also of the people who live in these countries.

"If regions that have experienced conflict start to see visitors coming in they will believe the war is really over."

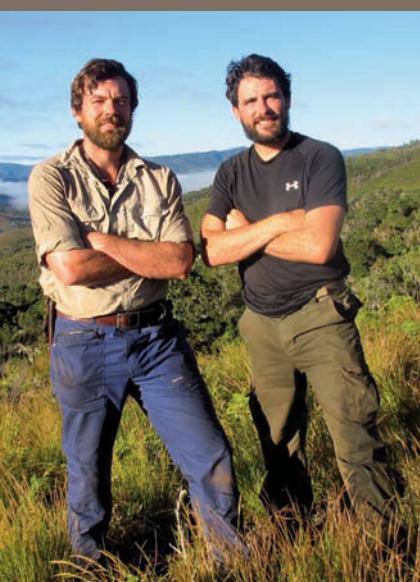
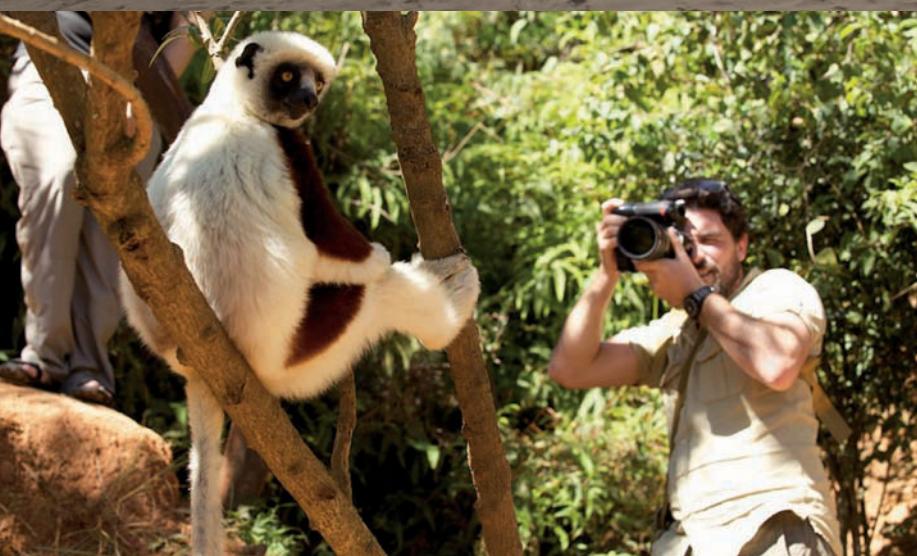
Specialist teams monitor the Secret Compass area of operations using a variety of means including security personnel, journalists and non-governmental organisations based in the travel zones.

But according to the company's founder, a sojourn in northern Afghanistan or south Sudan is not the deathtrap some may perceive it to be.



It's life-changing to go on these trips





Previous page: Rwanda. This page, Clockwise from top: Indian Ocean view; photographing lemurs in Madagascar; Tom Bodkin riding through the Wakhan Corridor; yurts in Afghanistan; Levison Wood and Si Clarke in Madagascar

Pictures: Tom McShane and Secret Compass

"We wouldn't take an expedition anywhere that had potential to cause problems, it just wouldn't be worth the risk," Tom insisted.

And the military influence does not stop with the business's founders.

Capt Tom McShane, operations director for Secret Compass, is a former Regular soldier who now serves as a Reservist with the Army's combat camera team.

He has strong views on how the company's trips may appeal to those with a natural sense of adventure.

"You can be living in tents, hammocks or perhaps a yurt, eating rations that you've carried on your back, and there are no washing facilities apart from the running stream," he explained.

"But it's life-changing to do these things – your senses go into overdrive because you are part of a pioneering adventure.

"This fits perfectly with military skills and a love of travelling."

Another ex-soldier working for the innovative firm is Si Clarke, who served with 3rd Battalion, The Rifles prior to his role as an assistant expedition leader.

"Adventure; world firsts.; the people," was his blunt summation of what attracts customers to Secret Compass.

"I've been to Madagascar, Malawi, Afghanistan and Iraqi Kurdistan with the company and they are some of the best experiences I've ever had.

"The trips focus on truly boundary-pushing travel so it's less about technical skills like rope work or rafting, although that's part of it, and more about getting on with people and thinking on your feet to stay as safe as possible but also pushing the limits."

The former captain continued:

"Singling out a most memorable moment while in this job would be tricky but it might be photographing wild lemurs in Madagascar, seeing the stars in Afghanistan with no light pollution or perhaps helping to put out a village fire by Lake Malawi."

One thing is for sure: any Service personnel searching for a carefree couple of weeks with fine dining and plush accommodation should stick to the orthodox travel brochures.

But if trekking through a leech-riddled jungle, climbing a mountain or being the first to packraft down the Moa River in Sierra Leone sounds appealing then these former soldiers might just have the answer for you. ■

► WIN A UK BREAK

WIN



a summer break in the UK

BAG YOURSELF A HAPPY HOLIDAY COURTESY OF SOLDIER
BY ENTERING ONE OR ALL OF THESE COMPETITIONS

THREE NIGHTS IN A CORNWALL LODGE



TRENYTHON
MANOR
A LUXURY WORLD RESORT

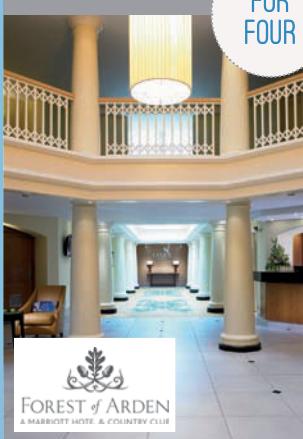
- OVERLOOKING St Austell Bay, the award-winning Trenython Manor (www.trenython.co.uk) is located close to Fowey on the south coast of Cornwall near the famous Eden Project and Lost Gardens of Heligan.

The resort prides itself on its family-friendly set-up and boasts excellent leisure facilities, children's activities and a spa. Read pages 55-56 for more details on the destination.

To be in with a chance of winning three nights in one of the hotel's self-contained lodges*, kitted out to a high standard and sleeping up to six people, send the word "Cornwall" plus your name, rank (if any) and contact details to the usual address or email us at comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

* Prize must be taken in 2014

A FOREST OF ARDEN ESCAPE



FOREST OF ARDEN
A MARRIOTT HOTEL & COUNTRY CLUB

- TRYING to arrange a reunion of old comrades? Or want to treat your family to a country break? We have teamed up with the Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel and Country Club (www.marriott.com) in the heart of the West Midlands to offer this special two-night weekend break, including dinner on both nights, for a party of four.

The resort, which offers discounted Forces packages by calling 01676 522335, boasts great golfing facilities, outdoor tennis courts and a fully equipped fitness centre and spa.

To be in with a chance of winning this sociable getaway, send the word "Forest" plus your name, rank (if any) and contact details to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

* Beverages and beauty treatments not included. Bookings, for four adults sharing two rooms, is subject to availability. Valid until September 30, 2014

Only one entry per person, per competition
Multiple entries will be removed

A SURF BOOT CAMP WEEKEND



To be in with a chance of bagging this prize* send the word "Newquay" plus your name, rank (if any) and contact details to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

* Winners must book their trip by May 15 and agree to photo publicity for the centre

- THANKS to Newquay Activity Centre (www.newquayactivitycentre.co.uk), sponsor of the Army surf team, we are offering one lucky reader a surf boot camp weekend for two.

The prize includes two nights' accommodation at the modern Ocean Surf Lodge close to Fistral Beach, with a choice of dates for attendance (May 23-25, June 20-22 or July 18-20 this year).

Breakfast, lunch, dinner and soft drinks will also be provided for you on the Saturday and Sunday.

Suitable for beginners to upper-intermediate surfers, this action-packed weekend will take the winner to some of Cornwall's most beautiful beaches with four in-water coaching sessions and video analysis to help assess technique. The coaches are all highly experienced with a maximum of eight pupils per instructor.

AN OVERNIGHT STAY IN ONE OF SCOTLAND'S MOST LUXURIOUS HOTELS

FOR
TWO



- SET in secluded grounds near the River Clyde, Glasgow's Mar Hall (www.marshall.com) offers an 18-hole championship golf course, spa and first-class dining.

The five-star resort has been the destination of choice for A-list celebrities including Brad Pitt, Beyoncé and Kylie Minogue.

To be in with a chance of winning a night's bed and breakfast for two, plus dinner, a spa treatment each and a round of golf send the word "Scotland" along with your name and rank (if any) to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

* Accommodation subject to availability. Valid until November 30, 2014

NEXT STOP: VETERANS TAKE ON TOURISM ▶

Be my guest

THE FORMER FORCES PERSONNEL MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE UK HOTEL AND LEISURE SCENE

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

FRONT-LINE operations may be poles apart from the hospitality industry, but skills acquired in the military can stand ex-Servicemen and women in good stead for a second career in the tourism market.

From organisational ability and knowledge of logistics to forward planning and keeping calm in a crisis, these veterans told *Soldier* what it took to make the leap from Army life to holiday sector success.

HIGHLAND HOSPITALITY

The former Army officer turned award-winning hotelier

● **TRANSFORMING** a run-down hotel into one of Scotland's premier places to stay is no mean feat, especially during an economic crisis.

But then Rachel Ross is not the type of person to shy away from a challenge.

After commissioning into the Royal Logistic Corps in 1996, the ex-Servicewoman quickly rose up the ranks of the food services branch and became one of the youngest majors in the Army at the age of 26.

Her military career included a tour of Bosnia, a high-profile stint overseeing the food provision of London-based troops and a post as an officer

commanding at the Service's catering school.

So when she and her husband Calum fulfilled their dream of buying their own hotel in 2008, only for the world to plunge into financial meltdown shortly afterwards, it was not the first time the 39-year-old had been called on to keep calm and carry on.

"We bought the hotel just as the credit crunch hit," explained Mrs Ross.

"Since then it has been nearly six years of challenge after challenge.





"Economically, the building hadn't been invested in and was looking shabby so we had to spend a lot more than we thought we would and that held us back a bit in terms of moving the hotel into the future."

"Although we both had plenty of experience of management, when you work for a large organisation you have lots of support around you but when you run a business like this you don't have that backup at all."

"If the computer breaks down, there's no IT department – it's you that has to sort it out."

"Also, the previous owners had taken all the records with them so we had no customer database."

"It was like starting a brand new company from scratch and we weren't expecting that – we thought it would be up and running. It was really frustrating."

While emergencies in the hospitality industry might not have such dire consequences as crises on the front line, according to Mrs Ross the ability to cope with pressure is as important to a hotelier as it is to military personnel.

"It's not life-or-death like on the battlefield but the daily challenges require you to make decisions and execute your plan," she commented.

"Every day there's an emergency."

"We could have a power cut or a blocked pipe, a chef might not turn up to cook breakfast – there's always an immediate problem to deal with."

"For me, organisational skills and knowledge of logistics are also absolutely critical in running a venture like this because it's 24 hours a day, seven days a week just like in the Army."

Despite the hurdles and the added challenge of raising a young family, the Ross's hard work has paid off, with the Loch Melfort Hotel flourishing into an award-winning operation.

Numerous industry accolades culminated in the couple being named hoteliers of the year in the 2013 Scottish Hotel Awards.

"That was a big honour to get and it was really nice, not just for us but for every member of our staff too," beamed Mrs Ross. "It's all about having a good team around you." ■

● *Soldier* readers can take advantage of a 20 per cent discount at the Loch Melfort Hotel* until November 1, 2014. For more details visit www.lochmelfort.co.uk

* Excludes bank holidays



Loch Melfort LOW-DOWN:



NEXT STOP: CHEPSTOW, GLOUCESTERSHIRE ▶

MAN WITH A PLAN

How hard work and proper preparation helped this ex-soldier secure a second career in the leisure industry

● WHILE some Service leavers could be forgiven for putting their heads in the sand about making the transition to civvy street, others follow the military maxim that prior planning prevents poor performance.

Former warrant officer Daz Bryce adopted the latter approach as his time in uniform drew to a close.

The 44-year-old left the Forces in 2013 to run Chepstow's National Diving and Activity Centre full-time, having spent the last few years of his career using every spare moment he had to develop the facility.

"We all have to leave the Army one day but you don't need to wait until you finish to work out what you're going to do," said the ex-Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer.

"This place was always my plan for when I left."

"For three years I didn't have a day off – all my weekends and leave were taken up with it."

Together with his wife, Kaye, Mr Bryce set about expanding an existing scuba diving centre into a multi-activity destination for young and old alike.



Visitors can now take part in a range of high-adrenalin pursuits including water walking, flyboarding, Segway racing and an impressive 700-metre zip wire course.

On-site self-catering accommodation is provided in the form of 19 distinctive, wigwam-style huts.

Getting the venture off the ground while holding down a role as the regimental sergeant major of a training establishment was, he admits, "hard graft" but gradually his plans and vision came together.

"Eight years ago there were 2,200 visitors to the centre annually. In 2013 we had 14,500 up 3,000 from just the year before," he said.

"Turnover started at £72,000, now it's £762,000 and I'm aiming to get to £1 million in the next three years."

"We're in a recession and times are tough but I've got lots of development plans."

"We've applied for planning permission to increase the number of cabins and the new activities we've introduced are proving very popular."

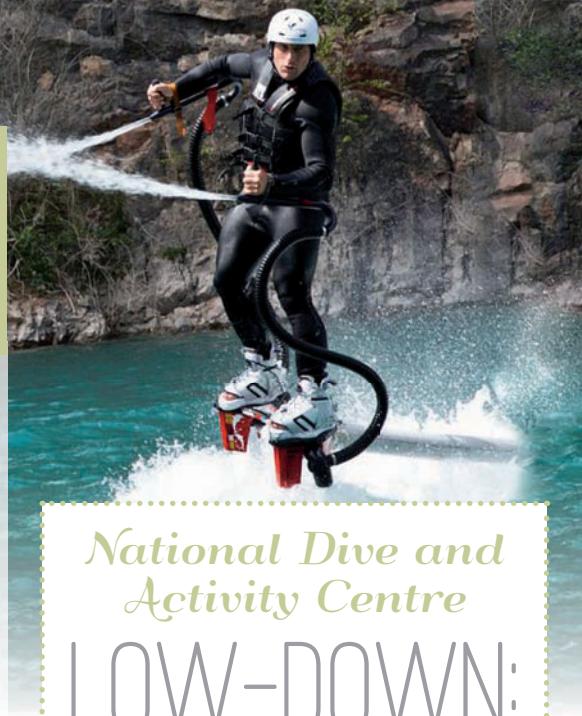
And according to Mr Bryce, those looking at leaving the Services have nothing to fear from civvy street as long as they are prepared to roll up their sleeves.

"The skills and experience you gain at any rank in the Forces are transferable – you just have to think that you can do anything you put your mind to," he said.

"It's not the end of the world when your Army career comes to a close."

"Life goes on – the only difference is I now wear sandals every day instead of combat boots." ■

● Service personnel can enjoy a third off a diving experience at the National Dive and Activity Centre. Visit www.ndac.co.uk for details



National Dive and Activity Centre

LOW-DOWN:



WHERE?
Chepstow,
Gloucestershire

WHO?
Adventurous types
of all ages, families,
groups and couples

WHY?
Short activity breaks for
adrenalin junkies. The site
boasts one of the longest
zip wires in the UK and the
limestone quarry is the
country's deepest
inland dive site



SEE & DO?

Scuba diving from beginner to advanced level, water walking, flyboarding, Segway racing. At night unwind around the campfire or enjoy a barbecue outside your very own six-berth wigwam





Report: Becky Clark

JERFORMING a dangerous job while enduring prolonged periods of separation from their loved ones places a unique set of demands on Forces personnel.

The cycle of training exercises followed by operational deployments is challenging in itself but a recent survey by the Army Families Federation also found that working hours in the Service had increased significantly.

So with quality time at more of a premium than ever before, *Soldier* found out more about the organisations on a mission to give troops and their families a well-earned break.

Getting away from it all

THE CHARITIES MAKING SURE FORCES FAMILIES GET THE DOWN TIME THEY DESERVE



Home from home: The Hannaford family spent a week in a self-catering lodge in Cornwall's Trenython Manor

HOLIDAYS FOR HEROES

● WHILE the British economy seems to be showing the first signs of recovery, a proper family getaway isn't financially viable for everyone – especially with unscrupulous travel companies putting prices up during the school holidays.

But a recent initiative to offer free breaks to the Service community will come as welcome news to cash-strapped parents and singles alike.

The Give Us Time scheme encourages hotels, travel firms and holiday home or timeshare owners to donate getaways to Forces personnel and their loved ones.

Since its launch in 2012 by former defence secretary Dr Liam Fox, offers have flooded in from Britain and around the world and the programme now has hundreds of potential destinations for troops to choose from.

Among the first to benefit was Sgt Simon Hannaford (RE), his wife Michelle and their three children.

The 35-year-old was selected by his unit, Catterick-based 521 Squadron, 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment,

to take part in the charity's pilot week following a particularly stressful period.

"I was seven days away from returning to the UK from Afghanistan when I got the news that my father had passed away," the bomb disposal expert said.

"It was horrific. He had had a heart condition and I thought he was on the mend but he died suddenly in his sleep.

"Soon afterwards I was told I was coming away on this trip, which was a nice surprise and has made a hard situation a lot easier."

With her husband having completed three Herrick tours in four years, Mrs Hannaford thought it important to be able to spend time together as a family away from the home environment.

"This scheme is fantastic because it's brought us to neutral ground where we can bond again away from day-to-day life, the school runs and work," she said.

"Simon is so passionate about his Army career and I back him 100 per cent but it's difficult because as a wife, when they're away, you do have to become hard. >

► "If you're having a problem with the house or whatever you try not to let them know over the phone and you sort it out yourself."

"It makes you very independent but when they return home it's almost like they're coming into your territory and it can take a while to get to know each other again."

Not only had Sgt Hannaford's latest deployment coincided with a difficult time for the family, his UK-based role also sees him working unpredictable hours.

Being on duty to respond to call-outs to potential explosive devices can have a dramatic impact on home life.

"I literally stay in my uniform until I go to bed, get up in the morning, put it back on again and wait for the phone to ring," the Serviceman explained.

"Any family time we do get is massively important so to be given some leave to have 100 per cent time together is great."

The couple and their sons, Josh, Jack and Max, spent a week in a self-catering lodge at Trenython Manor in Cornwall.

Overlooking St Austell Bay, the resort offers children's activities, a spa and stunning coastal scenery.

Manager Nick Waddington decided to get the resort involved with Give Us Time after hearing about the scheme in the media.

"Being a hotel and having an off-peak season I thought it was a great idea," he commented.

"We don't appreciate how lucky we are with the Armed Forces, who go out of their way so we can live the life that we do."

"As a parent I don't think I could bear to be away from my children so I take my hat off to these people."

Dr Fox, who is now a Conservative backbencher, launched the initiative the year after he stepped down as defence secretary because he thought more could be done to support Forces families.

According to the politician, services for physically injured or mentally traumatised troops had improved but the vital contribution made by their loved ones was not yet fully acknowledged.

"I always took the view that you couldn't think of Armed Forces personnel outside the context of their families because nobody exists in a vacuum," he explained.

"When soldiers serve in a combat role it's very stressful for their dependents, from how the family dynamic shifts when a parent is away to how they have to endure the news broadcasts about casualties on a regular basis."

"So it seemed logical, post-deployment,

to give them some time together and that's where the idea came from."

"It's unique because we're not asking people for money, we're asking them for time."

"We've had a huge response and have been offered holidays from all over the world, from Cornwall and the Lake District to luxury yachts in the Mediterranean or a beach hut in Perth, Australia."

Reflecting on the enormous outpouring of goodwill that had enabled his family's holiday to happen, Sgt Hannaford commented: "No one does this job for recognition or expects people to make a song and dance but it's nice to know you're appreciated."

"If there's one thing I've taken on-board, not just as a result of my dad dying but the nature of my job in general, is never to take anyone for granted because it can change in a heartbeat."

"I cherish every minute that I get with my family so I'm very grateful to everyone who has made this possible." ■



Give Us Time is open to all personnel who have served on Operation Herrick since 2005 as well as those who have been discharged through injury or had a member of their family killed while serving in Afghanistan.

Find out more at www.giveustime.org.uk or email enquiries@giveustime.org.uk

The organisation is especially keen to hear from welfare officers to discuss holidays for deserving cases.

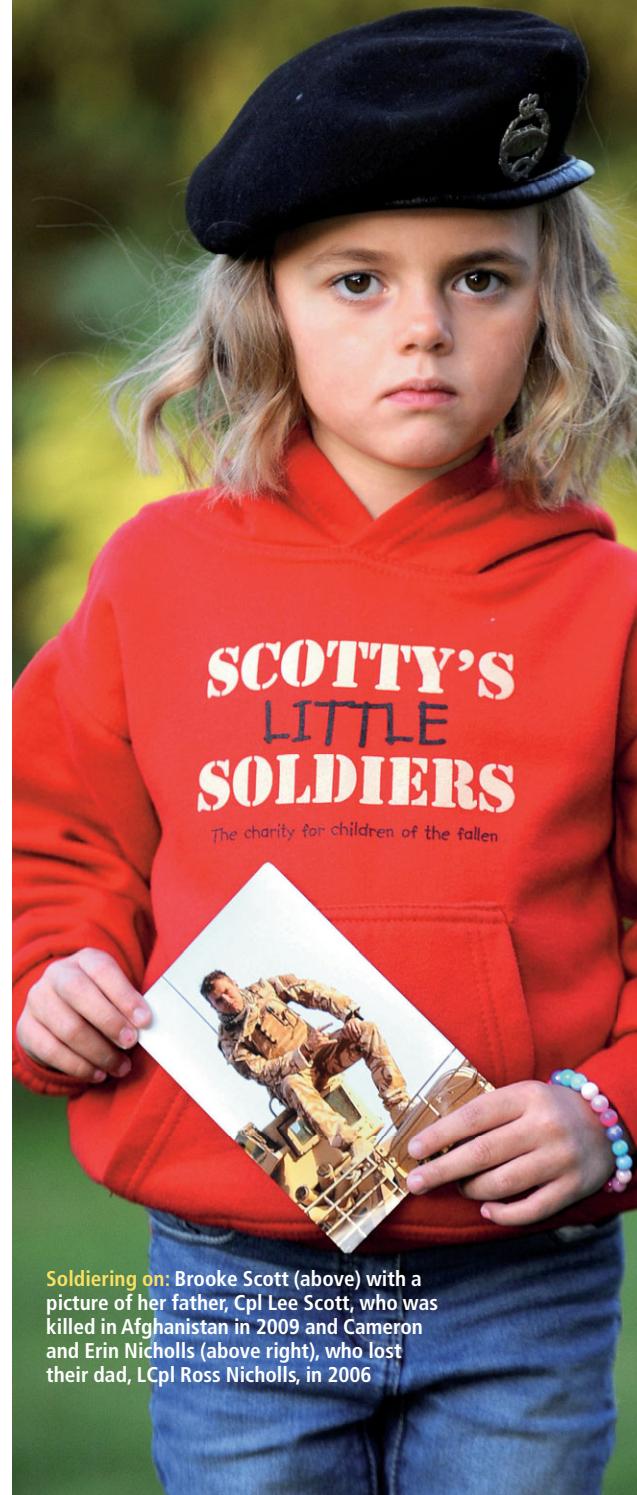
LIFE AFTER LOSS

► SERVICE children have to deal with the frightening reality that their parents regularly face danger in the line of duty.

And while nothing can prepare a child for the loss of their mum or dad, if the worst should happen there are organisations on hand to help them cope with their grief.

One such charity, Scotty's Little Soldiers, supports bereaved children by providing treats, activities and trips, including stays at special holiday lodges.

The initiative was founded by Nikki Scott, whose husband Cpl Lee Scott (RTR) was killed in Afghanistan in 2009.



Soldiering on: Brooke Scott (above) with a picture of her father, Cpl Lee Scott, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009 and Cameron and Erin Nicholls (above right), who lost their dad, LCpl Ross Nicholls, in 2006



Watching her offspring, five-year-old Kai and seven-month-old Brooke, struggling to adjust to life without their father, Mrs Scott decided she had to act.

"When I took the children away on holiday about nine months after Lee had been killed, I watched Kai smiling and having fun in the pool with his cousins and I suddenly realised I had not seen him laugh like that in months," she said.

"That is when I knew I had to do something to try and help him and other children who had also sadly lost a parent."

Along with family and friends, she established the charity in 2010.

Funds are raised through events, donations, merchandise and corporate sponsorship.

The organisation currently supports more than 170 children by providing birthday and Christmas presents, tickets, gift vouchers and help towards clubs, activities and trips.

It has also purchased two holiday homes in Great Yarmouth and Blackpool, with a third due to open in Devon this month.

The three-bedroom lodges are filled with everything a family could want while away from home and members can visit whenever they need a reprieve from the struggles of life after losing a loved one.

Army widow Angela Nicholls was preparing to move home in London in August 2006 when she received word that her husband Ross, a lance corporal in the Royal Corps of Signals, had died on operations in Afghanistan.

He was killed during a rocket attack on his vehicle convoy alongside his

colleagues, Capt Alex Eida and 2nd Lt Ralph Johnson.

"Ross had spent just three weeks with his daughter before he went to Afghanistan and my son wasn't yet two, so their memories of their dad mostly come from photos," explained Mrs Nicholls, whose children Cameron and Erin are now aged nine and seven.

"It's difficult for them to comprehend as they get older."

"I felt quite lost afterwards because it felt like Ross was still on tour and the whole process of moving out of our married quarter dragged on."

"Not knowing anyone in the same situation as me was quite lonely."

Through Facebook the 38-year-old eventually found out about Scotty's Little Soldiers and together with her family has taken advantage of the charity's first two lodges.

"I would say it's harder now they're getting to the age they understand things at school and are learning to deal with their emotions," she commented.

"That's why Scotty's is good; we can go away and not worry about things – that's exactly what the lodges do."

"Everything's provided and you don't feel under pressure to do anything, it's more of a relaxing holiday."

"Our next break together will be at the end of August, just before the children return to school."

"It has really become the highlight of their year."

Although life has changed irrevocably for the Nicholls youngsters and others like them, the charity's aim is to remind them that it's still okay to laugh and smile and that the country cares about the sacrifice their parent made. ■

For more information about Scotty's Little Soldiers visit www.scottylittlesoldiers.co.uk, send an email to hello@scottylittlesoldiers.co.uk or call 01553 763000



Rest & recuperation

ROUND-UP

The other Forces-friendly organisations ready to give holiday help...



SSAFA
Short breaks project

● FORCES charity SSAFA is offering young people the chance to sign up for exciting adventure holidays in the UK and Germany this summer.

The short breaks project is open to Service children with an additional need or disability, their siblings and young carers and gives them the opportunity to try a range of exciting activities, make new friends and build confidence.

Participants must be between eight and 16 years of age and have a parent currently serving in the Regulars or Reserves.

Find out about dates for trips during 2014 by emailing hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk or phoning on 0207 463 9275.

SSAFA is also looking for more volunteers to help out on the adventure breaks.

For further details visit www.ssafa.org.uk



FELIX FUND
Activity breaks

● BOMB disposal work is one of the most high-pressure jobs in the Army and for those coming back from a stint with the Counter-IED Task Force in Afghanistan, having time to readjust to normal life is vital.

As part of its support to the explosive ordnance disposal community, the charity known as Felix Fund arranges outdoor activity breaks for troops in the Peak District.

The week-long trips give personnel the chance to get away from work and family responsibilities in a relaxing, non-military environment.

With peer support recognised as key to successful normalisation, the holidays reunite those who served together on Operation Herrick but who often disperse to different units on their return to the UK.

Some 250 soldiers have so far taken part in the getaways, which are partly funded by cash from fines levied on banks after the Libor rate-fixing scandal.

The scheme will continue to offer respite from the pressures of EOD work after operations in Afghanistan end. For further information visit www.felixfund.org.uk



CHECK POINT!

TOP UP WELCOME ACCOUNTS ONLINE

WelComE Customer Contact Centre
Opening hours: (UK) Mon - Fri 06:00 - 22:00
Dial *0 from any WelComE provided phone for more information
www.mywelcome.co.uk

You can now manage your WelComE account online with the new **WelComE Account Manager**

Simply visit www.account.mywelcome.co.uk and logon using your account number and PIN

WelComE
Welfare Communications Everywhere

YDS
Step Forward

Europe's Largest Manufacturer of Police and Military Boots

Supplying Armed Forces and Government Agencies Worldwide

Injected sole technology for reliability wherever you go



Moraine
High Liability Combat Boot

CORDURA®
FABRIC

COOL MAX®



YDS Boots now available online at
Patrolstore, Polimil and Adventure1



YDS Boots, Goliath Footwear, Goliath House, Chain Bar Road, Cleckheaton, BD19 3QF UK
www.ydsboots.co.uk Tel: +44 (0) 01274 860382 Email: info@ydsboots.com

www.facebook.com/YDSBOOTS1927 <https://twitter.com/YDSBootsUK>

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

'Call time on low-cost booze in military'

I WAS surprised to read the news piece on festive binge drinking in your December issue ("Festive Binge Warning").

The article was obviously providing health promotion in regards to alcohol and its safe usage, as well as the view of the Armed Forces on the issue of alcoholism.

However, to those of us living the military life it actually smacks of hypocrisy.

What's missing is the fact that many soldiers feel obliged to drink socially and certain events can even run all through the night and end with champagne breakfasts.

Toasting is done with alcohol and it's frowned upon if someone doesn't partake or decides to use a soft beverage.

If alcohol wasn't so cheap and readily available to the military perhaps we wouldn't see the mindless acts that normally would be dealt with severely on civilian streets but seem almost accepted as a fact of life within the Forces.

Promoting safer usage is one thing but to have a culture, albeit an unofficial one, within the organisation that goes against this ethos is

counterproductive to say the least.

There may be a reply to this from someone high up who will deny this occurs but I think that those of us living this life know the truth.

It's a shame that what is written is not what is put into practice. — Name and address supplied.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: The Army has made significant steps in recent years to promote moderate consumption of alcohol, recognising that it has a role to play in developing greater unit cohesion, team building and unwinding in certain social environments.

Troops are not forced to have alcohol – it is against Queen's Regulations – and soft drinks are routinely available at all social functions and regimental events.

I notice a steady increase in the number of personnel who consume non-alcoholic drinks. This shows they are increasingly aware of the impact of excessive consumption and that education is central to change.

Alcohol abuse is not tolerated in the Army; it is treated as a professional failing and is in breach of our values and standards. Those who deviate from this position will be held to account.

A robust discipline process is in place for commanders to deal with offenders.

As *Soldier's* article explained, new powers were introduced last November to test for alcohol levels where there is reasonable cause to believe personnel are unfit to perform their duties due to drink.

We have invested much time and effort raising awareness of the consequences of excessive consumption, on health, professional performance and conduct.

The Army has, for several years, run a variety of hard-hitting awareness campaigns, including "Know Your Limits", which has had a measurable effect.

We are not complacent and while we have had some success, we still have more to do to educate on the dangers of binge-drinking at weekends and on leave.



Appeal for more flexibility on moving house

OVER the last six months my husband has had his Afghanistan tour extended by three weeks, his leave cancelled twice due to the floods and he's been posted to a location that will mean me losing my job and our children changing schools.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



We have sacrificed much but have always known and appreciated that the needs of the Service come first.

It's unfortunate that those who should be supporting us don't feel the same way.

We recently applied for accommodation at our new duty station. We picked an ideal quarter and then applied to the Housing Allocations Service Centre.

They told us it would be vacant by the time we needed to move but because they require 21 days between tenants we would not be allowed to occupy the house earlier.

We told them that due to the start of the new school year we could wait 16 days but they would not bend and said we would have to take another property.

There seems to be no recognition of the disruption to our lives and the fact that the quarter will be our home for two years.

Why should we accept second best?

This may seem like an individual case but it's not because this is the sort of officious attitude that families have to deal with every

day. — Name and address supplied.

Sarah White, Assistant Head, Delivery, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, responds: There will be a new housing contract issued later this year which, it is expected, will set a new minimum period of 15 days between occupants of Service families' accommodation (SFA) in England and Wales – reduced from 22 days.

This is part of the official arrangement with our housing contractors to allow them time to prepare and, if necessary, repair the property for its incoming tenants.

There are rare occasions when the occupation of SFA can take place in less than the agreed transition period.

Unfortunately, you didn't benefit from this but potential candidates are considered on a case-by-case basis.

They are usually successful as a result of very exceptional welfare or operational reasons that are supported by the applicants' chain of command.

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#SOLDIERSPORT (P 87)

@26elte1

Mobbs Memorial Day @SaintsRugby first watched 50 years ago, played 40 years ago, always a great day, even more so this year

@GoMcMahon

2,412 great Saintsmen and bunch of thoroughly decent squadies here at Franklin's Gardens **#MobbsMemorial**

@armyboxingteam

Not long until the @ABAEngland Champs. We hope the @RoyalNavy and @RoyalAirForceUK are ready? We are

@jamiedoig

Well played @doncaster_rffc, hopefully not too many injuries from @ArmyRugbyLeague game. Good luck in the next round

@Josh_Tester

RAF v Navy - 6 yellow cards, 1 red card, 4 penalty strokes, a game for the neutrals! @EnglandHockey **#Interservice**

#GENA TURGEL (P 35)

@fkilgour

Tonight I listened to Gena Turgel MBE tell her story of surviving the Holocaust. Humbling and inspiring doesn't even come close to enough

@amanda_erica

Incredible talk by Gena Turgel who is a survivor of the Holocaust – with her wedding dress made from parachute silk

#CHARITIES

@Rigby_Match

Hi guys – in need of special treats ie spa hotel stays, nights out for auction prizes for @CorporalScotty & @SSAFA many thanks

#SOLDIER SPEAK

@PoplarsPenny

Great article ("Hot shots", March). Combat photos do a brilliant job at home and abroad

@gordonjcraig

The British Army in 25 words – never in the field of human conflict has so much been expected by so many of so few, clever @soldiermagazine

@MsCatinboots

While clearing out an uncle's house we have found a *Soldier* magazine dated April 27, 1946. It's in fairly good condition too!

@soldiermagazine

Wrestling with the 'one Army' concept

I AM a member of non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) and have been in my current post for around 30 years.

I'm being made redundant and have to pay tax on my lump sum compensation payment but Regulars get this tax free.

How is this not discrimination and inequality? It is hardly in the spirit of the so-called "one Army" concept.

Please can someone explain the difference. – **SSgt M Brookes, RLC.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies:
Regulars and Reservists are governed by different legislation.

Regular personnel are not taxed on redundancy payments over £30,000 as they are governed by the Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensation) Act 2004 whereas Reserves are aligned to Defence Council regulations.

The NRPS pension and redundancy schemes are similar to civil service arrangements. The latter is linked and complementary to the pension scheme.

NRPS pension provisions were previously contained in TA Regulations 1978 but these were replaced with separate Defence Council regulations in September 2011 to ensure compliance with the Finance Act 2004.

Payments made under the revoked scheme which exceeded the financial threshold set out in the relevant legislation were also taxable.

Therefore, under current tax law, the first £30,000 of any payment made under the NRPS (redundancy scheme) regulations 2012 will be tax free but normal arrangements will apply to payments above this threshold.

■ AS a full-time Reserve service (home commitment) technical quartermaster sergeant directly supporting the Army Reserve, I am required to perform exactly the

same job as my Regular counterparts apart from deploying on operations.

However, I do not receive any of the allowances awarded to these colleagues, which goes against the vision of "one Army" – something that is shouted at every opportune moment.

In particular, I see the current policy of not being able to claim home to travel duty as singularly unfair.

A Regular soldier living in private accommodation can claim this allowance as can Reservists travelling to their training centre.

But as one of only three permanent staff in my sub-unit, I must travel 28 miles a day, five days a week and sometimes one or two weekends a month to facilitate that training yet cannot do so.

With the introduction of super-garrisons and removal of arms plot moves meaning more troops are buying their own properties and commuting, surely it's time to review this policy in favour of a fair system.

New arrangements need to include all soldiers who are key in delivering defence capability, including FTRS personnel.

Is this anomaly being looked at? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: The aim of home to duty travel (HDT) is to provide a contribution towards the costs incurred when eligible Service personnel travel daily between their residence at work address and their place of duty.

It is a non-taxable allowance.

Whereas most civilian employers do not reimburse their employees for daily commuting costs, the MoD does because certain categories of personnel have little choice over where they work or live.

FTRS (HC) soldiers apply for appointments knowing how far they will have to travel and that they do not qualify for HDT so they accept the appointment with their eyes open in this regard.

That said, HDT is included in the ongoing review of allowances in line with the new employment model, which includes efforts to integrate Reserves more thoroughly and reduce complexity.



Grappling with the issue:
Reserves and Regulars may be moving closer but there are still differences

Keeping the home fires burning – literally

My neighbours and I may possibly be the envy of other Service families in that we occupy upgraded 1970s-built quarters.

However, the day-to-day reality of residing in this supposedly superior accommodation falls far short of my expectations.

While internal improvements to my home have been appreciated, some elements of the alterations that were made defy logic.

One example is the installation of wooden fire surrounds which cannot incorporate an electric fire. Also, the property doesn't have many modern energy saving measures fitted and even lacks basic wall insulation.

“ The net result is inflated heating bills and a forlorn effort to maintain a modest living temperature ”

The net result is grossly inflated heating bills being incurred in a forlorn effort to maintain a modest living temperature.

Surely in this environmentally-aware age, all Service accommodation should be surveyed and energy certificates issued and made available for the tenants.

Any upgrading that's undertaken should also include modifications to improve the house's green credentials. – Mrs S Burrows, Lisburn.

In a fix over France

I ASKED my admin staff if I could claim the get you home allowance but they said I wasn't eligible because my home is in France.

I know serving soldiers are entitled to this if they live in the UK so will this ever be changed for people in my situation?

I still have to travel a great distance from my battalion's location to see my family. – Sgt Lee Pennington, Rifles.

Brig Donnelly, DPS(A), responds: Your admin office is absolutely right.

Get you home (travel) eligibility is limited to the UK, islands that are part of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The qualifying residence has to be either a family home, a privately maintained property or a residence at work address, the definitions of which are in chapter one of JSP 752.

Your home in France does not qualify on these grounds but if you believe you have a genuine case you should submit evidence to the pay and allowances casework and complaints cell.

Your regimental administrative officer will be able to advise you.

David Simpson, SFA Development Programme Manager, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, replies: The DIO has been working very hard for a number of years to try and improve its environmental credentials.

Among other projects, we have spent £5 million adding loft and cavity wall insulation to numerous military dwellings since 2008.

The majority of Service families' accommodation (SFA) properties already have these modifications, most of which were installed in the 1970s and 1980s.

We are currently surveying our housing to confirm that the insulation is still effective. Where it is not, we will take steps to correct it.

SFA in England, Wales and Scotland should have an energy performance certificate rating and we are in the process of gathering this information for accommodation in Northern Ireland.

It is hoped that in the future this data can be added to the electronic form used to request SFA.

The issue of the wooden fire surround will be looked at by our local staff.



Feeling the chill: Is energy efficiency a high enough priority at DIO?

Picture: Shutterstock/Monkey Business Images

Service in 25 words? Easy!

Soldier readers take their turn at summing up Army

■ LEST we forget the hero. Country's call; Colours tall. Gun smoke; Body broke. Bugle host; Last Post. We will remember them. – Cliff Cooper, Oxfordshire Army Cadet Force.

■ THE British Army – because even the Americans need superheroes! – J Trainor.

■ ARMY; British; Courageous; Dependable; Enterprising; Family; Giving; Humorous; Industrious; Just; Knowledgeable; Loyal; Modest; Nurturing; Optimistic; Patriotic; Quirky; Respectful; Sporting; Team; Unequalled; Vital; Willing; Xenodochial; Yours. X was a bit of a problem! – Eddie Triggs, ex-RE.

■ SERVICE bittersweet, always neat, thinks on its feet, never been beat. – Maj Colin Coull, City of London and North East Sector Army Cadet Force.

■ DON'T need 25 just this sentence: top-class, professional, brave and the best worldwide. – Peter Smith-Donoghue.

■ WORTH more than a one per cent pay rise! – Leigh Anderson.

■ TWO words: the best. – Pat Freeman.



Why medal for minimal service?



As an active member of the Army Reserve for more than 11 years, I'm having issues getting my Volunteer Reserves Service Medal (VRSM).

I've deployed on three operational tours and been employed for several years on full-time Reserve service (FTRS) contracts.

But apparently I don't meet the criteria due to lack of bounty qualifying years.

I don't expect to get paid the bounty while I'm employed in full-time service but surely these years can be signed off towards the decoration as I still have to complete military annual training tests?

What I find strange is that many Reservists out there have met the bounty qualifications and received their medal by only reaching the minimum criteria. – **Cpl Pete Philbin, REME.**

Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops, replies:
The VRSM is awarded to Reservists of all ranks in recognition of long and efficient

service. "Long" is defined as ten years' continuous service in any of the three Reserve Forces. "Efficient" is defined as having earned the training bounty for nine of the ten qualifying years with the same standards of conduct as those applied to the Long Service & Good Conduct Medal.

FTRS assignments count the same as normal Reserve service up to a maximum of five years, as does that of mobilised TA with the Regulars. There is no requirement to earn training bounties during periods of FTRS or when mobilised.

With all the various forms of Reserve service, the qualification criteria can get a little complicated but all the rules with examples can be found in annex C to chapter three of TA regulations.

In your particular case, the MoD Medal Office believes you have already qualified for the VRSM and your unit just needs to send your details for it to be confirmed.



'DON'T MISS OUT ON LEAVE'

■ CAN I take this opportunity to remind readers who are still serving and joined before March 31, 1999 that they are entitled to re-engagement leave at their 17-year point?

I know of five people so far from different bases whose entitlement has been overlooked and with the introduction of JPA it has also been missed by HR staff – be that by either administrative or human error.

Re-engagement leave is a period of authorised absence granted as an inducement to commit for a further period of service.

A period of 20 working days is granted to eligible troops on open engagements who have completed 11 and 17 years' continuous service.

More details can be found within chapter seven of JSP 760. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
PAR is only payable when no Service accommodation is available and NS hotel stays would be claimed. The current rate is £35 per 24-hour period.

On permanent assignment from the UK to an overseas duty station, JSP 752 regulations allow for you to claim up to three nights' worth of NS or PAR inclusive of your immediate accompanying family (or four nights when a Sunday or public holiday is included) in the UK prior to departure and 14 nights upon arrival at the overseas assignment station, provided a non-availability chit of Service accommodation is obtained in advance.

These rules are considered to be reasonable and appropriate once troops have vacated Service families' or single living accommodation (or equivalent) in preparation for their flight abroad, and to cater for scenarios where military or overseas rented digs may be temporarily unavailable.

Your letter does not make it clear if there were extenuating Service reasons to take your claim to 13 nights.

If there were then you should submit a case to the pay and allowances casework cell (via your RAO department) for authority to claim for those additional nights.

In the dark over night claims

WHAT is the maximum period that the private arrangement rate (PAR) can be claimed for on a UK to overseas posting?

I'm serving in the British Army Training Unit Suffield and am receiving mixed information about a recent claim.

I understand that PAR falls under night subsistence (NS) arrangements and that I can only claim four nights at most on overseas assignments.

But what happens to personnel who have no Service accommodation available for periods longer than this?

From reading JSP 752 (3.018) it is my understanding that PAR is an alternative to NS but it does not state in this paragraph the upper limit of days/nights that can be claimed.

However, after submitting the



paperwork I was told I could only claim four nights at most and not 13 as with NS.

If this is the case I feel that the PAR paragraph should be removed to alleviate more situations like mine.

I've been told that Support Command have also asked for clarification on this. – Name and address supplied.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
PAR is only payable when no Service accommodation is available and NS hotel stays would be claimed. The current rate is £35 per 24-hour period.

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If there were then you should submit a case to the pay and allowances casework cell (via your RAO department) for authority to claim for those additional nights.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
I endorse the comments from this letter writer.

Service personnel are fortunate to have a very good leave package, covering a wide variety of circumstances, and are to be encouraged by their chain of command to take their full entitlement.

I would like to remind all troops of the importance of recording whatever leave is taken on the JPA system.

This is essential in order for the appropriate pay, allowances or career management action to be taken, and for the provision of accurate management information.

● Lost for leave inspiration? Check out our holiday section – pages 45-57

GOT A GRIPE?

Contact **Talkback**

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
{@soldiermagazine}

'Why is Army charging when other Services don't?'



Hooked up: A reader argues that married Army personnel are weighed down by SSSA charges

Is it fair that Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel who are married do not pay for their accommodation when working away from their families but Army staff do?

I have lived with a warrant officer in the Navy for two years in substitute Service single accommodation (SSSA).

Like me, his permanent home is more than 100 miles away where his wife and children reside.

We have large mortgages to pay and do our best to balance work and family commitments.

He and I are both 35 years old and have been married homeowners for six years or more.

However, he does not have to pay for his accommodation at work while I do.

The fact is the British Army does not support married officers like me, or any soldiers under the age of 36 years and six months, due to our over 37 provision.

Why does my Service only assist the domestic stability of the family in the latter part of officers'

and soldiers' careers while the RAF and Navy support their personnel regardless of their age?

With mortgage rates poised to rise and house prices once again sky-rocketing this bizarre and antiquated policy could do with being refreshed to bring parity across the Armed Forces.

I believe this should be part of the military covenant and the support should be based on circumstance and not age. — **Name and address supplied.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
When the allowance regulations were combined into JSP 752 there were a number of anomalies between single Service policies.

The differences reflect the contrasting approaches the Army, Navy and RAF have traditionally taken towards mobility and family stability and were driven by the unique needs of each Force.

The situation you have outlined is one such anomaly.

The new employment model is seeking to deliver a set of simplified, coherent allowances that will be common across the military.

We are working very closely with the MoD to ensure that the packages are equitable and meet the requirements of a more stable Army.

- Contract to improve services – page 21



HEADS UP ON BERET DEBATE

■ I AGREE with Glyn Morrison about the correct wearing of berets ("Is over the left eye right?", March).

I was a paratrooper during the late 1950s and early 60s and if we had gone on parade looking like the Serviceman in the photograph we would have doubtless been put on a charge.

Quite frankly, he looks like an old-fashioned coal man. — **Mr W Crawforth, Hailsham, East Sussex.**

No allowance for city parking problems

I AM currently serving in an Army careers centre on a full-time Reserve service (FTRS) contract.

I am aware that I have no entitlement to the various allowances that I previously enjoyed as a Regular soldier such as medical or dental cover, the X factor and home to duty travel (HDT).

However, I was led to believe that I could reclaim the cost of parking my car at work, which is £8 per day, as my office is located in a city centre and no spaces are provided.

I have now been informed that these charges come under HDT and, as such, I am not entitled to reclaim them.

If this was the same for all FTRS personnel I could accept this, but I know there are many such staff who receive free parking at their place of work and it's therefore a lottery as to who receives this benefit and who does not.

I have had FTRS terms and conditions quoted to me as the reason for my ineligibility but I feel there are two very different packages available to Servicemen and women on the same contract.

Having spent 30 years in the Army, I have never seen any soldier have to pay out of his or her own pocket to park at their place of work.



Over a barrel: Staff in certain locations must pay for parking out of their own pockets

Independent Education

Boarding School Girls & Boys, 5 to 19 years

Ranked by the Daily Telegraph for A level and equivalent qualifications 2013:

Queen Ethelburga's College

- Top northern day and boarding school.
- UK's 4th day and boarding school.

The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's

- 2nd northern day and boarding school.
- UK's 12th day and boarding school.

For the third year running we have pegged your contribution per child, per term, at £795. Childcare Vouchers also accepted. This now means we rank as one of the most competitively priced schools for Forces in the UK. Over £65m invested in new facilities in the last eight years. Our boarding facilities are the best in Europe. Every bedroom has its own private shower and toilet plus telephone, voice mail, large plasma TV/DVD player with gaming port (on timer), a Sony PS3, fridge, microwave, trouser press, safe and hot drinks facilities. House staff are friendly and caring.



We understand the needs of service families with staff who are married to serving members of the Forces. With years of experience in ensuring our 200+ Forces children settle well, are confident and highly successful. Easy to get to by road, rail and air. We work hard, we play hard. Top of the line academic facilities and resources with an amazing range of out of hours activities. Dedicated, professional, friendly and helpful staff go the "extra mile" to ensure your child is happy and doing well. We have Forces families from all over the UK, not just the north. One new pupil described our Estate as "imagine Hogwarts meets American Campus". Successful CCF contingent. Huge range of sports + £16m new Sports Centre, new 100 station £1m gymnasium health club, + music and drama. Wide range of abilities accepted. A full range of A level and BTEC courses.



Over 98% of our Year 13 students went on to university with majority to the first class Russell Group universities.

Want to see how we are into Sport? www.SportsVillageQE.org

"Our son read your prospectus. Wonders will never cease. He soon found the piece about all the things you put in a boarding bedroom including TV and PS3, plus your amazing sports, now he is all smiles!"

Queen Ethelburga's

Thorpe Underwood. Yorkshire. Web: www.QE.org
Tel: 01423 333 330 Email: info@QE.org

Ranking of all Independent Schools offering day and boarding from the 2013 Daily Telegraph chart, for % A*/A A level and equivalent qualifications.
(NR = Not ranked, • Means last year's results as this year's not available.)

1	94%	Cardiff 6th Form Coll	75	45%	Truro School
2	86%	Wycombe Abbey	76	45%	Kent College
3	81%	St Swithun's School	77	45%	St Leonards
4	80%	QE College	78	45%	Harrogate Ladies' School
5	79%	Concord College	NR	45%	Fyling Hall School
6	74%	Brighton College	79	44%	ACS Cobham School
7	72%	St Mary's Ascot	80	44%	Christ College
8	71%	Badminton School	81	44%	Mill Hill School
9	71%	Benenden School	82	43%	St Bees School
10	71%	St Catherine's	83	43%	Ampleforth College
11	71%	Wellington College	84	43%	Windermere School
12	68%	Faculty of QE	85	43%	The Leys School
13	68%	St Mary's Calne	86	42%	St Mary's Shftbury
14	68%	Canford School	87	42%	Stonyhurst College
15	67%	Hurtwood House	88	41%	King William's Coll
16	67%	Oundle School	89	41%	New Hall School
17	66%	Dulwich College	90	41%	Wellington School
18	65%	St Clare's	91	41%	Burgess Hill Girls
19	64%	Headington School	92	41%	King's School
20	64%	Malvern St James	93	41%	Royal Dungannon
21	63%	Godolphin School	94	41%	Wells Cathedral S
22	62%	Caterham School	95	40%	Queen's College
23	62%	Moreton Hall	96	40%	Glenalmond College
24	61%	Bromsgrove School	97	40%	St Margaret's Bushey
25	61%	Royal High Sch Bath	98	39%	St Edmund's College
26	60%	Ruthin School	99	38%	Purcell School of Music
27	60%	St Michael's School	100	38%	Bruton School for Girls
28	59%	King's School	101	38%	Stamford School
29	58%	Marlborough College	102	38%	Wrekin College
30	58%	d'Overbroeck's Coll	103	38%	Victoria College
31	57%	St Leonards-Mayfield	104	38%	Leighton Park School
32	57%	City of Ldn Freemens	105	37%	Welbeck College
33	56%	Talbot Heath School	106	37%	Tring Park School
34	56%	Haileybury	107	37%	St James Senior Boys'
35	56%	Queenswood	108	35%	Ratcliffe College
36	56%	St Peter's School	109	35%	Rossall School
37	55%	Warwick School	110	35%	Kirkham Grammar
38	55%	Woldingham School	111	35%	Lord Wandsworth Coll
39	55%	Queen Margaret's	112	35%	Ashville College
40	54%	Rugby School	113	34%	Plymouth College
41	54%	Roedean School	114	34%	St Edmund's Canterbury
42	54%	Bedford School	115	34%	St Joseph's College
43	54%	Uppingham School	116	34%	Pocklington School
44	54%	Bishop's Stortford	117	34%	Stamford High School
45	53%	Lancing College	118	33%	The King's School Ely
46	53%	Haberdasher Girls	119	33%	Bede's Senior School
47	53%	Oakham School	120	33%	Sutton Valence School
48	53%	Gresham's School	121	33%	Langley School
49	53%	St Francis' College	122	32%	Battle Abbey School
50	52%	St Teresa's, Eff	123	31%	Felsted School
51	52%	Brentwood School	124	31%	Kelly College
52	52%	Surbiton High School	125	31%	Ackworth School
53	51%	St Mary's Cambridge	126	30%	Millfield School
54	51%	Loughborough Gram	127	30%	The Oratory School
55	51%	Merchiston Castle	128	30%	Sedbergh School
56	50%	Bootham School	129	29%	Farringtons School
57	50%	Dauntsey's School	130	28%	Shebbear College
58	50%	Reed's School	131	28%	Clayesmore School
59	50%	Marymount School	132	28%	Box Hill School
60	50%	Kingswood School	NR	28%	Giggleswick
61	49%	Ipswich School	NR	28%	Polam
62	49%	Merchant Taylors B	133	26%	Tettenhall College
63	49%	Prior Park College	134	25%	St John's College
64	48%	Tudor Hall School	135	25%	Woodhouse Grove
65	48%	Downside School	136	24%	Sibford School
66	48%	St John's School	137	24%	Culford School
67	47%	Mount School (York)	138	24%	Friends' School
68	46%	Chigwell School	139	24%	Lincoln Minster School
69	46%	Chetham's Music	140	24%	Hampshire Collegiate
70	46%	Sidcot School	141	23%	LVS Ascot
71	46%	Kimbolton School	142	22%	Seaford College
72	46%	Bradfield College	NR•	21%	Barnard Castle
73	46%	Cheltenham College	143	20%	Trinity School
74	46%	Bury Grammar Girls	144	18%	The Royal Ballet School
			145	18%	Fulneck School
			NR•	16%	Read School Drax



The Armed For IT Careers programme provides a one-stop shop for ex-military personnel looking to launch a career in IT, helping them find training, resettlement funding and qualifications. For more information visit www.armedforitcareers.org

Transition Force uses a combination of online technology and events to provide personalised career support for ex-Service personnel nationwide. To register visit <http://events.transitionforce.com>

HighGround is a charity providing land-based skills and experience to serving and ex-Service personnel, helping them move into civilian life. Four "rural weeks" offering career advice in this sector will be held in 2014. For details visit www.highground-uk.org

ForceSelect is a specialist recruitment consultancy for Service leavers and veterans. For further information visit www.forceselect.com or email info@forceselect.com

Jobs4Reservists is a website developed by the South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association to match veterans and Reservists who are seeking employment with job vacancies. For more information visit www.jobs4reservists.org.uk

X-Forces helps ex-military personnel embark upon the journey to business ownership. For more information visit www.x-forces.com

COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: LCpl T Leatherland, Alfreton, Derbyshire.

Blood Glacier DVD: K McMurtrie, The Castle, Edinburgh; Barry Exley, Billericay, Essex; Sgt A Duncan, BFPO 47; Maj E Mathieson, Army HQ, Andover; Charles Long, Grimsby, Lincolnshire.

Battle Classics: LCpl S Wood, BFPO 31; CPO Iain McCallum, DE&S Yeovil; John Card, SSU, Stafford.

DIARY

From April 5: From Street to Trench, IWM North. The first major exhibition from IWM to mark the First World War centenary features more than 200 objects and photographs from the conflict, many on display for the first time. Open daily from 1000-1700. For more information telephone 0161 836 4000 or email iwmnorth@iwm.org.uk

April 11-October 12: The First Georgians: Art and Monarchy 1714-1760 at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. This exhibition includes military maps and battle plans. Visit www.royalcollection.org.uk for further information.

April 12: Drummer Hodge by Rupert Creed at The Thomas Hardy School Theatre, Dorchester. The play centres on a Dorset Regiment drummer deployed to the Boer War. To book tickets visit www.dorchestercommunityplay.org.uk

April 26: 2014 British Model Soldier Society's annual show at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Coram Street, London WC1N 1HT. Admission from 1030 (BMSS members 1000) with tickets priced at £5 (accompanied children free). For further details contact bmss.annualshow@gmail.com or 01895 832757.

May 10: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo at King's Hall, Kingsway in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity. Doors open 1730, performance starts 1830. First World War centenary concert, marching displays and beating retreat feature. Tickets £10 from Music Mania via 01782 206000.

BULLET POINTS

May 18: Paras' 10 event, Colchester. Organised by The Parachute Regiment Charity and sponsored by YDS Boots. For more information visit www.paras10.com

June 28: Armed Forces Day 2014. Details of events across the country can be found at www.armedforcesday.org.uk

Until July 2014: IWM London is temporarily closed and will reopen in summer 2014 with new First World War galleries to mark the 100-year anniversary of the start of the conflict. The IWM London's research room will remain open during the temporary closure. For more information visit www.iwm.org.uk

DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

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

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

Armed Forces Muslim Association: Chaplain 0207 414 3252; www.afma.org.uk

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

Army LGBT Forum: www.armylgbt.org.uk; chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries: 01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

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

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

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

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

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

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

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Help for Heroes: 0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459; www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association: www.nesa.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

PoppyScotland: 0131 557 2782; www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk; 0808 802 8080

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences: 0131 556 0091; www.svronline.org

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0808 1914 218 (from the UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafa.org.uk

Stoll: (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation) 0207 385 2110; info@stoll.org.uk; www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association: 020 7730 2400; www.nfassociation.org

Continued on page 66

The Poppy Factory: 020 8940 3305
www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star & Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676 www.starandgarter.org

uk4u Thanks!: 01798 812081; www.uk4u.org



INTELLIGENCE

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

ABN 28/14 Tour de France Festival of Cycling

ABN 27/14 The Army's approach to risk

ABN 26/14 Versatile engagement conversion update

ABN 25/14 Sexual harassment survey

ABN 24/14 New functionality for the operational deployment record

ABN 23/14 Forces Help to Buy scheme

ABN 22/14 Allowance revision – movement and storage of personal effects

ABN 21/14 Army basing programme SPTA public consultation

ABN 20/14 Government security classification update

ABN 19/14 Army photographic competition 2014 (tbc)

DIN 2014DIN01-054: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – changes to rehabilitation periods from March 10, 2014 and the impact on the Armed Forces

DIN 2014DIN01-053: BR3 – issue of February 2014 edition

DIN 2014DIN01-051: Unaccompanied baggage – short notice applications to the contractor (Agility Logistics) for removals and storage of personal effects

DIN 2014DIN01-050: Relocation allowances – additional housing costs allowance for renters

DIN 2014DIN01-049: Tax relief for laundry expenses

DIN 2014DIN01-047: Defence Fire and Rescue Service fire officers 2012 and 2013 pay award

DIN 2014DIN01-045: Joint Forces Command – global support organisation

DIN 2014DIN01-044: MoD provision of passports for Service personnel, MoD civilians and their dependants living in the UK

DIN 2014DIN01-042: Late entry commissions in the Adjutant General's Corps

DIN 2014DIN01-041: Amendment to the entitlement to occupy single living accommodation when serving married unaccompanied/civil partnership

DIN 2014DIN01-040: MILLIE number assigned to moving schools booklets

DIN 2014DIN02-006: Government security classification policy: industrial security implementation guidance

DIN 2014DIN02-005: Notification (alongsiders) Official Secrets Acts 1989

DIN 2014DIN02-004: DFTS Enterprise Gateway Service policy

DIN 2014DIN03-005: MSP organisational changes February 2014

DIN 2014DIN03-004: Locally engaged civilians in Afghanistan

DIN 2014DIN04-038: Amendments to operational medical modules contents

DIN 2014DIN04-037: Accommodation booking requirements and charges for exercising troops and sports groups staying in BF Gibraltar

DIN 2014DIN04-036: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – resuscitation bay R3/R2E capability

DIN 2014DIN04-035: Weapon equipment – declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2014DIN04-034: Declaration of ALC obsolescence equipment

DIN 2014DIN04-033: Amendments to operational medical modules contents (November 13-January 14)

DIN 2014DIN04-032: New free of charge service for the recycling of waste cooking oils and fats

DIN 2014DIN04-031: Management of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear physical protective equipment

DIN 2014DIN04-030: Declaration of obsolete – GPNVG 5Z7II/5855-99-966-6811

DIN 2014DIN04-029: Suction unit Eschmann VP45 – modification to increase capacity

DIN 2014DIN04-028: Trade receipts deliveries, booking-in procedure LCS Donnington

DIN 2014DIN04-026: Withdrawal from service of the conversion kit 0.22 inch, L41A1; DMC B4, NSN 1005-99-967-7144

DIN 2014DIN04-025: Declaration of confirmed out of service date for the Gun Riot 37mm, L67A4; DMC RIOTG, NSN 1010-99-339-4546

DIN 2014DIN04-024: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of the VELA ventilator within medical modules

DIN 2014DIN04-023: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of HeartStart MRx defibrillator/monitor within medical modules

DIN 2014DIN04-022: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of Datex FM monitor within modules

DIN 2014DIN04-021: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of the Belmont Rapid Infuser within medical modules

DIN 2014DIN04-020: Equipment tables, scales and schedules

DIN 2014DIN04-019: Use of interim professional manpower substitutions and changes to contractual routes

DIN 2014DIN04-018: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of the iSTAT analyser and associated downloader recharger kit and printer kit within modules (module)

DIN 2014DIN04-017: Withdrawal from service of the pull-off weight assemblies – B7/1005-99-399-8116 and B2/1005-99-535-7444, STTE

DIN 2014DIN05-009: Mine warfare drills and procedures committee

DIN 2014DIN07-053: Defence unit fire safety managers, warden, extinguisher maintenance, awareness trainer

DIN 2014DIN07-052: British Services Dhaulagiri

medical research expedition 2016

DIN 2014DIN07-051: Defence instructional techniques and defence instructional techniques (trainer) courses delivered by the AES: 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN07-050: School of Aerospace Battle Management courses

DIN 2014DIN07-049: Sub-aqua diving – overseas diving training centres

DIN 2014DIN07-048: Tri-Service language examinations (professional, expert and functional) 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN07-047: Defence foreign language training courses for training year 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN07-046: Unit welfare personnel training courses 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN07-045: Junior officers hydrography, meteorology and oceanography acquaint courses 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN07-044: Instructions for the all arms commando course

DIN 2014DIN07-043: UKRFA Scottish military skills competition 2014

DIN 2014DIN07-042: Army postgraduate studies

DIN 2014DIN07-041: Defence media training 2014/15

DIN 2014DIN09-005: Call for nominations – chief scientific adviser commendation scheme

DIN 2014DIN10-024: Army Canoe Union surf championships June 13-15, 2014

DIN 2014DIN10-023: Tri-service motorbike expedition in South Africa to raise funds for The Royal British Legion March 6-15, 2015

DIN 2014DIN10-022: Participation in Army Sport Control Board authorised British Army Motorsports Association navigation events in military vehicles

DIN 2014DIN10-020: Introduction of new medical standards for Service boxers

DIB12/14: Next steps for defence infrastructure delivery

DIB11/14: PUS writes on delivering transformation

DIB10/14: Next chief of the general staff appointment announced

DIB09/14: Forces Help To Buy: detailed scheme rules launched, including those for Tranche 4 redundancy scheme

DIB08/14: The defence equipment plan 2013

DIB07/14: Forces Help To Buy: home purchase loan scheme rules



REUNION

The Royal Logistic Corps warrant officer class one (conductor) parchment ceremony.

All serving commissioned and former warrant officers class one (conductor) are invited to attend this event on May 30, 2014 at Buckley Barracks, Hullavington. For further information email gordon.webster2@btinternet.com

The Royal Logistic Corps Association, conductors' branch 10th anniversary reunion dinner and annual general meeting,

May 30-31, 2014 at Buckley Barracks, Hullavington. For further information email gordon.webster2@btinternet.com

LGBT Veterans' Ball. All those who have served since the 1940s and identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender are invited to this event at the Union Jack Club on June 7. For more information email smith.alastair@me.com

The Regimental Band of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment will be holding a reunion on June 21 from 1400 at the Duke of Wellington's Public House, Commercial Street, Halifax. For details visit their Facebook page or email 1dwrbandreunion@gmail.com

521 Specialist Team Royal Engineers well drillers will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on June 27-28 in Chilwell. This ticket-only event is open to all current and former personnel. For more details contact Sgt Chris Fuery by telephone on 0115 957 2857 or via christopher.fuery443@mod.uk

32 Engineer Regiment's reformation and 39 Armoured Engineer Squadron's disbandment weekend. The disbandment has been brought forward to July 14 from the previously advertised date of October 14. To mark the occasion a weekend of festivities will be held on July 11-13 at Campbell Barracks, Hohne. Events will include a dinner night on July 11 for all former OCs and SSMs of 39 Armoured Engineer Squadron and invited VIP guests. Contact Maj Mark Jones via msjones9442@hotmail.com for details. A regimental open day will take place on July 12 followed by the disbandment parade. An all-ranks function will round off the occasion. To attend either event please contact WO2 Garry Cattle via g.cattle@hotmail.com to assist with catering estimates.

7th Intake AAC ACC 40th anniversary reunion dinner. To celebrate this event a dinner will be held on August 2 in Rickmansworth,

Hertfordshire. Any permanent staff serving at the AAC at the time are also invited to attend. For further details contact Stephen Carroll at stephencarroll441@btinternet.com

25 Regiment RA will be holding a reunion for all ex-members in the warrant officers' and sergeants' mess in Larkhill on June 27-29 to mark the 30th anniversary of its disbandment. For details contact Steve Russell on 01980 845539 or via stevenrussell771@btinternet.com

to Movak or Mowak. Anyone who can help is asked to contact her on 01493 444138.

Paddy Bowes is trying to find friends **John Ainsley, Taffy Evans and Pinky Howes**, who were in 113 Coy RASC in Mulheim an der Ruhr, Germany between 1962-1966. Anyone who can help, or who also served in 113 Coy, is asked to contact him on 02890 869366.

ROADSHOWS



The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btconnect.com with the event you are interested in attending.

April: 29, Croydon; 30, Haringey.
May: 1, Islington.

SEARCHLINE



Linda Shore is looking for information about a former colleague **Bruce, born January 17, 1950, who lived in the Aldershot area in 1972**. He had four brothers also serving in the Army at that time and she believes the surname was similar

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01435 866102 or info@tnauk.org.uk

National Talking Newspapers & Magazines, National Recording Centre, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8DB



NO. 869

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed in this picture of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge meeting Domhnall the Irish wolf hound at the Irish Guards' St Patrick's Day parade in Aldershot. Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 869, Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by April 30, 2014.

Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by April 30, 2014.

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

First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The

results will be announced in the June issue. Usual rules apply.

February's winner: First correct entry drawn at random was Eleanor Holder, Bovington, Dorset. **Runners up:** Kay Newby-Driscoll, Aldershot, Hants and Carlene Bantick, Luton, Beds.



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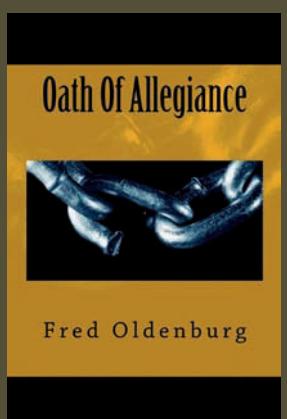
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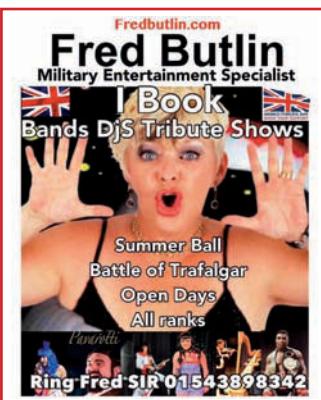


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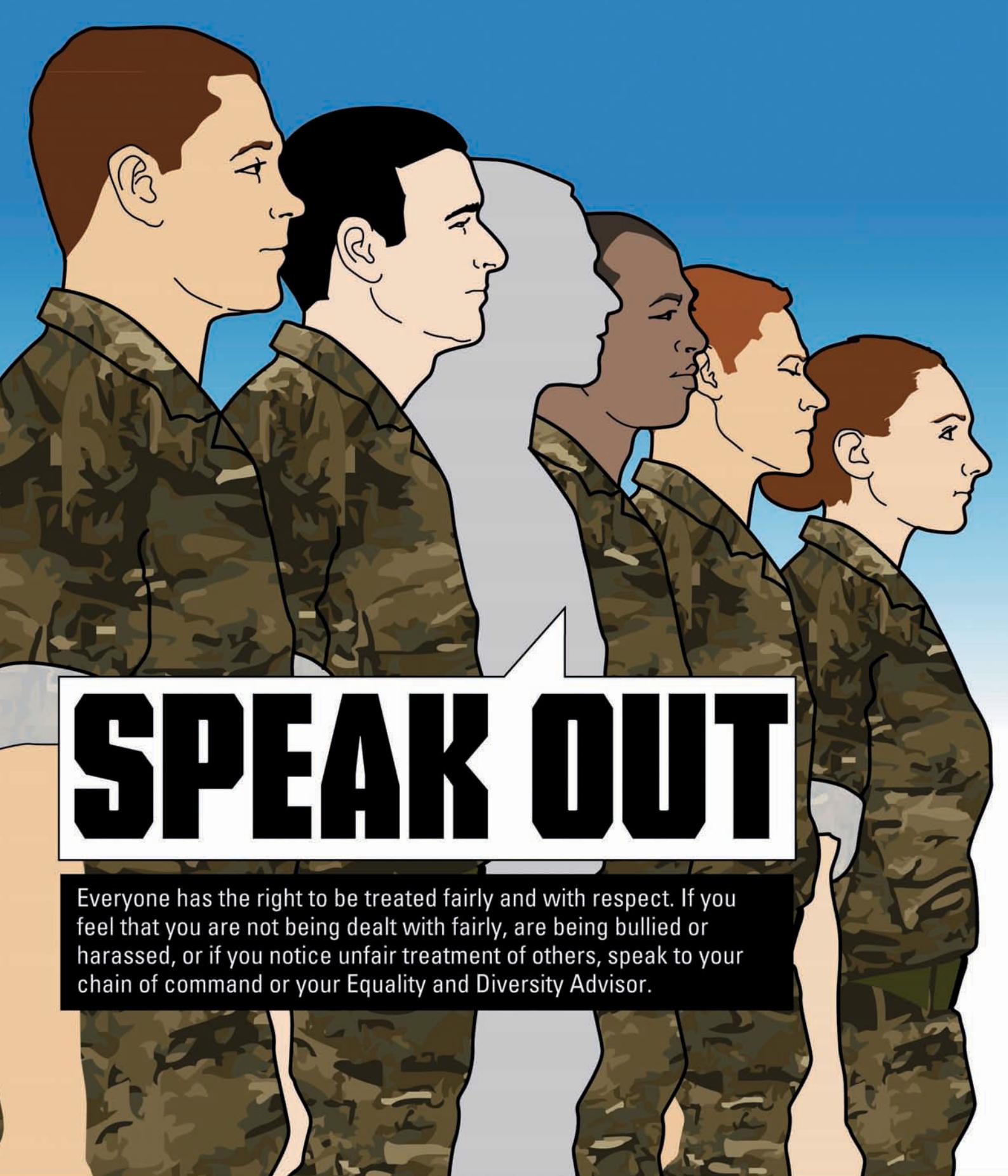
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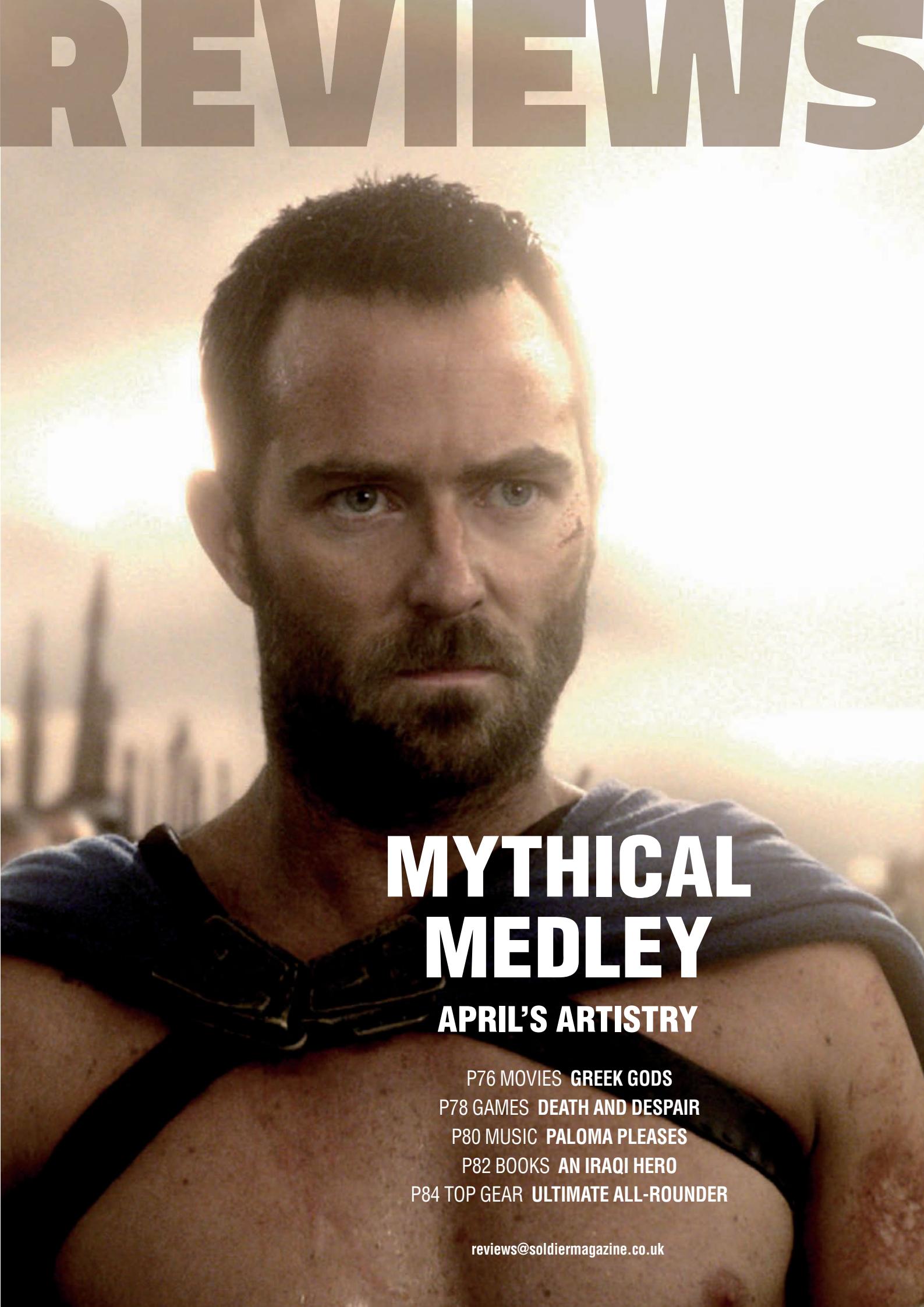


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REVIEWS



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MOVIES



PICK OF THE MONTH:
300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE

BARBARIC BATTLE

SECOND INSTALMENT TAKES EPIC
PERSIAN CLASH TO THE OCEAN WITH
SPECTACULAR RESULTS

Review: Joe Clapson

AFTER seven long years the follow-up to the global blockbuster *300* has arrived on the big screen to provide a new fix of hyper-stylised Greek mythology and god-like figures.

The first film saw Leonidas, the warrior king of Sparta, and his impressive army make a heroic last stand against a huge Persian force and *300: Rise Of An Empire* certainly proves itself to be a worthy companion title, with much of the brutal action taking place at sea.

Based once again on a Frank Miller graphic novel, the plot throws its audience back to the Battle of Thermopylae – the same conflict where Gerard Butler's chiseled lead character faced his enemy in the original instalment.

But this time it is the navy, led by Themistokles (Sullivan Stapleton), that goes into combat with limited resources.

"He unites all of Greece in order to fight the Persians as one army," explained Stapleton of his Athenian character.

"It is really one man's drive and military brilliance to go and meet the opposing force out on the water that characterises this film – which is very different from the first movie."

The latest chapter in the epic saga sees the protagonist's band of farm hands, tradesmen and poets pitted against the Persian god-king Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro).

And it is during these spectacular battle scenes, fought on a dark, blood-filled ocean, that the feature returns to the glory of the first film.

Themistokles' match-up with naval commander Artemisia (Eva Green) produces some incredibly intense moments.

"I think there's a deep-rooted hatred at the start, and then as they battle together and start to learn about each other, they come to admire each other's tactics and their military abilities," the Australian said of the encounter.

"They've both spent years alone and been married to the military side of things so when they do finally get together, there are definitely sparks."

By "sparks" Stapleton is referring to a jaw-droppingly rough sex scene in which Artemisia is certainly no shrinking violet.

"She's one tough woman and good with a sword. She kept up, definitely," he added.

300: Rise Of An Empire is certainly not for the faint-hearted.

The violent clashes are extraordinarily vivid with large slow-motion splashes of claret covering the screen as blades slice through limbs and throats.

Another gruesome moment requiring strong stomachs comes when a crow pecks the eyes out of corpses on the beach.

"In a way, it's really an experience that helps the audience to understand and to visualise the size and scope of those battles," said Santoro.

"The film has something fresh about it, the quality of the details caught my attention.

"It is packed with great action and adventure and all of the scenes that these sort of movies have. It really gives the word 'epic' new meaning."

While this title certainly won't be to everyone's taste, fans of comic-book inspired rippling bodies and those who enjoy the thrill of mythological warfare will be in their element. ■

VERDICT: Spectacular battles, impressive warriors and plenty of blood



FROST out now

A GROUP of Icelandic researchers camping on a glacier find themselves up against a deadly force in this science fiction horror directed by **Reynir Lyngdal**. Physiologist Agla and filmmaker Gunnar wake up to discover that their camp has been abandoned and their co-workers have disappeared. It's a bit of a thin storyline but the movie has a great atmosphere and setting which compensates a little.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

VERDICT: Blood on ice never fails but this could be better



SAVING MR BANKS out now

THIS is a great film to watch on a weekend with the family. It reveals the hidden truths to one of the most well known childrens' films, *Mary Poppins*, detailing its transformation from novel to the big screen. Mr Banks' daughter seeks to have the movie as she wants it while Mr Disney fights for the touches he wishes to add. For Poppins fans it will expand the story and for those who aren't it's a great stand-alone feature.

Cpl Nick Reader, Rifles

VERDICT: Great family viewing that stands up as its own film

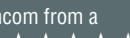


DON JON out now

DON Martello (**Joseph Gordon-Levitt**) earned the nickname Don Jon by scoring with a different woman every weekend but he still finds more satisfaction in front of his computer. Opposite him is Barbara Sugarman (**Scarlett Johansson**), who is determined to find her Prince Charming. Battling the expectations of the opposite sex, Jon and Barbara struggle, hilariously, to find intimacy and affection.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

VERDICT: Very funny romcom from a man's perspective



THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG out April 7

VAST computer-generated landscapes, the ubiquitous orks, elves, dwarves and a nasty dragon complete this winning formula. Bilbo (**Martin Freeman**) and his mates are thrown headlong into a maelstrom of surprisingly graphic violence in their quest for a mystical stone; even Gandalf (**Ian McKellen**) gets a kicking. It starts slowly then delivers an inconclusive ending.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC

VERDICT: Those with a thirst for dwarf blood will be satisfied



FROZEN out now

THIS is a tale of two princess sisters, voiced by **Kristen Bell** and **Idina Menzel**. A magical spell has trapped the siblings' kingdom in eternal winter. The optimist of the two teams up with a gruff mountain man and his reindeer on an epic journey to free the nation from its icy grip. With trolls, Olaf the snowman and an epic soundtrack, this feature is a must-watch for anybody with young children.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

VERDICT: Awesome family flick – my kids are still singing



WIN... SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY

BASED on the acclaimed 1939 short story by James Thurber and brought to life by **Ben Stiller**, this classic story of a daydreamer who escapes his existence by disappearing into a fantasy world is released on Blu-ray and DVD on April 21. *Soldier* has teamed up with Twentieth Century Fox to offer a copy of the DVD to four lucky readers. To be in with a chance of winning one, just tell us who directed the movie. Send your answers on a postcard to the usual address or via comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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GAMES



PICK OF THE MONTH: DARK SOULS II

MASTERING THE MYSTICAL

SEQUEL DELIVERS ENCHANTING
FANTASY ADVENTURE

Review: Richard Long

DEVELOPERS From Software hit the bullseye with the release of *Dark Souls* – a title that set a new benchmark in the fantasy adventure genre and offered players a level of difficulty rarely seen among rivals in the console world.

So when talk of a sequel first surfaced there was great anticipation as to whether this trend would continue.

Those seeking a challenge other than repeated and frenetic button-bashing will be delighted to hear that *Dark Souls II* ticks all the boxes in what proves to be a spellbinding second instalment.

A taste of the haunting quest to come is offered in the highly impressive opening sequences, which provide a cinema-like backdrop to the narrative.

Here we see our doomed hero making his way to the mystic land of Drangleic, where he will attempt to remove the evil curse that threatens to turn him into a zombie-like Hollow form.

Fortunately, there is little crossover with the title's predecessor so newcomers do not need to worry about ongoing storylines and plot intricacies.

A brief introductory phase sees basic skills quickly mastered and from there the action quickly gets underway.

While the graphics and presentation are generally very strong *Dark Souls II* suffers from indifferent lighting effects that can unfortunately hamper progress.

The game's tagline suggests, in a round about way, that you will die a hundred times and it's safe to assume that a fair few of these fatalities are achieved by mistakenly tumbling off cliffs.

And this leads to further frustrations. Progress can be saved, and indeed torches lit, at camp fires dotted around the vast landscape but these are few and far between and after plunging, yet again, to your death a serious amount of legwork is required to get back on track.

Such tragedies may be the result of simple ineptitude but others stem directly from the brutality of battle.

Early foes are swiftly swatted aside with lusty blows from a sword but the threat level rapidly rises meaning a more considered approach is needed.

Further blood will undoubtedly be spilt but important lessons are learnt from each contact and these hold you in good stead for the long-term.

The expansive set pieces lend themselves to endless exploration and players must be prepared to invest significant time if they want to see the story progress.

But this adds to the charm and intrigue of a game that delivers a welcome break from the fast-paced nature of other releases.

While falling short in some areas, *Dark Souls II* certainly packs a punch and is definitely worth considering as a challenging alternative to the mainstream. ■

VERDICT: Slightly flawed but a fantasy adventure that hits the mark ★★★★★

METAL GEAR SOLID V: GROUND ZEROES

for Xbox/PS3 and 4

THIS offering is the prologue version to *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* – a short but very sweet taster of the real thing. Snake, who is played by **Kiefer Sutherland**, undertakes a series of missions set inside a Guantanamo Bay-style prison camp. Action-packed with unreal graphics, you rescue the good guys and assassinate the baddies. On the whole it is a fantastic introduction to the series but it is far too short. For that reason it loses a star – but at £29.99 you can't quibble.



Ashley Swarbrick, ex-RLC

VERDICT: A short prologue offering but very sweet ★★★★★

THIEF

for Xbox/PS3 and 4/PC

STEALTH, patience and an ability to lift anything that isn't nailed down are the keys to success in *Thief*. Taking place entirely at night in a shadowy Victorian-style city the game revolves around central characters Garrett and Erin. You can choose your route through the streets and rooftops, while the need to pick locks before being spotted adds to the tension and suspense. This is coupled with the ever-present friction between staying undetected and a desire to steal absolutely everything.



Cpl Gary Hart, 26 Engr Regt

VERDICT: The need to be stealthy makes this wicked fun ★★★★★

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

for Xbox/PS3/PC

THE latest instalment in the *Castlevania* series picks up where its predecessor left off. Only now the lead character has the familiar Dracula name. The game looks great, particularly when it returns to its Gothic roots, and the combat is good, although it ends up being a bit hack and slash. The disjointed backstory is interesting and it was fun trying to find the collectables but, in truth, this seems to have been cobbled together from a host of random ideas.



WO2 Graeme Russell, 39 Engr Regt

VERDICT: Lacks the clarity and focus of its predecessor ★★★★★

SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

for Xbox/PS3/PC

THE greatest thing about this title is that *South Park* creators **Trey Parker** and **Matt Stone** had full control over the voice acting and script, meaning the game is every bit as sarcastic and sickening as the TV show. Before you're free to explore you have to choose a combat class but instead of magic you have various farts to unleash on opponents and there are numerous cameos and references to the show. Add to this the ease of gameplay and you have an absolute winner.



Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

VERDICT: A diabolically good spin-off from the television show ★★★★★

PLANTS v ZOMBIES

for Xbox/PC

THE popular tower defence game has been converted into an enjoyable third-person shooter in *Plants vs Zombies: Garden Warfare*. The cartoon graphics and range of colourful characters (including a sharpshooting cactus) clearly set this up as a family-friendly offering, but the different weapons and abilities make it a nice alternative to the usual military and sci-fi titles. However, there is little variety in the modes making it a nice game but one lacking in substance.



Steve Smith, MoD Corsham

VERDICT: A fun online shooter suitable for all ages ★★★★★

PAC-MAN: GHOSTLY ADVENTURES

for Xbox/PS3/PC/Wii U

THE gaming world's first true superstar gets a 2014 reboot in this miserable platform release that only serves to damage the franchise's reputation. A lack of imagination is the title's biggest weakness and an array of annoying characters only adds to the despair. A little research revealed the game is a tie-in to a children's cartoon, so its intentions are fairly obvious. Youngsters may well enjoy this but those seeking a dose of 80s' nostalgia will be disappointed.



Richard Long, Soldier

VERDICT: A painful trip down memory lane for *Pac-Man* fans ★★★★★

MUSIC



PICK OF THE MONTH: A
PERFECT CONTRADICTION

LEAP OF FAITH

POP PRINCESS EMBRACES
COLLABORATORS'
CONTRIBUTION

Review: Richard Long

HAVING edged her way towards the top of pop's tree with a double platinum-selling second album Paloma Faith is hoping to go one step further as she returns to the musical spotlight.

Her growing reputation has attracted a fair share of admiring glances and when her next studio date loomed there was no shortage of would-be collaborators making an advance.

One of the first to surface was singer-songwriter and super producer Pharrell Williams, who sang one of her early songs – *New York* – to her at the Met Ball.

He then grabbed her phone, typed in his number and declared "I'm ready to work". The Grammy Award-winning Diane Warren made repeated calls and even played a song she'd written specifically for Faith down the phone on Boxing Day in an attempt to seal the deal.

Other stars to contribute to the new record – *A Perfect Contradiction* – include Plan B, John Legend and Raphael Saadiq.

But before this impressive roll-call was assembled the star decided to move to New York and live anonymously as an ordinary person, instead of a Brit-nominated pop star.

"When I first got there I felt like a huge outsider," she recalled. "I felt really insecure and wasn't in my comfort zone. But the busier I got, the better it was."

The songs soon followed and the music has a strong focus on everyday emotions, feelings and experiences.

"If anyone says their record's not personal, they're lying," Faith said. "I kept relating to things that people I knew were going through and putting my own hand in the fire."

"The album title was obvious to me soon after. It's tone is the very opposite of what the last one was. There are a couple of melancholy moments, sure, but it's much more of a 'let's have a dance' kind of record.

"I'm not somebody who dwells on hardship. You can't have darkness without light; you can't have joy without pain."

"If I've just been dumped or lost my job I dress up and go out. I'll call my mates and say, right, get your glad-rags on girls."

The upbeat feel is evident from the outset on *Can't Rely On You*, the lead single that features all the hallmarks of Williams' unique style while showcasing Faith's strong vocals.

Mouth to Mouth boasts an 80s' Whitney Houston pop vibe before the album takes a soulful, almost gospel-like diversion on the Legend collaboration *Take Me*.

However, the emotion and serious approach comes to the fore on *Other Woman*, which is produced by Plan B and carries the distinctive sound of his smash hit offering *The Defamation of Strickland Banks*.

One of the most striking characteristics of *A Perfect Contradiction* is the sheer variety contained within its 11 tracks and on the whole that proves to be a good thing. This record will undoubtedly achieve mass success and the line of stars wanting to work with the headline act will only grow bigger. ■

VERDICT: Variety is the spice of life on Faith's impressive third album



Pup by Pup

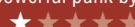
PUP have been described as a 21st century **Sex Pistols**. Unfortunately, they are not as good. This album is a mixed bag as the guitar



work is great but the drums sound off beat and the vocals are trashy. In fact, they are your stereotypical teenage band who play in their parents' garage. The odd tune is okay and the lyrics are catchy on certain songs but they have a long way to go and improvements are needed. If you listen to see if they are your taste one song will do it as they all sound the same.

Cpl Nick Reader, Rifles

VERDICT: An attempt at powerful punk by teenage amateurs



Hendra by Ben Watt

IT turns out that there was more to **Everything but the Girl** than **Tracey Thorn**. Her husband **Ben Watt** is also a solo artist and after first releasing his own work in 1983 he returns with an album far away from the pop associated with the band. After a dull start things swiftly pick up and the record sounds like a modern take on **Dire Straits** mixed with **Runrig**. This results in a unique offering which suggests deep talent and raises the hope he won't wait another 31 years before producing his next instalment.

Maj Euan Mathieson, Yorks

VERDICT: Electronic folk-rock that does not disappoint



Josh by Josh Taerk

WITH the floods receding and the weather heating up **Josh Taerk** has provided us with an upbeat offering that will put a smile on your face. There are no real weak links and tracks such as *Casie*, *Grace* and *Smell the Roses* stand out thanks to their optimistic outlook. The whole album mixes pop and soft rock straight out of the mid-90s conjuring memories of summer days spent eating ice creams in the park. This is one you can stick on in the car and have a great time tapping along to on the steering wheel.



LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

VERDICT: This is your typical feel good summer album



Happy Ending by Glenn Tillbrook

GLENN Tillbrook is back with his fifth non-**Squeeze** album *Happy Ending*. Inventive, witty and stuffed with a trove of brand new melodies, it proves the man's musicality and sense of craft are more energised than ever. This record is striking from the word go thanks to the acoustic vibe that flows throughout. Tillbrook has a good voice and this offering does it full justice. It is not something I'd have rushed out to buy, however, it's easy on the ear and, to be honest, is a breath of fresh air. Not bad at all.



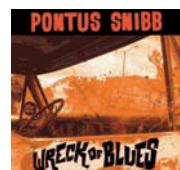
Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

VERDICT: Acoustic bliss that strikes the right chord



Wreck of Blues by Pontus Snibb

TAKE a Fender Stratocaster, add a crunchy overdriven tube amplifier and mix with a tight rhythm section. Blend together with some well-constructed compositions and season with smoky vocals and the result is *Wreck of Blues*, the new album from Swedish blues musician **Pontus Snibb**. The tracks range from the sadness of *Longing for You* to the playful *Lightin' Change* and, while all sit neatly within the genre, each was interesting enough in its own right and kept my foot a tappin' throughout.



Maj Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)

VERDICT: Sweden's Stevie Ray Vaughan; a must for blues fans



Girl by Pharrell Williams

COLLABORATIONS with **Daft Punk** and **Robin Thicke** saw **Pharrell Williams** ride high in 2013 and his winning run looks set to continue with the release of new album *Girl*. Toe-tapping hit-single *Happy* takes centre stage but there is plenty to enjoy within the other tracks as the star showcases his vast talent. Having helped out on numerous musical projects in recent times Pharrell has called in a few favours here and the likes of **Justin Timberlake** and **Miley Cyrus** lend a hand on what is a diverse and enjoyable offering.



Richard Long, Soldier

VERDICT: Pharrell shines brightly in the solo spotlight

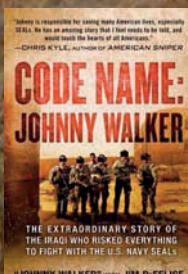


BOOKS

PICK OF THE MONTH:
CODE NAME: JOHNNY WALKER

AN INTERPRETER'S TALE

IRAQI'S ACCOUNT OF HUNTING
INSURGENTS ALONGSIDE
AMERICA'S ELITE TROOPS



Other side of the story:
The title offers a new
perspective on Iraq

Picture: US Army

Interview: Becky Clark

FIRST-HAND accounts from British and American troops fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq have painted a vivid picture of combat operations but only rarely do we hear the story told by ordinary citizens caught up in such conflicts.

Now, a new memoir by an ex-Iraqi interpreter who worked with US forces is lifting the lid on the other side of life in a war zone.

Writing under the pseudonym "Johnny Walker" – the code name given to him by the Americans – the author describes how he became the Navy SEALs' most trusted "terp", risking his life with them on hundreds of operations to apprehend insurgents.

Such was the respect he earned among the elite group that they later helped him flee Iraq with his wife and children.

Speaking to *Soldier* from his new home in the United States, Walker recalled: "At the beginning I thought I was going to die.

"But then going out on missions night after night, it became routine – just like people go to their office and head back home again.

"And for me, every time I looked at my family I knew I had to make extra sacrifices to get them out of the place they were in."

Walker worked with the Americans and, occasionally, the British from 2003 to 2009, when the worsening security situation in Iraq left him with no choice but to leave.

His family had faced death threats and his brother had been gunned down by insurgents.

But despite the personal cost and the controversy over the campaign to oust Saddam, the 50-year-old believes the war was worth it.

"For me it was one of the best things that happened when the British and Americans came to throw out the old regime," he commented.

"They gave us hope to live again in freedom and democracy.

"The soldiers I worked with didn't have personal or religious issues with anyone, they just wanted to do the right thing and get on with their jobs."

Reflecting on the ongoing hostilities in his former homeland, Walker is optimistic that one day Iraqis will have peace.

"Nothing is free in life," he remarked.

"If you want to change the whole future of a country, there will be struggle and blood and it will take time until the Iraqi people wake up and start their new life."

He also called for world leaders to do more for other former employees of Nato by removing red tape around the issue of immigration.

"Maybe my book will send the message to all those in politics that they have the opportunity to do the right thing – no more, no less," he said.

"I want people to ask, 'hey, these people have worked with us – are we leaving someone behind who deserves to be in our country?'"

When Walker finally touched down in the US he wandered into a department store with his son and marvelled at the array of goods on offer.

He said: "I bought an XXXL shirt – it's too big and I've never worn it but I just wanted to give myself the feeling I'm a regular human being and I have a new life."

Code Name: Johnny Walker by "Johnny Walker" and Jim DeFelice is available to buy now, priced £18.99. ■

Code Name: Johnny Walker by "Johnny Walker" and Jim DeFelice is available to buy now, priced £18.99. ■

Wives and Sweethearts

by Massie and Parton



FOLLOWING on from a National Army Museum exhibition, this book brings together a collection of letters, diary entries and postcards sent home from the First and Second World Wars. Background details on the campaigns and relationships between correspondents provide context and reveal the final outcome, be it death or long, happy lives. But this leads to a disappointingly formulaic approach for each chapter. It would have been better to focus in more depth on fewer individuals.

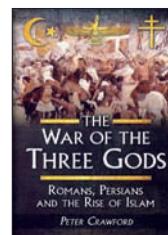
SSgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps

VERDICT: Format lets down an otherwise decent read



The War of the Three Gods

by Peter Crawford



THIS outstanding book looks at the impact of the lengthy conflict between the empires of Eastern Rome and the Persians. It reveals how the fighting weakened both sides to the point where the forces of Islam took advantage of the power vacuum and rose to dominance. Tracing the intricacies of warfare and politics from the sixth and seventh centuries, the author charts the decline of the traditional powers and rise of a religiously motivated successor.

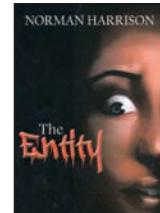
Maj Chris Buckingham, RCAF

VERDICT: An eminently readable and enjoyable book



The Entity

by Norman Harrison



EVER wondered what would happen if the internet became self-aware and began to wage war against any human who it felt was a threat? If not, don't waste your time with this book. Apart from the incredibly irritating Americanisms, this offering is beyond confusing, with a ridiculously complex plot and more characters per chapter than any title in the history of paper. Leaves you guessing, but only about what the author was thinking when he wrote this.

LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

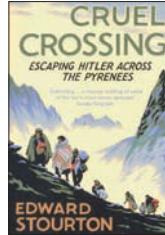
VERDICT: Boring, complicated and annoying – don't bother



Cruel Crossing

by Edward Stourton

THE author (of Radio Four fame) has put together a gripping insight into the escape routes used by hundreds to traverse the Pyrenees during the Second World War. The book uses the memoirs of the different groups including Allied troops, Jews, children and resistance fighters to describe the perils they encountered. It is illustrated with maps and photographs and includes Stourton's personal account of travelling the Chemin de la Liberte in 2011. An enthralling read.



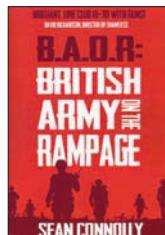
Maj Matt Sheldrick, Scots

VERDICT: Great insight into a little-known aspect of the war



BAOR

by Sean Connolly



OUT in paperback, *BAOR* or *British Army on the Rampage*, tells a host of comedy tales of soldierly carnage during the author's 1982 tour to Belize. Back then, the local overseas allowance was 37 pence but that didn't prevent the fun and frolics. From "AH" (accumulative hangovers) and the side effects of the local toxic spirit to run-ins with the military police and the demise of a pet chicken, this book delivers a funny tale for all.

Maj Jim Vincent, RLC

VERDICT: Draws amusing comparisons to Army life, then and now



The Cover up on Omaha Beach

by Gary Sterne



I HAVE been leading battlefield tours to Normandy for a great number of years so I was rather sceptical that any new information on the Ranger assault on Pointe du Hoc could be unearthed. But with extensive research, detailed maps and his in-depth knowledge of the ground, the author makes a compelling case. While on the face of it the subject matter appears contentious, having read the book I have changed my view on the events surrounding the Omaha landing.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC

VERDICT: An unexpectedly convincing and worthwhile read



FOUR-SEATER



PICK OF THE MONTH: RANGE ROVER SPORT

TASTE OF THE HIGH LIFE

CLEVER TECHNOLOGY MAKES THIS MODEL SPORTY, PRACTICAL, SAFE... AND EXPENSIVE

Review: Steven Muncey

ACTUALLY cursed on the day I had to hand the keys of my Range Rover Sport back to the manufacturer.

Living in a narrow, congested urban side street in south west London, this 4.9-metre long, 2.3-metre wide, two-tonne sports utility vehicle suited my needs to an absolute tee.

Forget the ubiquitous speed humps and high kerbs, what I loved about this thing was it felt virtually flood proof – something I was very grateful for during recent months living as close as I do to the River Thames.

You see, this car not only has high ground clearance and the all-terrain pedigree of Land Rover to reassure you in severe weather conditions, it also has something called "wade sensors" that alert you to the current depth of water you're driving through.

That feature alone could make the vehicle a major sales hit before next winter. But this was just one small note in a cacophony of cleverness that made it a real joy to use.

Other technical treats include active cruise control, a real boon for motorway driving as it maintains a constant distance from the vehicle in front regardless of how it changes speed.

I've never used this system before and it was a true revelation, one that makes high-speed driving more relaxing than I thought was possible.

I also found the parallel parking function and parking cameras amazingly effective, enabling the Sport to squeeze into some very tight spots.

Then there's the traffic sign recognition function which identifies and displays upcoming speed limit signs you may have missed plus another feature that works with a smartphone app to allow you to check your fuel levels remotely, find your vehicle in a busy car park and receive an SMS alert if you leave anything open.

My kids loved the rear seat entertainment with ten-inch colour screens set into the front passenger headrests.

If that wasn't enough, it looks pretty futuristic too and its design has a lot in common with the mega-selling Range Rover Evoque.

It has a steeper windscreen angle and a sleeker shape overall compared to its house brick of a predecessor.

An aluminium chassis means the new model is between 420 and 513 kilograms lighter than the old version – depending on the engine – increasing fuel economy by a significant margin.

Sophisticated air-sprung suspension means this Range Rover handles like a smaller car on the road. Off it, a torque-vectoring system adjusts the power going to each wheel to help you hold your line and a terrain response system adapts the traction control to suit ground conditions including ice and mud.

Three engines are available at the moment and the five-litre supercharged V8 producing around 510hp is a lovely, smooth unit with a fantastic exhaust note.

However, the Sport averages around 20 miles per gallon so my money would go into one of the diesels which provide a better mix of performance and economy.

Put one of those oil burners under the bonnet and you'll be driving one of the best all-round cars on the market today. ■

AT HOME IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

WE LIKED...

- Its fantastic look that mixes sportiness and traditional Range Rover ruggedness
- The throttle pedal which is well weighted so motorway driving is a pleasure and the dynamic cruise control is a very useful option
- Its firm but comfortable seats and superb driving position with a high, commanding outlook
- The technology that makes the Sport easy to live with, even in town



WE DIDN'T LIKE...

- The fact that it's not quite as sporty to drive as BMW's X5 despite its name
- Intrusion of tyre noise at speed, which could be down to the 22-inch rims
- How easy it is to kerb those big wheels – think about your options carefully
- The 784-litre boot, which while spacious (over 100 litres more than an X5) could have been bigger still because lots of useful space is swallowed up by the spare wheel carried in the under-floor compartment



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

The 5.0-litre V8 petrol
accelerates from 0-60mph in 5 seconds

- CO₂ g/km: 298
- Combined (mpg): 22.1
- Power: 510hp
- Torque: 461lbs/ft

The 4.4-litre SDV8 diesel
accelerates from 0-60mph in 6.5 seconds

- CO₂ g/km: 229
- Combined (mpg): 32.5
- Power: 339hp
- Torque: 516lbs/ft

The 3.0-litre LR-SDV6 diesel
accelerates from 0-60mph in 6.8 seconds

- CO₂ g/km: 199
- Combined (mpg): 37.7
- Power: 292hp
- Torque: 443lbs/ft

VERDICT: A spacious and practical four-wheel drive that can perform and handle like a sports car when commanded to do so – if only it was cheaper to buy ★★★★★

ONLINE DISCOUNT

THE on-the-road price for the Range Rover Sport starts from just under £60,000 and ranges up to £85,500. It's pricey but there are useful discounts for Service personnel.

- For more information go to www.landrovermilitarysales.co.uk

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SOLDIER SPORT

EDITED BY RICHARD LONG PICTURES BY GRAEME MAIN



American hustle: WO2 Tom Burrows (AAC) is one of a number of soldiers to have joined the ranks of Swindon Storm. Read more about the appeal of American football on page 93...



Picture: Shane Wilkinson

Running hot: Army skipper SSgt Krissy Wright (AGC [RMP]) bursts through the Royal Navy's defensive line during her side's 2-1 win in Aldershot

LATE SHOW TORPEDOES NAVY

Inter-Services Championship

Army 2 – Royal Navy 1

STRIKER Pte Rachel Rigby (RLC) headed a 90th minute winner as the Army women came from behind to snatch a dramatic victory in their **Inter-Services** opener.

The Royal Navy looked set to record a rare win over the defending champions as they led 1-0 with just minutes remaining but midfield general Cpl Tara Lofts (RE) bundled home a late equaliser before Rigby's strike ensured they left Aldershot empty handed.

A draw would have been a deserved reward for the visitors, who were more than a match for a Reds' side that failed to produce the fine form seen throughout the season.

The Senior Service made a bright start and AET Nards Nardiello forced a superb save from Pte Terri Brown (RAMC) with a well-struck drive at the far post.

LPT Nat Bavister squandered a gilt-edged opportunity moments later as she failed to fully connect with an inch-perfect pass from MA Sue Badger as the Army continued to struggle.

The soldiers had to wait until the 40th minute to register their first meaningful chance but Lofts saw her effort saved by the legs of keeper LH Louise Worsfold.

Lofts fired just over shortly after half-

time but clear-cut chances evaded the home side and it was the Navy who finally broke the deadlock.

Rigby fired straight at Worsfold from an Army corner and the play quickly shifted to the other end, where Badger was given an eternity to control the ball and bury her shot from six yards.

The setback sparked some much-needed urgency among the Reds and Cfn

Rachel Gwilliam (REME) came close to an equaliser when she met a flick-on from skipper SSgt Krissy Wright (AGC [RMP]).

Lofts was on hand to force the ball home from the resulting corner and with the clock ticking down the hosts chased a grandstand finish.

And their chance came on the stroke of full-time as LBdr Jade Clark (RA) pumped a free kick deep into the area and Rigby (pictured below) rose unchallenged to score. The final whistle immediately followed and the Army celebrated an unlikely win.

"We took a while to get going, especially in the first half," Wright told *SoldierSport* afterwards. "The Navy were aggressive in their approach and they were beating us to the ball."

"In the second period we started to play the football we are capable of. We have a lot of new girls in the team; it is a big occasion and it took them a while to get into it."

"A draw would have been a fair result but we kept going until the final whistle and we got the win."

The Army were in action against the RAF as this issue went to press.

Army: Brown, Taylor-Koff, Kidd, Trehearne, Clark, Gwilliam, Rigby, Lofts, Lee, Wright, Keane. **Subs:** Jaffe, Davies, Clift, Trowbridge, Jones, Burgess, Jennings. ■





LADIES' LILLESHELL LIFT

THE Army women warmed up for their Inter-Services campaign with a three-day training camp at the National Sports Centre in Lilleshall.

With heavy rain hitting this season's fixture list the Reds made the most of near perfect conditions to work on the patterns of play that would hopefully secure a fourth successive title.

"The facilities are superb," coach SSgt Mags McAteer (AAC) told *SoldierSport*. "The surfaces are a lot better than we are used to and everyone at Lilleshall has been really helpful and supportive."

"Coming here has allowed us to work on our formation, defensive shape and attacking in wide areas."

3

GOALS FROM SIG LUKE NOBLE IN THE 2014 U23 INTER-SERVICES



ARMY RUE ADMIN ERROR

AN admin error ended the Army's hopes of lifting the Inter-Services Under-23 crown after they mistakenly fielded ineligible players in their win against the Royal Air Force.

Having defeated the light blues 2-0 the soldiers saw the result reversed after the indiscretion came to light, meaning their title challenge was over before they even kicked a ball against the Royal Navy.

A brace from Sig Luke Noble (R Signals) gave them a deserved 2-1 lead before Mne Ryan McKechnie snatched a late equaliser.

"It feels like a defeat but I'm proud of the boys and their efforts," said coach SSgt Ian Saunders (RA).



Picture: Shane Wilkinson

AGAR SHINES ON RETURN

Inter-Services Championship

Army 3 – Royal Navy 3

An inspired performance from LCpl Sam Agar (R Signals) failed to fire the Army to victory in the opening match of their Inter-Services campaign.

The striker (pictured), who returned from Op Herrick to join the squad in the build-up to the tournament, created all three goals for the Reds in their clash with the Royal Navy but on each occasion they were pegged back to eventually draw 3-3.

Defending champions the Royal Air Force now lie in wait for the soldiers, who need to win away from home if they are to end their long trophy drought.

The Army made the perfect start against the Senior Service as the electrifying Agar outpaced the visitors' defence to create time and space for Cpl Jay Bates (R Signals) to lift the ball into the roof of the net.

LCpl Calum Wilkinson (RLC) then saw an effort saved by keeper LAET Roy Emmerson before Agar tested the stopper with a low free kick.

However, the Navy restored parity in the 23rd minute as AB Leon Cashman found Cpl Shea Saunders and he smashed the ball into the top corner.

The contest then descended into a stalemate before another spell of Agar magic saw the hosts surge ahead. The livewire sprung the offside trap to race clear on the right and his cross picked out Bates for a simple finish.

"WE ARE HAPPY WITH A POINT AND THE RESULT KEEPS US IN IT"

But the lead was short-lived as the challengers found an immediate equaliser. Army keeper Spr Luke Cairney (RE) spilled a stinging free kick from Saunders and Cpl Dan Boere nodded home after the soldiers failed to clear.

The opening exchanges of the second period lacked the same intensity and the first chance did not come until midway through the half, when Agar tested Emmerson with an effort from distance.

With the clock ticking down the Reds restored their advantage as Wilkinson converted a superb cross from Agar but they failed to hold on as substitute CPO Andy Todd ran clear and found the bottom corner with his first touch.

Hopes of a late winner failed to materialise meaning coach Capt Joe Collins (R Signals) was left to reflect on dropped points at home.

"It didn't really go to the game plan and we did not play as well as we have done this season," he told *SoldierSport*.

"However, we are happy with a point and the result keeps us in it."

"In this competition you want to win your home game to give yourselves an advantage. We were in front on three occasions but they pulled it back. I will pick the players up and we'll go again."

The Army were in action against the RAF as this issue went to press.

Army: Cairney, Evans, Broadbent, Paddock, Greenfield, Haley, Wilkinson, Rizza, Agar, Bates, Emmerson. Subs: Davidson, Williams, Cameron, Tidy, Poulter, Noble, Billingsley. ■



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SAINTS SECURE MOBBS GLORY

Mobbs Memorial Match

Northampton 47 – Army 27

THE Army's rugby union stars completed their on-field preparations for this season's Inter-Services campaign with a 47-27 defeat to Northampton Saints in the annual Mobbs Memorial Match.

A three-try burst inside the opening ten minutes laid the foundations for a comfortable win for the home side but the soldiers showed enough attacking threat to suggest further Twickenham glory is well within their grasp.

Big guns LCpl Samesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG), LBdr Sam Speight (RA), LCpl Ricky Reeves (RE) and LSgt Mattie Dwyer (WG) all missed the match but will return to the fold this month as the squad heads to Portugal for a pre-tournament training camp.

Their absence was strongly felt against a youthful Northampton outfit that was brimming with pace.

Scrum half Alex Day opened the scoring in the second minute when he collected the ball from a strong forward surge to dive to the line.

Harry Mallinder ghosted home moments later before Day added his second when he outsprinted the Reds' defence to pounce on a kick over the top.

But instead of being overrun the visitors came storming back. After winning a line-out deep in opposition territory the Army worked the ball inside to Cpl Peceli Nacamavuto (RE)

and the centre showed quick feet to jink clear and score.

Spr James Dixon (RE) converted the extras and then slotted a penalty from range before Cpl Gerhard Wessels (RE) added to the tally.

Pte Tams Tamatawale (RLC) broke through the Northampton rearguard to set an attacking platform and with support on hand the play switched infield for Wessels to touch down.

However, tries from Paul Diggins and Fa'atoina Autagavaia halted the resurgence as the Saints opened a 33-15 lead at the interval.

The second-half failed to follow the pattern of the first period and the scoreboard was not troubled again until the 69th minute, when Rory Hutchinson crossed for the hosts.

Autagavaia sprinted clear to add his second shortly afterwards before the Army bagged a late brace courtesy of Tamatawale and replacement Cpl Maku Koroiyadi (RE) to finish on a high.

"I think the score was a fair reflection of the game," head coach SSgt Axel Rees (REME) told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"We were shell-shocked by the

start they made and it was always going to be difficult to recover from that against a quality side.

"But I thought we looked dangerous and if we get quick ball we have the backs who can score.

"Our attention now turns to the Inter-Services and we will not be taking it lightly. Playing against the Royal Navy in front of 70,000 people will be tough but if we get our game right I am confident we can win."

The Army take on the Navy at Twickenham on Saturday May 3. To book your seat for the match visit www.arutickets.com





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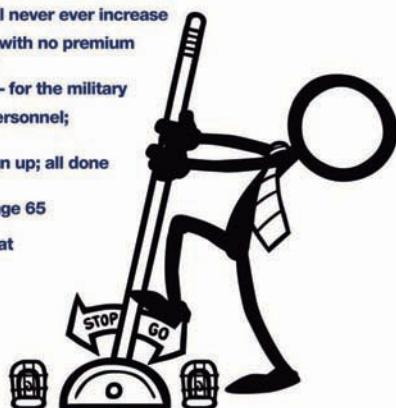
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GRIDIRON GANG

AMERICAN football side Swindon Storm are hoping the growing number of Forces players on their books will propel them to on-field success in 2014.

A number of soldiers joined the club following an open trial in February and with regular training sessions now taking place the newcomers are starting to find their feet.

Coach Cpl Steve Bennett, who serves in the Royal Air Force, has a wealth of gridiron experience having previously represented the Great Britain Lions and believes military personnel are ideally suited to events on the field.

"The club is really excited about introducing athletes from the Armed Forces into the world of American football," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Being the only team based in Wiltshire, over the next few years we are hoping to expand our recruitment drive as thousands more troops move to the county.

"The skills needed to serve marry well with our sport; young, energetic, fit, strong and fearless. American football is not for the faint-hearted, more of a collision sport than a

contact sport; it takes guts to come back for more after your first full-speed tackle in a training session."

Sgt MJ Brightley (RAPTC, pictured below right) was among those to star in the trials session and is looking forward to tasting competitive action once the full season gets under way.

"I watch American football on the television so I thought I'd come and give it a blast," the soldier explained.

"I went to the trials and won everything, I just need a game now. I play corps rugby but we only get six or seven matches a season so this gives me a chance to take part in another contact sport. I'm not here just to train; I want to play.

"The coaching is at a really good level and it is the right intensity.

"There is quite a lot to learn but I'm listening to what the coaches have to say and I'll do my best to make it out on the pitch."

Teammate WO2 Tom Burrows (AAC, pictured below left) joined the

Storm at the tail end of last season as he looked to extend his athletic career.

A serious knee injury ruled him out of contention in both football and rugby but the different demands of his new sport meant he could play on.

"I used to watch American football as a kid and always wanted to have a go," he explained.

"This allows me to get my team sports fix without covering six or seven miles in every game.

"I knew the basics but once you get into it there are a lot of rules, skills and intricacies to master.

"It is a great set-up. The trials were very professional and I'm now hoping to get into the team. The club finished with a three and seven record last year and we are hoping to improve.

"Considering we are a young and inexperienced squad compared to some, winning three games last season was a good showing."

Anyone interested in joining the team should email steve.bennett@swindonstorm.org.uk ■

"THERE IS QUITE A LOT TO LEARN BUT I'M LISTENING TO WHAT THE COACHES HAVE TO SAY"



REDS ROMP TO COURT WIN



Inter-Services Netball Championship

Army 25 – RAF 20 Army 42 – Royal Navy 19

A COMPREHENSIVE 42-19 win over the Royal Navy saw the Army secure another **Inter-Services Netball Championship** on the courts of Aldershot.

The Reds started their campaign with a hard-fought 25-20 victory against the Royal Air Force before they hit top gear in a surprisingly one-sided title-decider.

Player of the tournament Maj Laura White (REME) put the Senior Service to the sword with a ruthless performance in front of goal while the soldiers' rearguard – marshalled by Northern Ireland international Cpl Niodia Masters (AGC, pictured left) – blunted the opposition's attacking threat.

"We were expecting a really close match with the Navy but that was not the case," skipper White told *SoldierSport* after lifting the trophy.

However, it was the RAF who gave us a tough game. They took us by surprise but we stuck to our plan and got the win.

Considering we had six players who took part in last year's Inter-Services away on deployments, it is a great achievement.

Their absence allowed some new girls to join the squad and that will make future selections a tough job for the coaches."

Gnr Georgia Reade (RA), who is still in phase two training at Larkhill, was one of the newcomers to impress as she made an effortless transition to the Reds defensive line, where she starred alongside Masters and the outstanding Capt Steph Novak (AGC).

Another player to excel was Capt Nkoya Wright (AMS), who shone in her new position at centre.

The Reds achieved further success with their development team, who triumphed over the RAF and Navy to secure an Inter-Services double.

"The sport is looking really strong at the moment," White said. "At the last Inter-Corps tournament we had a record number of teams enter and new players are coming through from there."

"I think more people now realise we are out there. We have got the message out about Army netball and hopefully the growth will continue."

All nine players from the senior set-up have now been included in the Combined Services squad for their upcoming fixtures.

For more information about how to get involved in the sport contact Lt Col (Retd) Bill Herlihy on 01252 787076 or email wherlihy@ascb.uk.com

ARMY'S LEADING LIGHTS



1

Gnr Georgia Reade (RA) made her Army debut at the Inter-Services and earned high praise for her defensive performances



2

Capt Nkoya Wright (AMS) switched to centre midway through the season and has been a key link between defence and attack



3

Maj Laura White (REME) was named player of the tournament as her accuracy in front of goal helped the Reds to another title



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Doncaster dent cup challenge

Challenge Cup Third Round

Army 12 – Doncaster RLFC 62

CHAMPIONSHIP outfit Doncaster RLFC ended the Army's run in rugby league's **Tetley's Challenge Cup** with a 62-12 win in Aldershot.

The soldiers defeated Askam ARLFC and the British Police to reach the third round but the might of their professional opponents proved to be a step too far.

However, the Reds earned high praise for a strong showing on home turf that included tries for Spr Sonoma Veikune and Cpl Matty Curgenven (both RE).

LCpl Tony Lawless (RAMC) kicked two

conversions on his senior debut to add to the points tally, while CSgt Andre Zwijnen (Rifles) was named man of the match following an all-action display.

The cup run leaves the side well placed to defend their Inter-Services title later this year and secretary Maj Dave Groce (RLC) believes the players will benefit greatly from the experience.

"It was one of the best Army performances I have seen," he told *SoldierSport*. "Doncaster are third in the Championship with full professionals on their books.

"We may have lost by 50 points but they will do greater damage against other sides in their division this season.

"Man for man we were a match but Paul Cooke proved to be the difference. As an ex-Super League player he was able to pick the passes to exploit us out wide, but we held our own."

Groce also highlighted the improvement in performance against sides from the upper echelons.

He added: "On the last two occasions we reached the third round we lost 92-6 and 86-0 so we are definitely moving in the right direction.

"We scored two converted tries and we now have a good foundation to build on ahead of the Inter-Services.

"We have got a strong group and they are buying into the way we do things." ■

Luge leaders

THE Army luge team emerged victorious from the Inter-Services Winter Ice Sports Championships at the former Olympic park in Igls, Austria.

Cpl Danielle Scott (QARANC, pictured) was the fastest female on the track and is hoping her impressive form will translate to success at international level.

The 27-year-old is targeting a place at the 2018 Olympics having already been crowned Great Britain women's champion and reaching a ranking of 49th in the world.

"I've been doing luge for four years after I saw an advert in the gym," she said. "As soon as I tried it I fell in love with it."

"Every time you sit at the top of the track it is scary but you just have to slide and get the job done."

"You get in a different mindset, overcoming the fear – that's good training for anything you do in the military."

"The Army has never had an Olympic competitor in luge before – I hope to be the first."



The soldiers also took second place in the bobsleigh and skeleton, where Reservist LCpl Sarah Raby (R Signals) was given an opportunity to compete alongside her Regular counterparts at Inter-Services level.

"The team spirit is great," she explained. "Rank, age and class barriers all break down and it is first-name terms but people still guard their slide secrets – it's a competition at the end of the day."

"There aren't many girls in the team but I'd recommend it to anyone who likes speed and can be resilient."

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Pictures: Charles Jackman



Winning run: The Army men defeated the Royal Navy 4-3 in their final fixture, while the women downed both Forces rivals to reclaim their title

Soldiers toast Services double

Inter-Services Hockey

Men	Women
Army 2 - RAF 0	Army 10 - Navy 0
Army 4 - Navy 3	Army 4 - RAF 2

ABATTING 4-3 win over the Royal Navy secured a first **Inter-Services Hockey Championship** in five years for the Army men in Portsmouth.

Goals from Cfn Ian Harvey and LSgt John Partenheimer (both REME) saw the Reds down the Royal Air Force 2-0 in their opening match; meaning success against the defending champions would see them lift the trophy.

The clash proved to be an end-to-end affair but the Army sealed a famous win courtesy of a hat-trick from LCpl Shane Vincent (R Signals) and a strike from Maj Rosco Wendover (RE).

"We are really chuffed," skipper and goalkeeper Sgt Dan Cattermole (R Signals) told *SoldierSport*. "This is the first time we have won since 2009 and we've now done the double after securing the indoor title earlier in the season."

"We changed our preparation this year and decided to hold two week-long training camps. That allowed us to focus specifically on this tournament."

"We have had the same group of players for a few years now but we also had some younger guys coming in, three of whom made their debuts here, and that is great to see."

"We had the right players and the right preparation and we performed really well on the day."

The Army found themselves in a tight battle with the RAF but the match tipped in their favour when one of their

opponents was sent to the sin bin early in the second half.

"We scored from the resulting penalty corner then added another a couple of minutes later," Cattermole, who was named player of the tournament, said. "They missed a penalty stroke and we closed the game out."

"The RAF played some good stuff so we were really pleased. The first half against the Navy was a bit scrappy but in the second period we played the best 35 minutes of hockey the Army has seen for a number of years."

The women made a perfect start to their campaign as they thrashed the Navy 10-0, with Capt Cheryl Valentine (RAMC) scoring a hat-trick.

The result was followed by a 4-2 win against the RAF as the Army completed a senior double. ■

BODYBUILDING

Taylor finds perfect form

FORMER soldier Jake Taylor is targeting the upper echelons of the bodybuilding world after leaving the Army to pursue a career in the sport.

The 26-year-old, who served with 35 Engineer Regiment, was named best newcomer at the Int NRW competition in Germany late last year and having just completed his Service commitments he is hoping for further success on the stage.

"To win that in my first event is just what I wanted," the ex-sapper told *SoldierSport*. "I was up against guys who have been competing for years so it was great experience for me."

"Bodybuilding is an absolute lifestyle; I don't know what I'd do without it. The Army gave me discipline and routine and that is the mindset I need."

Taylor first started flexing his muscles as he prepared to join the military and he quickly progressed.

"I began working out ahead of my basic training," he explained. "I then started powerlifting during phase two and it progressed from there."

"It was something I enjoyed but I wanted to push myself further and bodybuilding really appealed to me. I got posted to Germany and that's when it went up a notch."

And having sampled competitive action Taylor decided to leave the Army after four-and-a-half years in uniform.

He added: "I wanted to focus on bodybuilding. In the military you don't know what's round the corner in terms of where we will be going next and I was determined to give everything to this."



Boxers get ready to rumble

ARMY fighters return to the ring this month on a mission to extend their winning run in the Combined Services Boxing Championships.

Last season the Reds lifted the trophy for a 30th consecutive year but with a change in rules and a resurgent Royal Navy team now coming to the fore they face a stern test of their credentials.

The squad slipped to a 5-2 defeat against Scotland at ATR Winchester in the build-up to the tournament, with LCpl Chris Nealon (3 Rifles) – in his first bout for four years – and Spr Niall Steadman (RE) picking up victories for the Servicemen.

Coach SSgt Jason Browning (RAPTC) said inconsistencies in the judging added to the Army's downfall but he was pleased with the way his fighters went about their task.

"I actually thought we won 4-3," he told *SoldierSport*. "The judging is flawed at the moment due to the various rule changes that have come in and nobody really knows what they are looking for."

"In terms of performance we are boxing really well; we are just not getting the results."

"That can have an impact on morale but it is down to me to pick the guys up."

This year's Combined Services have been reduced from 13 weight categories to ten and the Navy have already submitted a squad of eight boxers, with the Royal Air Force offering a further three.

"It is going to be competitive and this is the first year we could genuinely lose," Browning added.

"But I don't see that as added pressure, it is what we have wanted all along. We don't want it to be won on walkovers; it would be great if things went down to the last bout of the night – that is what makes it entertaining."

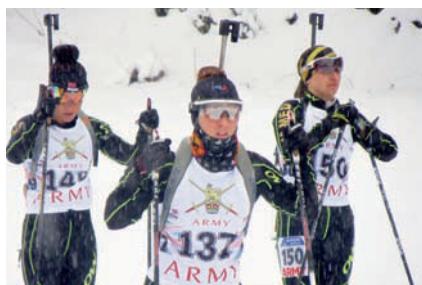
"I am glad the Navy have a decent team out and they will expect to win the trophy. It is our job to make sure that doesn't happen."

The Combined Services will be held at the Combat Sports Centre in Aldershot on Thursday, April 10. ■



Picture: Penguin Events

SPORT SHORTS



■ SKIERS from the Army Medical Services have celebrated a successful campaign on the piste that included their first silverware at the Nordic and Biathlon Championships – Ex Rucksack.

The squad won gold in the military patrol race and ladies ten-kilometre team competition, with novice Pte Charly Acaster (2 Med Regt) describing the success as the highlight of her year.

"I have gained mental strength from competing and I now know I can push myself harder than I realised," she said.



■ PARALYMPIAN Capt Nick Beighton (RE) will form part of a four-man team that will attempt to travel from Land's End to John O'Groats in a straight line.

The route is 603 miles long and will take around 16 days to complete via kayak, cycle and some hiking across the Cairngorms in Scotland.

The challenge gets underway next month and is raising money for Service charity BLESMA.

To donate money to the cause visit www.justgiving.com/BeelineBritain



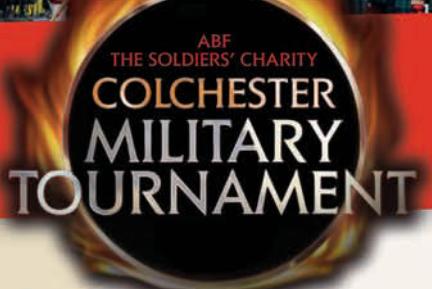
■ SERVICE motorcyclists are being urged to book their place at the 2014 British Army track day.

The event is open to Regular, Reserve and ex-soldiers and will be held at Snetterton race circuit on August 23.

A discounted price of £109 is being offered to personnel who book before May 1 via No Limit Track Days on 01727 827794. For more information contact WO2 Glyn Hannah on military 94659 5534 or search for British Army Track Day 2014 on Facebook.



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SPORT SHORTS



■ PRINCE Harry has launched a new international sporting event for wounded, injured and sick military personnel – the Invictus Games.

The action will see more than 300 competitors from 13 different nations taking part in eight adaptive disciplines ranging from athletics and wheelchair basketball to road cycling.

Iconic venues such as the Olympic Park and Lee Valley Athletics Centre will be utilised during the showpiece, which gets under way on Wednesday, September 10.

"I have witnessed first-hand how the power of sport can positively impact the lives of injured Servicemen and women in their journey of recovery," the Army captain said.

"The Games will focus on what they can achieve post-injury and celebrate their fighting spirit through an inclusive competition that recognises the sacrifices they have made."



■ SERVICE jockeys returned to the saddle last month for the annual Grand Military Gold Cup meeting at Sandown Park.

LBdr Jody Sole (RA) was successful in the first event of the day as he triumphed in the Annington Amateur Riders' Handicap Hurdle to add to his two victories from last year.

LBdr Sally Randell (RA) took top honours in the Gold Cup race before Capt Harry Wallace (29 Cdo Regt RA) won The Queen Mother Memorial Amateur Riders' Handicap Chase.

"I didn't ride last year as I had spent months on various exercises abroad," he said. "I've been working full-time for trainer EJ O'Grady in Tipperary in the build-up to this, riding six days a week.

"I'm not sure if that's made me any better but I certainly feel fitter."

Pte Lucy Gardner (RAMC) finished third in the race – just days after riding a double at Exeter.



Leading lights: The Army hope to build on a strong showing in 2013 with further success this year

Back in the saddle

THE Army Triathlon Association is hoping to build on its success from last year as it prepares for another busy season in 2014.

A novice training camp will be held at ATC Pirbright from April 14 to 16 for newcomers to the energy-sapping sport and a packed fixture list is in the pipeline for the coming months.

The first Army race is the sprint distance championships at South Cerney on May 28 and a number of competitions follow from there.

"We want to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the sport and join the association," said secretary Capt James Beechey (RA).

"As well as the obvious fitness benefits members receive a number of discounts from triathlon and leisure retailers."

The 2013 campaign proved to be



particularly fruitful as the soldiers completed a clean sweep at Inter-Services level, where they won the duathlon, standard-distance triathlon and middle-distance triathlon championships.

The men's team and men's veterans' team took top spot at the national relays, with the women finishing third.

On an individual basis, Lt Col Chris Stuart (RLC) and SSgt Neil Ferguson (RAPTC) were second and sixth respectively in their age groups at the World Short Course Championships, while Cpl Becky Hoare (REME, pictured) set a new British under-25 record at the World Ironman Championships in Hawaii.

For more information on the novice camp contact WO2 Butler on military 94211 8933. Details of all 2014 events can be found on the Army Triathlon Association Facebook page. ■

2014 KEY FIXTURES

- **May 14** – Army super sprint and novice championships (RMAS)
- **May 28** – Army sprint triathlon championships (South Cerney)
- **July 2** – Inter-Services standard triathlon (South Cerney)
- **July 23** – Army standard championships (TBC)
- **August 23-24** – National club relay championships (Nottingham)
- **September 14** – Army long-distance championships (Ironman Wales)

Final word

With holidays on the *Soldier* team's minds this month (pages 45-57), we asked troops what their ultimate break would involve if time and money were no object.



Gnr David Owen, RA

I'd like to go the Far East and see places like Vietnam and Thailand. It's getting to the point now where everything's commercialised so I'd like to go off the beaten track a bit. There's lots of cultural stuff to see and do and different food to try. I don't really like sitting around – I prefer to get out and about and do as much as I can.

Capt Adam Birtwistle, RA

Our regiment is good at making sure the guys get their leave in when they can. We've got three weeks off over Easter and if I had my pick of where to go I'd ski somewhere like Alaska, even though I've just been on a winter exercise. Downhill is something I've always been into.



Gnr Jason Argent, RA

I'm all about drinking on the beach and chilling out with a nice cold beer. If I had the choice I'd like to do Ibiza – I've never been before. I'm hoping to see Spain during my leave. Thailand's another place that would be good to visit.



Sgt Becky Davies, AGC (SPS)

I would choose the Maldives because it's always hot there and almost like a fantasy island. It is a place that is totally out of the ordinary and would be a chance to get away from the normal European holidays.



Maj Toby Christie, Scots

I would go to New Zealand next time the rugby world cup was there and follow the entire thing. I've never visited that part of the world before and would really love to see a competition all the way through.



Gnr Lewis Harvey, RA

If I could I'd travel to Whistler in Canada to go snowboarding again – I've been before but I want to go back. I also did two seasons in the French Alps. I'd rather be doing something active but my other half prefers the beach. We've already booked a holiday in Lanzarote for when we get some leave at Easter. After an exercise in Norway I'll appreciate a bit of sun.



Capt Luke Beetlestone, Mercian

Visiting the States would be high on my list – I heard you get good military discounts over there. I'd like to do Route 66 and I'm taking my motorbike test soon. The idea of getting on an old chopper and going across America, seeing what I can, really appeals. I would have to finish up in Las Vegas, obviously.



Cfn Rachel Gwilliam, REME

I think my dream holiday would be to Cuba. It's really laid back there and such a nice environment to experience. I love the heat and the beaches in that part of the world are amazing. I went there when I was ten years old and it was probably the best holiday that I've ever had so I'd really love to go back one day.



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