

SOLDIER



MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



JANUARY 2013 £3.50

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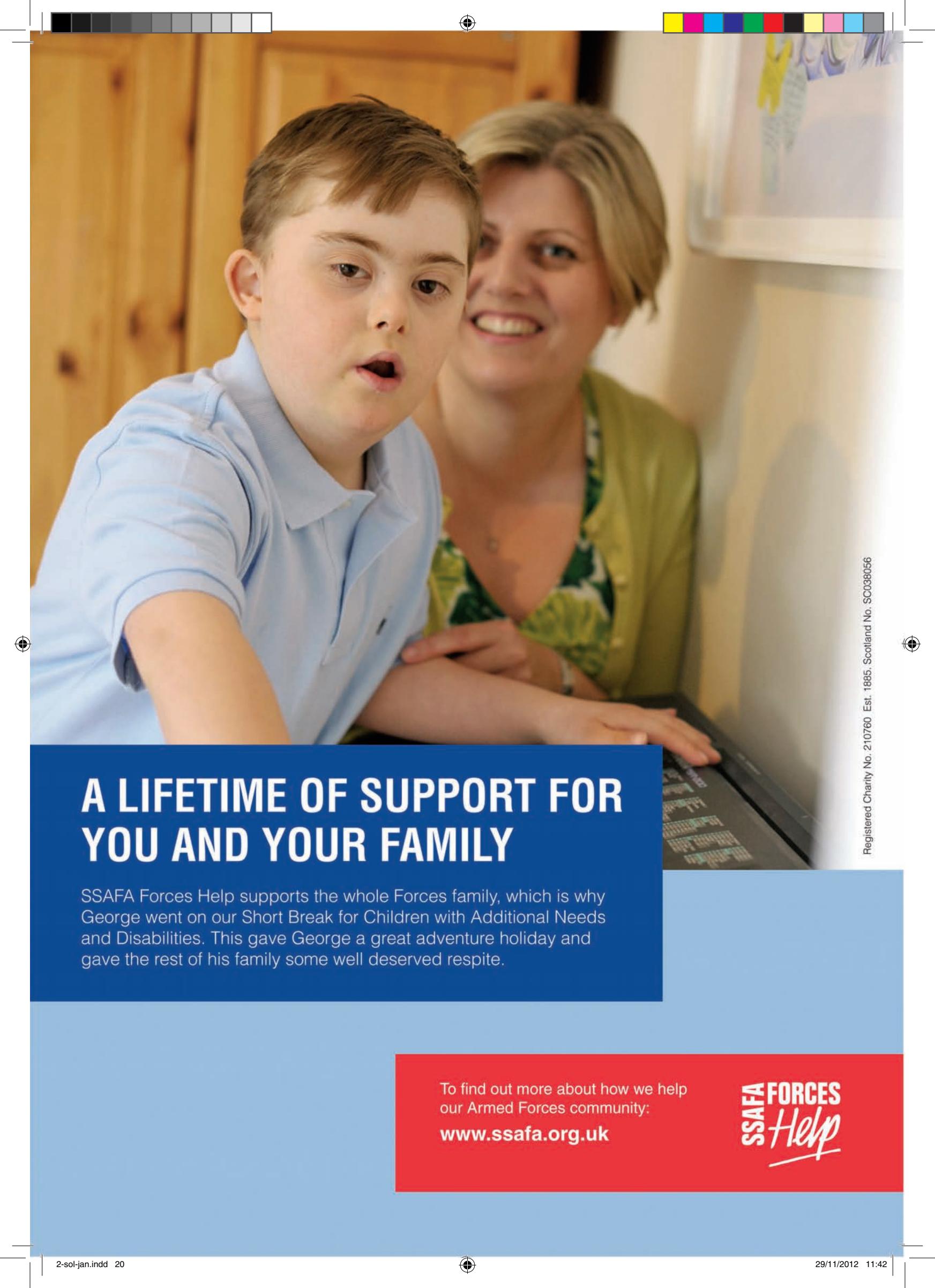
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Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

All enquiries: Tel 01252 787107 / 94222 7107
Fax: 01252 787110 / 94222 7110
Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Editor:

Sarah Goldthorpe 01252 787096 (7096)
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Joe Clapson 01252 787097 (7097)
jclapson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Becky Clark 01252 787099 (7099)
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Sports Editor:

Richard Long 01252 787098 (7098)
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Art Editor:

Tudor Morgan 01252 787100 (7100)
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Graphic Designer:

Chris Sell 01252 787101 (7101)
csell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographer:

Graeme Main 01252 787103 (7103)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographer:

Steve Dock 01252 787103 (7103)
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MARKETING and ADVERTISING

Business Manager:

Andy Clarkson 01252 787105 (7105)
aclarkson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising:

Heather Shekyls 01252 787106 (7106)
advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions:

Stephen King 01252 787107 (7107)
sking@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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ARMY

New year, new challenges

LOOKING ahead to what will undoubtedly be another busy 12 months for the British Army, I decided to dig out the first ever editorial I wrote for this magazine back in the spring of 2011.

Apart from bringing home what startling changes the Service has gone through in such a short space of time, the words I wrote at the beginning of Op Herrick 14 revealed how much the general outlook of our readers seems to have altered.

Although redundancy and contingency operations were firmly on the radar when I joined the publication, one particular statement made me realise how quickly the impact of ongoing restructuring has filtered through to the morale of individuals – not just those directly involved – now that the wheels of change are in motion.

"This organisation has a distinct optimism at its core – something sadly lacking in civilian life," I noted back then. Would I say the same thing now, 18 months later?

From your comments in some of the letters we have been receiving of late, perhaps not. And understandably so. It is difficult to carry out one's day-to-day duties with endless optimism while wondering if your own role will be highlighted in the next round of reductions.

What has become clear with recent correspondence is how important the "smaller" details can be for soldiers at a time when none of us have much control over the larger forces at work.

To that end, I hope our interview with the head of the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency is of interest this month (page 36), in addition to other various action-packed features which look at everything from the soldiering skills of tomorrow (pages 22-24) to the world of adventurous training on the slopes (pages 32-34).

This year is unlikely to be easy and that "distinct optimism" I once wrote about may be temporarily floundering but from the look of this issue, a job with the British Army is still one of the best going by far.

Happy New Year to all our readers. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor



"Disjointed, dull and disappointing"

– Female artists fail to impress *Soldier's* fearless review team (pages 70-71)

S. Goldthorpe.



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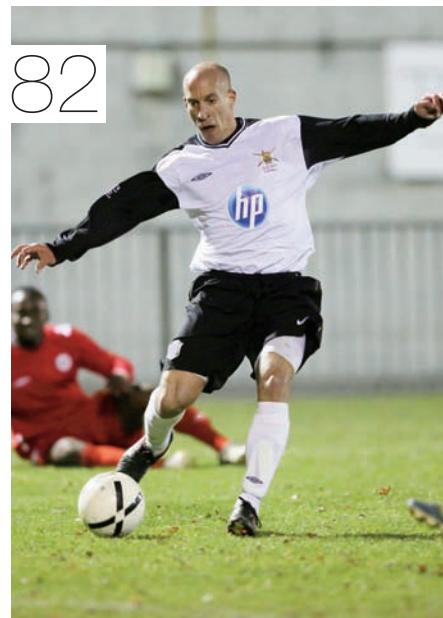
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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



New lease of life: Military personnel will put the Puma 2 helicopter through its paces during a six-month period at Boscombe Down

Trials commence on new-look Puma

A MAJOR upgrade to the Puma helicopter fleet is taking shape as trials on the improved airframes get under way.

A series of enhancements are being made to the platform in a bid to boost its performance levels, mission capability and safety – particularly in hot and high overseas environments.

The scheme is aimed at extending the life of the Puma to ensure it remains in service until 2025.

Unsustainable equipment will be replaced and the helicopter's low rotor downwash and twin cargo doors will make it ideal for insertion and extraction of personnel in urban operations.

New Makila 1A1 turboshaft engines are due to be fitted while a full glass cockpit is also being added.

This will incorporate modern avionics and a flight management system, a secure communications suite, new defensive aids and ballistic protection for

crew and passengers.

The Puma's greater on-board fuel capacity and lower consumption will increase operating capability and it will be able to carry twice the payload over three times the range of its predecessor.

Work is being carried out at Eurocopter facilities in France and Romania and the military's combined test team have already completed more than 150 hours of flying.

The first modified aircraft was recently delivered to QinetiQ's Boscombe Down site, where it will support ongoing trials, and it is hoped field training will start in mid-2013.

Brig James Illingworth, deputy commander of Joint Helicopter Command, said: "Puma 2 will provide a significant enhancement to the defence battlefield helicopter fleet."

"We greatly look forward to fielding this new platform with its vastly improved modifications and lift capability, as well as deploying it in support of UK ground forces much as its predecessor has been utilised."

The airframe was first purchased by the MoD in 1971 and has seen service in Northern Ireland, Belize, Mozambique, Bosnia, Zaire, Kosovo and Iraq.

Sqn Ldr Liam Taylor, officer commanding the Puma 2 field training team, said Servicemen and women could feel reassured by the recent life-extension programme.

"These changes take this asset from being a 40-year-old workhorse to a modern battlefield machine with significant improvements in capability.

"The most notable changes are two new engines which produce 70 per cent more power.

"The aircraft also has the ability to operate in more complex terrain and will be rapidly deployable.

"You can put two of them in the back of a C-17 with only four hours' preparation and in terms of rebuilding for contingency that's a big part."

"It has a bulletproof shell for the cockpit and more comms equipment on-board, including Bowman for the first time and also Talon."

"We greatly look forward to fielding this new platform with its vastly improved modifications and lift capability, as well as deploying it in support of UK ground forces" – Brig James Illingworth, JHC





WE ALL HELP EACH OTHER OUT AND AT TIMES THE JUNIOR SOLDIERS ARE MUCH BETTER THAN THE SENIOR PERSONNEL, WHICH IS A BIT OF A LEVELLER

- POTENTIAL INSTRUCTORS FACE UPS AND DOWNS OF AUSTRIAN SLOPES, PAGES 32-34



Picture: Sgt Adrian Hallen, RLC

Changing of the guard

A SIKH soldier has made history by becoming the first guardsman in 180 years to perform ceremonial duties with a turban instead of the traditional bearskin. Gdsm Jatinderpal Singh Bhullar (SG, pictured), who joined his unit last year, said it had been a "great honour" to stand guard outside Buckingham Palace. The Serviceman's appearance without the standard headwear was met with disapproval in some quarters. However, hundreds of messages of support and praise for the 25-year-old were later posted to social networking site Facebook.

Further to go on covenant

THE first annual survey on the Armed Forces Covenant has reported healthy progress on improving the relationship between the nation, the state and the military.

The document highlights that since the agreement was published in 2011, the government has launched a community covenant scheme, doubled the families welfare grant and raised council tax relief to nearly £600 per soldier for a six-month deployment.

Defence Minister Philip Hammond called the findings "an important step" in the process of repairing and strengthening relations.

"This is a commitment which we intend will endure," he said.

The Royal British Legion welcomed news of progress, but said it believed more should be done to improve housing for military personnel.

The charity says the recent

announcement of an additional £100 million for Service accommodation is not enough to offset a three-year halt in improvements for troops.

"We are concerned that the government is not going far enough in guaranteeing a decent home in return for service and sacrifice," said the organisation's director general, Chris Simpkins. "For many Forces families, 'homes fit for heroes' represents the physical embodiment of the covenant."

Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Mark Francois (pictured), added that the relationship between the military and public was improving but admitted it could go further still.

"I'm proud of the progress we've already made but I think in partnership we can do better," the politician said.

"All of us owe these people a debt."



TAX RELIEF REJIGGED

THE government has announced cuts to two areas of pension tax relief.

Changes outlined in the chancellor's autumn statement will see the lifetime allowance fall from £1.5 million to £1.25 million and the annual allowance shrink from £50,000 to £40,000 from the tax year 2014/15.

The latter amendment could affect officers at colonel and above, or majors and above where promotion has led to a substantial increase in pay.

Other ranks are expected to be largely unaffected. For full details on the changes read ABN 114/12 and 2012DIN01-253.

EDUCATION AMEND

CHANGES to the policy on the continuity of education allowance have been introduced to enable parents to withdraw from the scheme at any time without financial penalty.

In the past, families no longer wishing to claim faced action to recover their previous payments.

For those who want to move their child to another school but retain the allowance the process remains the same.

Parents opting to leave the scheme completely will only be able to get the decision reversed in rare circumstances.

TOURNAMENT TRIUMPH

THE skills of the UK's Armed Forces have been showcased at the annual British Military Tournament, which celebrated the life and times of the Queen.

Members of the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force contributed to the dynamic show which charted the monarch's work alongside the Services.

More than 600 participants, including combat troops, military musicians, horses and a massed bagpipe band, took part in the extravaganza at Earls Court in London.

The event, which raises funds for The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, ABF The Soldiers' Charity and The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, featured a bomb disposal re-enactment. Steeds of the Household Cavalry also competed with the motorcycles of the Royal Signals' White Helmets for the first time since Her Majesty's birth.

SUGGESTIONS SOUGHT

BRIGHT sparks from across the military world are being invited to submit their money-saving suggestions to new a online portal.

Known as GEMS, the defence ideas scheme encourages all soldiers, civilian staff, veterans and former employees to identify areas where the department can improve efficiency.

Around 40 per cent of the submissions received are implemented and the initiative is thought to bring the Ministry of Defence around £12 million in annual savings. Successful suggestions could also earn contributors a financial reward.

WO2 Chris Leare (RAPTC) was shortlisted for an award in the "idea of the year" category in 2012 after developing a FOB fitness guide (pages 40-41). It was the first time a member of his unit had been nominated.



“AS IF JANUARY WASN’T GLOOMY ENOUGH, MANY PERSONNEL WILL HAVE WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES HANGING OVER THEM”

— REDUNDANCY REALITY BITES FOR BRITISH ARMY FAMILIES, PAGE 57



Picture: Steve Dack

Happy shoppers: A new privilege card is helping personnel save money on the high street

PRIVILEGE CARD IN NUMBERS

20%

MONEY OFF VUE CINEMA TICKETS, MEALS AT FRANKIE AND BENNY'S AND MANY VODAFONE CONTRACTS

10%

SAVINGS TO BE MADE ON FAST FOOD AT KFC, GROCERIES AT ICELAND AND CLOTHES AT BURTON

4%

PRICE REDUCTION ON GIFT CARDS FOR SAINSBURY'S WHEN ORDERED THROUGH THE DEFENCE DISCOUNT SERVICE WEBSITE

Troops get go-ahead on discounts

A NEW privilege card for members of the Armed Forces, their families and veterans has been launched by the Ministry of Defence.

The money-saving plastic offers discounts at several high street businesses including Vodafone, Vue Cinemas and Burton and has already proved a hit among troops.

More than 24,000 members of the military community joined the scheme ahead of Christmas to take advantage of reduced prices on items including children's toys, mobile phones and supermarket groceries.

The card, which costs £4.99, can be ordered online and has received the backing of many firms in recognition of the work that soldiers do.

Issuing the first one at Downing

Street, Prime Minister David Cameron said: “I am delighted that we have managed to get so many companies to sign up to this.

“As well as allowing people to save money, these discounts are a token of the immense appreciation that we all have for our military.”

The roll-out of the scheme coincided with the publication of the first annual report on the Armed Forces Covenant (see opposite).

Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Mark Francois, said: “The men and women of our Services, their families and our veterans reflect what is best in society so it's great that some 230 local authorities have got behind this important work and signed community covenants around

the country.

“Businesses are now following suit and committing money off little luxuries and everyday items.”

Tom Dalby, director of the Defence Discount Service which is overseeing the initiative, said: “In the US the provision of reductions for the Armed Forces is more widespread and part of the recognition of its special role in the community.

“We want to develop a similar system here. It is a great chance for people to embrace the military.”

Christian Cull, director of corporate communications for Vodafone UK, added: “We are proud to support Service personnel and want to help them keep in touch with loved ones.”

For more details on the scheme visit www.defencediscountservicewebsite.co.uk



Picture: Jon Lewis/Oxford Mail

AN ENTIRE town centre redevelopment is to be named after a soon-to-be-disbanded Army unit.

The complex in Bicester will include a supermarket, cinema and six retail spaces and will be called The Pioneer Centre in honour of 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (pictured left).

Lt Col David Clouston, commanding officer of the formation, said: “The regiment feels both humbled and proud. We feel at home in Bicester and are extremely grateful to everyone for making us so welcome and part of this thriving community.”

The unit will be removed from the order of battle after October 2015 as part of Army 2020 changes.



New year, new start



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“I AM UP AGAINST A TOUGH OPPONENT AND IT WILL NOT BE AN EASY FIGHT BUT I AM CONFIDENT I CAN WIN”

- BOXERS PREPARE FOR FINAL SHOWDOWN, PAGE 83



Picture: Cpl Jamie Peters, RLC

Checking out: Troops from 1st Battalion, Scots Guards board their flight home after Afghan forces took control of security operations

Police progress sees troops fly home

THE first British troops of 4th Mechanized Brigade to leave Helmand province have returned home after their security roles were handed over to Afghan forces.

Personnel from Burma Company of 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment said goodbye to their outpost in the Lashkar Gah district before Christmas and are now safely back at their barracks in Catterick.

Prime Minister David Cameron had previously announced plans to withdraw 500 soldiers from theatre by the end of 2012 and the Servicemen were able to leave as the Afghan Uniformed Police took responsibility for the area.

The formation had been based at Patrol Base Nahidullah, where they were helping to advise, train and support

officers tasked with bringing security and stability to the region.

With the job complete the base was closed and Brig Bob Bruce, commander of 4 Mech Bde, reflected on the significance of the departure.

“In terms of the campaign this is the most obvious example of progress during our tour so far,” he said.

“The important thing has been enabling the Afghans to take a firm hand on the security situation, allowing us to close Nahidullah.”

Maj Ed Fraser, the officer commanding Burma Company, added: “This was a hard-fought area but a very active police force has come in over the last couple of years. There are more than 200 officers serving here and they have security locked down effectively.”

“They are running their own operations, they asked for some support but were working on their own from the beginning of October.”

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, Scots Guards also made an early return after their checkpoints were closed when the Afghan National Civil Order Police took control in the Upper Gereshk Valley.

More than 50 guardsmen flew home last month having spent their tour working alongside local forces to bring security and freedom of movement for traffic on Route 611, the main road between Sangin and Gereshk.

“The Afghan officers are brave people; I could fight alongside them anytime,” said Gdsm Alan Primrose.

“I can rely on them and they can rely on us.”

Future Force fit for action

THE chief of the general staff has told MPs that the new-look Force resulting from Army 2020 will be fit to meet the challenges of the future.

Appearing before the Commons defence select committee, Gen Sir

Peter Wall said that while changes would take time to implement, the restructured Service would be one that people would be “extremely proud of”. However, when pressed on whether the Army was verging on the

minimum troop levels below which it would not be able to fulfill the nation's security requirements, the senior officer admitted it was a possibility.

“We probably are approaching [the minimum level], but I think that we are above it now, subject to our ability to deliver by 2018 the integrated Reserve and Regular components into the Army 2020 Force design,” said Gen Wall.

When asked about the timetable for reducing numbers of full-time personnel to 82,000, he said the conditions of tranche three redundancies would be announced this month, with the fourth and final phase following in 2014.

Responding to a question by former officer Bob Stewart that 82,000 may not be the final figure, he declared: “I am absolutely sure that is not the case.”

MINISTRY ON THE MOVE

■ THE MoD website has moved to a new online destination.

All defence content and information can now be found within the “inside government” portal at www.gov.uk/mod.

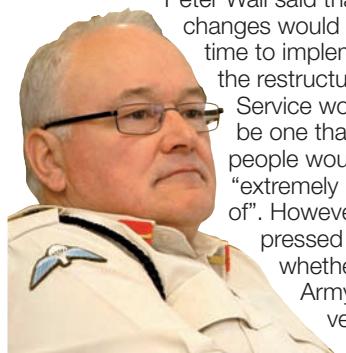
Anyone using the old address will be automatically redirected but users should update any bookmarks and shortcuts.

GUNNERS' NEW NAME

■ A ROYAL Artillery unit has undergone a historic name change to reflect plans set out in Army 2020.

As the only remaining Scottish artillery formation, 19th Regiment (The Highland Gunners) formally became The Scottish Gunners during a ceremony at Tidworth Garrison last month.

The renaming process followed the suspension of 40th Regiment (The Lowland Gunners) under Army restructuring proposals.



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“IT WAS AN OUTSTANDING SEASON AND IT IS A HUGE PRIVILEGE TO BE FORMALLY RECOGNISED AS THE NUMBER ONE ARMY TEAM”
- SEVENS SQUAD TRIUMPH AT SERVICE SPORTS AWARDS, PAGES 78-79



Airborne in Aragon: Members of B Company were dropped into the Zaragoza region before undertaking challenging clearance drills



Picture: Lcpl Obi Igbo, RLC

Paratroopers swoop in on Spaniards

BRITISH troops have been preparing for future conflict during a new training package in Spain.

Exercise Iberian Eagle saw members of B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment work alongside European counterparts in a bid to shift their focus away from Operation Herrick.

The unit has resumed a fresh role within the Army's Airborne Task Force, ending years of Afghan-specific drills for its personnel.

As part of that responsibility, the challenging serial helped prepare the soldiers for being the first feet on the ground in war zones of the future.

“I think of us as being like a fire brigade, where something kicks off and we go to sort it out before handing over to other units,” Sgt Gaz McMahon explained during the trip.

The Serviceman was caught in a large explosion in Helmand province in 2008 but managed to escape serious injury.

“I remember saying at the time that never again would I be that lucky but I hope I haven't used up all my luck – especially as the Airborne Task Force role is more difficult than previous ones,” he added.

“People have got used to all the infrastructure a long-term operation brings but that is not really what The Parachute Regiment is about.

“We are the first ones in and what this exercise does is to remind us of that.”

The package was supported by members of Spain's 1st Parachute Infantry Bandera “Roger De Flor”.

The troops were dropped into Zaragoza for five days, battling strong winds and sub-zero temperatures.

Carrying weights of around 60 kilos, the paratroopers patrolled up to 25 kilometres a day to complete a series of clearance and training drills.

The final stage of the trip saw the soldiers mount an attack on an enemy position with support from 465 members of the Spanish force before travelling to

Madrid for a joint parachute jump.

“Exercise Iberian Eagle has been a fantastic and rare opportunity for the formation to train overseas,” explained Maj Geoff Hargreaves, officer commanding B Company.

“The Spanish were excellent hosts with some first-class facilities but the highlight was the integrated descent and shared bond of the airborne brotherhood. The hardships and unique challenges of a paratrooper do not change, whatever your nationality.”

● **‘Drop The Parachute Regiment’**
– page 51



...a waterless wash kit

READERS lucky enough to have partied during last month's festivities may have known the answer to our spine lines competition. Inspired by our feature on military mixers, (Norman) Cook, (Myles aka Mylo) MacInnes, (Erick) Morillo and (David) Guetta are all world-famous DJs.

This month we are offering ten Pits and Bits waterless wash kits – available from various military suppliers. Each bag contains two toothbrushes, sanitiser, shampoo, body wash and wipes.

To win, tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers, plus postal address, to the usual place or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by January 31.





“I SENT A FEW CARTOONS OVER DURING THE GULF WAR AND THAT WAS IT”
– DICKIE CALLIES TIME ON SOLDIER SKETCHES, PAGES 38-39

Herrick heroes dominate Millies

HIGH praise has been heaped on members of the British Army at *The Sun* Military Awards 2012.

On what was billed as “a night of heroes”, personnel from across the Armed Forces were honoured for their relentless work and bravery at home and on Op Herrick.

Those who turned out to salute troops at London’s Imperial War Museum included the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, David Cameron and high profile celebrities such as *The Office* star Ricky Gervais, Olympic cyclist Victoria Pendleton (pictured below with Sgt Rick Clement), comedian Jimmy Carr, footballers Frank Lampard and David Beckham and actress Dame Helen Mirren.

Prizes were awarded by the VIP guests over nine categories,

The gong for most outstanding soldier went to LCpl Sean Jones (PWRR) who led a bayonet charge against the Taliban after his platoon was ambushed in Nahr-e Saraj.

The honour for best unit went to 3rd Battalion, The Rifles for their efforts with Afghan forces last summer and the true grit prize was handed to Cpl Oliver Kennedy (PWRR) who pulled his comrades to safety despite suffering serious neck wounds in a bomb blast.

Mirren saluted LCpl Hayley Ridgeway (RAMC) by presenting her with the lifesaver award.

The 24-year-old experienced agonising injuries in an explosion in

Helmand province but refused treatment for more than five



BRITISH soldiers have taken part in a large-scale mission to clear and secure an area of central Helmand.

Known as Op Tufaan, or Storm, the initiative was planned and led by members of the Afghan National Army’s 3/215 Brigade with support from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland in an advisory role.

The task ended with the death of six insurgents and the discovery of a significant stash of weapons. A member of the ANA also lost his life during the mission.

Speaking afterwards, LCpl Steven Guest said the UK’s counterparts had proved to be up to the challenge.

“A lot of the time they don’t really need us to do anything for them,” the junior NCO added.



Picture: *The Sun*

Star men: Gervais poses with award winner Cpl Oliver Kennedy (left) and Lt Rob Coates

hours while she tended to six others who had been hit.

Her colleague, Lt Daniel Clack, died in hospital as a result of the incident.

Giving the Servicewoman a hug, the screen star said: “You’re an honour to your country and your sex.”

Volunteer Pte Simon Sunderland (4 Yorks), who builds engines in his civilian job, picked up the best Reservist award for risking his life in Helmand when deployed with 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment (page 19).

And Capt Si Maxwell (RM) received a standing ovation after receiving the overcoming adversity award for completing a gruelling Iron Man race less than a year after losing a leg in a Taliban attack.

The prize for support to the Armed Forces went to mother-of-two Nikki Scott

who set up the Scotty’s Little Soldiers charity after her husband Cpl Lee Scott (RTR) was killed in Afghanistan.

The award for most outstanding sailor or marine went to Cpl Justin Morgan (RM) and most outstanding airman to Sgt Roy Geddes (RAF Regiment).

The judging panel added two extra categories to pay special recognition to the complex trauma team at Headley Court’s Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre and to the whole of the Armed Forces for its crucial role during the Olympic Games.

Speaking after the televised event, Gervais admitted he had been moved to tears by the stories revealed during the glitzy ceremony.

“I was crying after the first one,” he told *The Sun*. “I didn’t think I was going to sit at the table and blub, but it was so humbling for me.”



Picture: Cpl Jamie Peters, RIC



WHAT'S THE VALUE OF YOUR ARMED FORCES PENSION?



In these changing times, you need to know where you and your family stand and we're here to help protect your interests.



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The benefits of membership

Joining our fast-growing membership (now approaching 44,000) means you'll be supporting an organisation that campaigns **for** Armed Forces Pensions to be among the best in the public sector (we've been closely engaged in the AFPS 2015 process). We also campaign **against** unfairness in earlier schemes, notably widows' loss of pension on re-marriage.



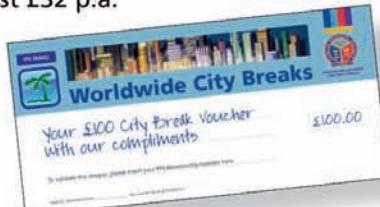
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“THIS IS NOT BUREAUCRACY, IT’S ABOUT LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE AND ONE OF MY PRIORITIES HAS BEEN TO PUT MYSELF IN THEIR SHOES”

— INSIDE THE SERVICE PERSONNEL AND VETERANS AGENCY, PAGE 36

GOOD DRILLS

FRIENDLY FOOTBALLERS

ARSENAL football club treated around 50 Service children to a VIP day at their north London ground. The visit was organised by My Daddy is a Soldier Adventures and included a training session and tour of the Emirates Stadium. Charity co-founder Louise Fetigan said: “They had a great day and by the end of it many were aspiring to be the next Theo Walcott.”



BOXER BRAVERY

FORMER Army boxing champion John Cokeley hit national headlines after fending off a 6ft 4ins attacker half his age. The incident in Devon left the 71-year-old needing hospital treatment but Exeter Crown Court recorder Brian Lett QC said the ex-soldier's professional training allowed him to fight back. The culprit was given a suspended prison sentence.

WANDERING HANDS

AN American soldier who was thrown out of a bar for slapping the buttocks of a waitress ended up being arrested by police, a US newspaper reported. The culprit was ejected from a Columbus nightclub following the incident and soon afterwards apprehended by officers for being drunk and disorderly, *The Ledger Enquirer* said.

KIT CRIMINALITY



THE theft of military equipment worth tens of thousands of pounds has been revealed in Parliament by defence minister Mark Francois. Among the items stolen in the six months leading up to September 2012 was an SA80 rifle, body armour, nearly £9,000 of Bowman radio kit and binoculars.

BAD DRILLS



Write way forward: Military partners launched the initiative at the Houses of Parliament

Back Army spouses, bosses urged

A CAMPAIGN to help the partners of military personnel find work has been launched at a House of Commons reception.

Armed Forces charity Heropreneurs and social enterprise Recruit for Spouses have joined forces to challenge assumptions about the impact of frequent moves and deployments on the employability of candidates.

As part of the scheme, the organisations have created a military partners business and employment charter to highlight the obstacles that other halves face when looking for a job.

The document states that firms should show both “flexibility” and “encouragement”.

Heledd Kendrick, founder of Recruit for Spouses, said that the year-long initiative would attempt to change the way bosses, job centres, and recruitment agencies view the loved ones of soldiers.

“This is about creating awareness of the lack of support, understanding and respect that so many individuals face when they are looking for work on a daily basis,” she explained.

“It is a huge problem that needs to be faced head-on.

“We are not saying that military partners should be advantaged in any way but they must receive equal treatment and be judged on their merits, qualifications and strengths.”

Richard Morris, chief executive officer of Heropreneurs, called for all captains of industry to back the drive.

“Unfortunately there is discrimination by some towards both sexes,” he said.

“The next 12 months will offer an exceptional series of opportunities for firms and organisations to start turning things around.”

For more information about the campaign and to read a copy of the charter visit www.heropreneurs.co.uk

Mother's cheeky money-spinner

A DARING mum has raised more than £1,200 for charity by offering members of the public the chance to choose a tattoo for her backside.

Jodi Field invited design submissions in exchange for a £5 donation to Help for Heroes.

But the 26-year-old Lincolnshire lass admitted she had been left very nervous about the image that would appear on her body as a result of the stunt.

“I pledged to the charity that I would get my bottom tattooed as a tribute to our awesome soldiers so that is exactly what I did,” she said.

“Obviously it was a bit risky because people could select anything and it would have been there forever but it was a good way



to draw attention to the cause and collect more money than the usual fund-raising events.”

The laboratory technician asked for a minimum donation of £5 on her website along with design ideas, which were printed out and put into a raffle pot.

Luckily for her, the winner was a member of her extended family who simply asked for the charity logo to be inked on her rear.

“I’m pleased with his choice,” she admitted.

“I have lots of relatives in the British Army so wanted to do something to say thank you.”

Anyone wishing to show their support for the fund-raising effort can still donate by logging on to www.bmycharity.com/JodiField





WE ARE GOING TO COVER 9,000 KILOMETRES AND THE WEAR AND TEAR ON THESE VEHICLES WILL BE PHENOMENAL
- RACE2RECOVERY EMBARK ON MOTORSPORT'S TOUGHEST TEST, PAGE 85



Lending a hand: 64 Works Group were rewarded for building a crucial bridge in Cumbria

Firmin honour for flood work

SOLDIERS who assisted residents of Workington during devastating floods have scooped the prestigious Firmin Sword of Peace.

The ceremonial honour is awarded annually to a unit or establishment from each of the Armed Forces plus one tri-Service formation.

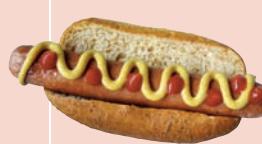
It goes to those judged to have made the most valuable contribution to humanitarian activities at home or overseas and was handed to members of 64 Works Group, Royal Engineers for their efforts back in 2009.

At the request of civilian authorities, the troops provided a temporary footbridge across the River Derwent in just under two weeks from the first Army expert arriving on site.

Named the Barker Crossing after PC Bill Barker who drowned during the natural disaster, the structure reconnected a divided community and enabled businesses and schools to begin operating again.

Members of 15 (UK) Psychological Operations Group received the same honour in recognition of their role in southern Afghanistan, where a small team has been continuously deployed for six years.

The group works predominantly to inform, reassure and educate the country's civilian population, running radio stations that employ community members as DJs and broadcast music, poetry, debate programmes and even a soap opera.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN		
SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
£500,000	RALLY RACKS UP FUNDS The Help for Heroes 4x4 European Rally has reached an impressive fund-raising milestone. It has become the largest independently organised event to support the charity and has received donations from various corporate partners. This year's leg will take place in June.	Help for Heroes 
£21,000	SCOUSE SUPPORT Shirts worn by Liverpool players during their Remembrance Sunday fixture against Chelsea have raised a record amount for The Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal. The clothing was auctioned off, with Steven Gerrard's number eight shirt raising £2,650 alone. "It was an honour to wear it," he said.	Poppy Appeal 
£3,244	HOT DOG DASH A team of 20 runners from 31 Squadron, 32 Engineer Regiment ran around the unit's parade square in Bergen-Hohne Garrison for 24 hours. The event, organised by SSgt Danny Hirst in memory of his friend, saw participants boost their energy levels with 400 hot dogs.	Combat Stress 

TECH TALENT TRAWL

A RECRUITMENT website aimed at retaining talent within the engineering and manufacturing sectors has proved a hit with Service leavers.

Around 2,000 people who left the MoD following redundancy have already signed up to Talent Retention Solution, which matches skilled individuals with employers.

Among the companies using the portal to fill vacancies are BAE Systems, Siemens, EDF Energy, Nissan, Airbus and Rolls-Royce, which has reported more than 60 successful hires as a result.

Job seekers can join the scheme for free at www.talentretention.biz

GOLDEN TICKETS

OLYMPIC golden girl Capt Heather Stanning (RA) has become a patron of the charity Tickets for Troops.

The organisation's director of operations, Ross Barden, described the announcement as an "honour".

Capt Stanning added: "I think this scheme is great and know many people who have benefited from it."

Olympic heroes hit awards trail
– pages 78-79

BIRTHDAY BOOST

TROOPS from 2nd Royal Tank Regiment have marked the unit's 95th birthday at a ceremony in Tidworth.

Some 200 Servicemen and women paid tribute to their formation, which pioneered the use of the tank, during a drumhead service before enjoying the final of the regiment's football tournament.

CIVILIAN SUPPORT

A MENTORING scheme to help wounded personnel make the transition into civilian life has been launched by SSAFA Forces Help.

The pilot project is being run in partnership with the Army recovery capability and is funded by The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, the Forces in Mind Trust, ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the Army Central Fund.

The trial will end in April this year and if successful could be rolled out across the Armed Forces.

ONLINE ART SHOW

THE UK's most important military masterpieces have been displayed online.

The National Army Museum's 643 oil paintings spanning 400 years are the latest contribution to a digital collaboration between the Public Catalogue Foundation and the BBC. For more information visit the project website www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings

FURNISHED BY FERGIE

MANCHESTER United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has presented members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh with their Op Herrick campaign medals at Chester Racecourse. The manager paid tribute to the troops in what was his first presentation of military honours.



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RESERVES ROUND-UP



On the right path: Service personnel test their military skills during the annual London District Operational Shooting Competition

Reserve troops make their mark

PERSONNEL from The Royal Yeomanry have been praised after hosting the London District Operational Shooting Competition – which saw Regular and Reserve soldiers competing side-by-side for the first time.

Responsibility for staging the event is usually handed to a full-time unit but with the Territorial Army playing an ever-increasing role in the military, the task was given to the formation so its troops could prove their organisational skills.

A total of 13 teams from across the capital competed in a range of disciplines, each of which was designed to test attributes such as fitness, speed and accuracy, which are vital in the field.

The march and shoot saw soldiers

tackle a 1.5-mile route on foot while carrying a weapon and 15lb Bergen before unloading a number of rounds.

The fire team snap challenged the reaction speed of troops as they negotiated obstacles and the electronic training range assessed their precision.

Maj Gen George Norton, general officer commanding London District, said: "I have been delighted if not surprised by how well the two Forces have worked together and how professionally personnel from The Royal Yeomanry have run this fully integrated shooting competition."

"It bodes well for a future in which the Regulars and Reserves will increasingly work alongside one another, as we are

already experiencing to such excellent effect with the London Regiment in Helmand province."

The overall victors were 106 (Y) Regiment, Royal Artillery.

"This is the culmination of a lot of hard work and training," said team leader SSgt Rob Hewitt.

"It has required dedication from all members, with a mix of old and new soldiers taking part and I'm thrilled to be returning home with the winners' trophy once again."

"We won the competition last year against TA colleagues but our victory is even sweeter this time having competed against our Regular counterparts."

"I am so proud."

● INTERIM changes have been made to the new selection process for Territorial Army soldiers.

The Service introduced a common standard for Regular and Reserve personnel in April last year.

However, the guidelines were criticised for placing too many hurdles in the way of potential TA soldiers by lengthening the recruiting system and making it more complex.

To help ease concerns the second and third stage interviews have been combined to reduce the number of journeys to TA centres and literacy and numeracy assessments can now be taken after selection.

A more efficient system will be introduced as part of the Recruiting Partnering Project in March.

High praise for courage under fire

THE bravery shown by Pte Simon Sunderland (4 Yorks) in Helmand province has been acknowledged at *The Sun* Military Awards.

When insurgents attacked the Reservist's patrol in Nahr-e Saraj district, the 40 year-old allowed his comrades to escape by firing back and exposing his position to the enemy.

Pte Sunderland, who builds diesel engines in his day job, was on a six-month tour of duty in southern Afghanistan with personnel from 1st

Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

He said: "We were out on patrol when a grenade went over our heads. Suddenly four or five gunmen emerged

and things went mad, with assault rifle bullets raining down on us."

His rapid response allowed his fellow soldiers to reach safety.

The father-of-four added: "I've been mortared, stoned and shot at but that was the closest I've come to being killed."



Picture: *The Sun*

● Herrick heroes dominate Millies – page 14



THE BIGGER PICTURE

SAPPERS from 21 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers work in the evening sunshine to strip one of the accommodation blocks at Patrol Base Nahidullah. The site is one of the first large British camps in Task Force Helmand to be closed as responsibility for security in the region is handed over to Afghan forces (page 11). Picture: Cpl Jamie Peters (RLC)







URBAN WARRIOR

SOLDIERS AND SCIENTISTS ON THE FRONT FOOT IN FRENCH FACILITY

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

AS the Army confronts redundancies, a new structure and the end of operations in southern Afghanistan, a series of groundbreaking experiments are determining how the new-look Force will meet the demands of an increasingly developed world.

The Urban Warrior programme uses real and virtual tests to assess how troops will conduct major combat operations in built-up areas of the future.

Held in the French Army's state-of-the-art Cenub training facility, the fifth serial in a two-year project staged a live experiment using some 540 British personnel and 35 armoured vehicles – the largest exercise of its kind to take place in more than a decade.

Like guinea pigs in a giant lab, soldiers from C Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh and supporting units carried out assaults on a mock town while their every move was monitored by a network of sensors and scrutinised by analysts at

mission control.

Chief of staff Lt Col Jonny Ormerod (QRH) explained how the programme represented a shift towards contingency planning.

"The main aim is to test Army 2020 structures, in particular an armoured infantry company group, so we can learn how best to optimise them in future," said the officer.

"We're looking at three main parameters; organisation, doctrine and equipment.

"Specifically for the live phase we are altering the infantry mass and surveillance assets. We are also looking at information systems and how we can improve the links between various elements of the combined arms force.

"We're using some of the technology we now have on operations to decide whether to keep those and other advancements that might be available in the future."

Based around Joffrecourt, the largest training complex in Cenub, the test put troops through three different scenarios.

The first centred on the historic town centre, the second in the industrial zone and the third in a high-rise residential block.

Each serial was repeated several times with different assets introduced on each run and personnel briefed to behave in the same way.

Among the soldiers taking part was Cpl Ross Jones (R Welsh), who explained the changing variables.

"We are doing integrated armour attacks on the village, with different capabilities or weapons systems from run to run," he said. "We can use tanks, different bits of radio equipment or have helicopters on standby."

"We definitely have better situational awareness with the air asset which gives us a bird's-eye view."

"The platoon commander is also trialling a tablet that can pinpoint our positions."

"It's a good experiment to take part in and see if different resources are needed for different types of missions. We're getting good training value out of it."

A complex grid of 1,000 sensors recording every building taken, every vehicle destroyed and every shot fired enhanced the realism.

"The tactical engagement simulation (TES) system is like a little game; you have to work hard to stay alive," the Serviceman added.



"You must make sure all the windows are closed and tuck yourself into the corner of a room, otherwise you will get killed by sniper fire from the opposite side of the street."

Despite the possibility of becoming "casualties", the soldiers themselves were not on trial but rather the theory and equipment.





Maj Mark Davis, commander of C Company, explained: "From my perspective this is less about decision-making and more about the capabilities we've got. There are lots of questions about what job the Army is going to do after Afghanistan and what it will look like.

"Exercises like this drive that and help us to

better understand what the future character of conflict actually means at section level.

"There are wider implications for the experiment but for us it is a really awesome opportunity to test personnel at every level: there's no place to hide and every single commander has to be on the ball." ■





DECODING THE DATA: THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SERIAL

MONITORING the action in mind-boggling detail during Urban Warrior 5 was a team of technicians from dstl, Niteworks, SAAB and QinetiQ.

While the soldiers moved through the town, analysts watched closely before evaluating what unfolded before them.

"Data collection is quite new in a way," explained John Owens, team leader for technical experimental design at Niteworks.

"One of the main aims of this trial is to understand how to do these experiments, to look at which methods are useful and where the Army should spend its money in the future in terms of testing.

"We're also trying to identify yardsticks to help with the planning process such as what type of building a company could manage and what kind of enemy they might be able to cope with before they need reinforcement."

Describing the scale of the undertaking, the former Royal Engineer said his team had a number of different mechanisms at their disposal, from the human to the artificial.

"We have observers on the ground who are experienced field training unit staff who do this kind of thing every day," he added.

"They answer a set of questions and we have questionnaires for the soldiers themselves. At the end of each run-through they get fully debriefed.

"SAAB have put 700 sensors out on the buildings alone, plus all those on the people.

"Their tactical engagement simulation kit gives us a lot of data about who shot who, which tank was destroyed by which weapon, where everyone is, which room they're in, their health status, whether they're standing or lying down, when they fire a weapon, when they hit something and it even records the radio traffic as well."

Appearing in front of analysts in the form of figures, statistics and screenshots, the data generated by the highly sophisticated sensors was fed back into the exercise to improve the soldiers' situational awareness.

"We have a synthetic wrap built by QinetiQ," Owens continued. "That takes the data from the TES and feeds it into a 3D model. We then create avatars so we have moving people and vehicles in there and that is put forward as a simulated UAV feed, which soldiers can view on palmtop devices.

"So we're merging the virtual and live and hope that will be useful for the troops on the ground."



URBAN COMBAT: THE CHALLENGES FOR TROOPS

WHILE operating in built-up areas is not new to the British Army, there are key points for those more familiar with rural Afghanistan to take into account.

"The ranges are so much smaller," said Lt Col Chris Barry, commanding officer of 2 Royal Welsh.

"Your ability to find the enemy and react quickly tends to be more constrained, while your capacity to set the conditions for an assault is affected by the fact people live in the village."

"You're more likely to be surprised so the risk is much higher than attacking in a place where you've got full situational awareness."

"Only when you're fighting your way through a building do you appreciate how cleverly designed this facility [Cenzub] is."

"It can be quite disorienting. All the houses are slightly different and there are split levels; you've got industrial sprawl and high-rise blocks."

"This has benefits for us in terms of practical elements but it's also good for our understanding of what we need to train to do in ten years time and how we need to prepare our soldiers and officers as we look to the future beyond Helmand province."

5.2 BILLION – THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ESTIMATED TO BE LIVING IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT BY 2050

(SOURCE – WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION)



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Reclaims UK is working closely with the Armed Forces to help give back to our British soldiers. Reclaims UK recently sponsored The Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day at Sandown Park and we are working closely with various charities to help raise awareness.



Mr & Mrs Allen (39 Regt RA) presenting the Winners Trophy at the Royal Artillery Gold Cup

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As sponsors of the Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day at Sandown Park on Friday 17th February 2012, we were able to invite the two couples as our guests on the day. It was a fantastic day where they were able to choose the best turned out horse and given the opportunity to go up into the Royal Box and watch our race. The day was a huge success and is a superb event organised by Major General Andrew Ritchie, Chairman of the Royal Artillery Steeplechase Committee, and we hope to continue our support for the event again this year.

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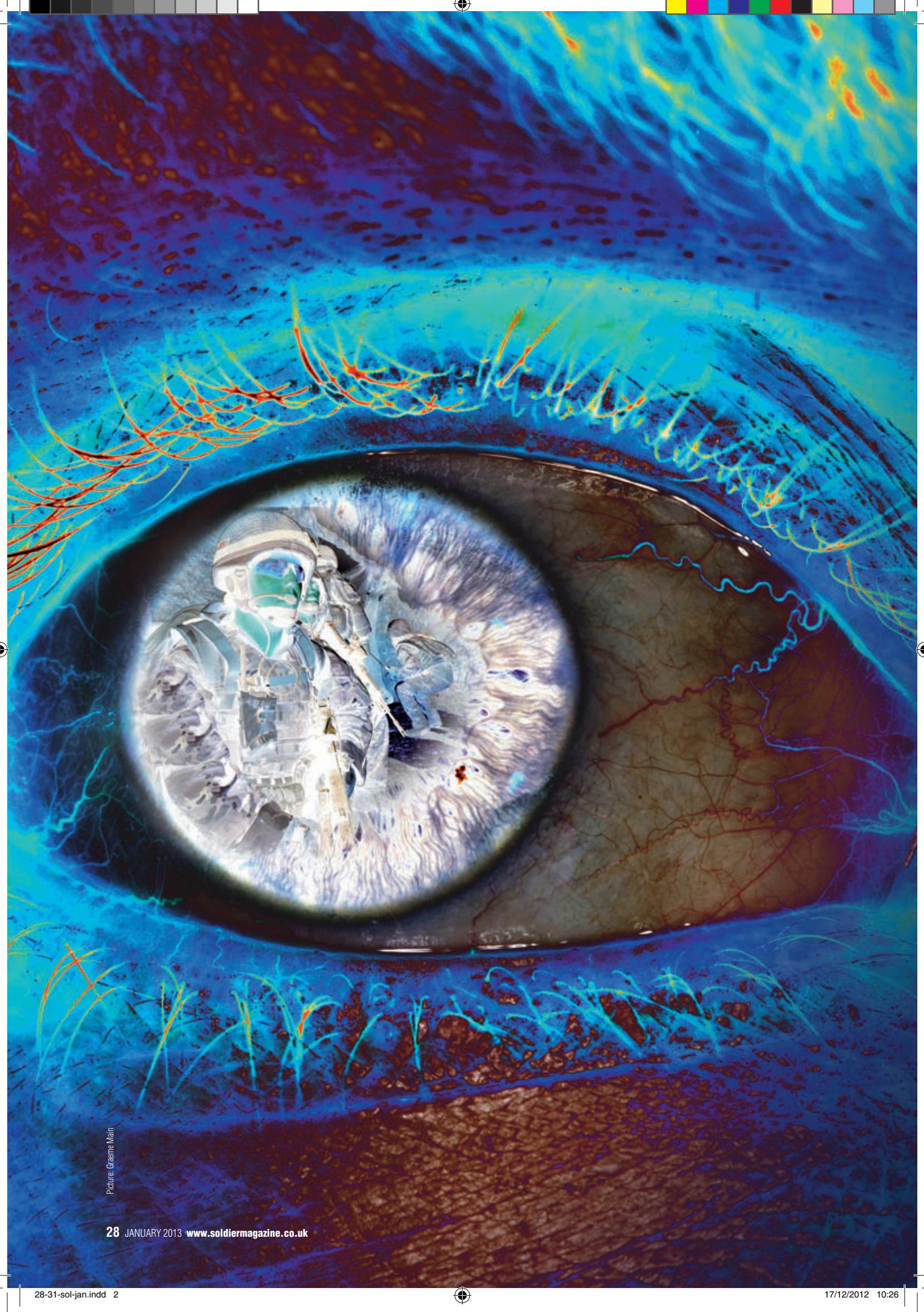
Reclaims UK has visited several UK and German based regiments in the last 12 months and our campaign to raise awareness of mis-sold PPI and claim back money for soldiers has been an ever growing success. If you feel that you or someone you may know may have paid PPI please get in touch today. You can call our freephone number, e-mail or fill out a contact form online. It's a hassle free process that can only benefit you. This is the biggest financial scandal in history and we are here to help.

Reclaims UK has helped claim back over £400,000 for British Armed Forces. There are still thousands of personnel out there that do not know they have PPI and could be entitled to thousands of pounds in repayments and compensation. Call Reclaims UK today to see if you have a claim.

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Picture: Graeme Man

Mind's eye

How pupil movement is helping to fight the symptoms of post-traumatic stress

Report: Joe Clapson

WHEN Sgt Steve Johnson (AGC(RMP)) was asked if he would like to trial a mind-boggling new treatment for post-traumatic stress he had nothing to lose.

"I'd already rehearsed how I would kill myself, what would be the cleanest way and how it would affect others," the Serviceman told *Soldier*.

Lost in mental illness, he became one of the first troops to try out the intriguing and cutting-edge therapy called eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) – a practice which would force him to relive suicidal thoughts but ultimately go on to help save his life.

The psychotherapy technique is based on the idea that if people think about a traumatic image while watching an object move back and forth, distressing feelings will reduce in intensity.

Basic eye movement, sounds or taps to the skin all help to activate networks in the brain which can become blocked following disturbing experiences.

By clearing these pathways, the mind is allowed to properly process thoughts and anxieties that have been previously locked out by individuals.

And sci-fi connotations aside, the results of the method appear hard to deny.

On his return from Afghanistan with the Royal Military Police in 2007, Sgt Johnson began suffering recurring nightmares and flashbacks for the first time in 15 years of operational service.

The mental state of the soldier deteriorated fast so his doctor sent him to be assessed.

"I was waking up screaming and smelling burning flesh," recalled the veteran of Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo and Iraq.

"I could taste things from all my tours. Everything I had seen had come back; the sensations running through my body.

"Africa was horrific, I saw lots of bodies in the road as a result of genocide; people lying dead in the street.

"In Kosovo in 1999 the houses were marked and if residents didn't get out of their properties by 1600 they would be

taken to the woods and killed.

"On Operation Telic 1 I was part of the mop-up team, clearing trenches.

"I saw burnt, charred bodies. Teeth don't burn – that was one of the many visions that haunted me during my career.

"Watching the TV afterwards I would sometimes zone out. I wouldn't be there; my mind would be somewhere else and I'd have constant flashbacks."

Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, Sgt Johnson was sent to Woking's Priory clinic where he was the only Serviceman.

After trying cognitive behavioural therapy and an endless list

of medications, the centre recommended EMDR but warned that it would be physically draining.

"The therapist said I would relive all the feelings and sensations I had during the events I was thinking about," the 38-year-old added. >>

As soon as she started talking to me it felt like I was out in theatre. I was back in a seven-hour contact in Afghanistan

Sgt Steve Johnson (AGC(RMP))





>> "My reaction was to ask myself 'do I want to go back?'"

But willing to try anything, he agreed. "I knew I needed to do something," the intelligence officer said.

"I made the decision to undergo the first session because you can only really be scared of something you've experienced."

The Serviceman sat down opposite a therapist while she tapped each hand 12 times to sensitise the nerve endings.

During the 30-minute appointment in a quiet room, he was then asked to relay encounters from his past.

"I suppose it was like being hypnotised, then coming back to reality and talking through the things I had described," Sgt Johnson recollects.

"As soon as she started talking to me it felt like I was out in theatre."

"I was back in a seven-hour contact in Afghanistan – something I thought I had dealt with. When I was brought back round I was so tired I couldn't walk, just like when I had actually been there."

After that first consultation the traumatised soldier maintained that he could not go through it again but was encouraged to do so in a bid to try and move on.

"I wasn't really happy about it but the sessions ended up processing what had happened in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere – all things I thought I had dealt with."

Undertaking weekly meetings over three months while staying in the Surrey clinic, the NCO was then released and put on sick leave during which time he underwent more of the psychotherapy as a day patient.

Eager to get back in uniform, by December 2007 he started a gradual return to work programme and was posted to Northern Ireland the following year.

Despite military missions clearly having triggered his mental health issues, Sgt Johnson had no doubts whatsoever that his future remained in the Service.

"I just wanted to get back to work because

I love it," he explained.

"Without the Army I wouldn't have been able to help the people I have or do the good things I've done."

In what is a quite remarkable transformation, Sgt Johnson is now preparing to deploy on Op Herrick 18 as a police adviser.

"I am really looking forward to it as it's been my end goal to return to active service where it all started," he added.

As one of the first members of the Armed Forces to receive the powerful treatment, the soldier has welcomed the emergence of trained EMDR therapists in every defence community mental health centre.

And although some sceptics refuse to believe the science behind the process, excitement about its results is palpable across the military.

Explaining the simple technique, which was approved by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in 2005, MoD consultant clinical psychologist Susanne McGowan said: "The theory is that our minds have a system where difficult things are processed, sorted and filed away.

"With traumatic experiences it seems this does not happen – the image gets shut in a different part of the brain."

"EMDR is an unlocking process."

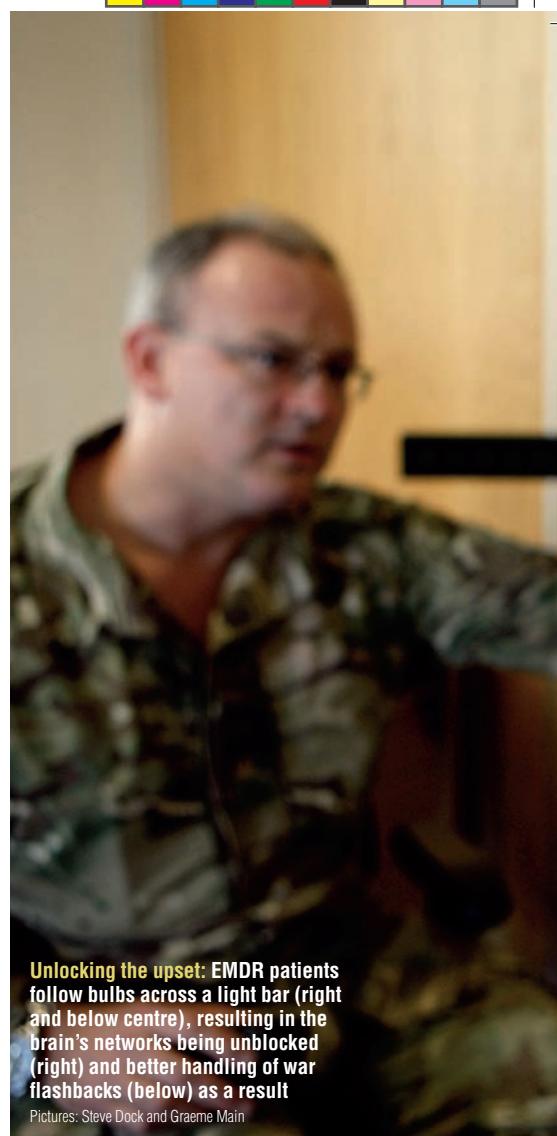
With some clinicians suggesting that the impact of the treatment is nothing more than a placebo, debate over its results is set to continue.

But whatever the future for the strange therapy, Sgt Johnson is clear that its use has finally helped him to put severe anxiety to one side.

"I thought I had dealt with everything I saw but the sessions brought it out and put it back in order," he said.

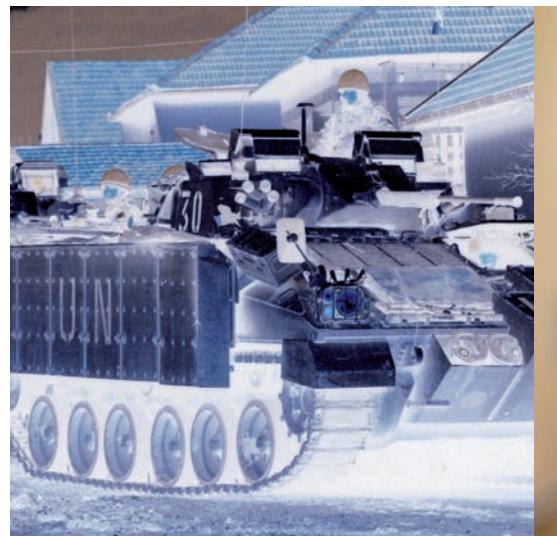
"Different things help people in different ways but for me EMDR is the only reason I am here today."

"I can't explain the science behind it, but it worked."



Unlocking the upset: EMDR patients follow bulbs across a light bar (right and below centre), resulting in the brain's networks being unblocked (right) and better handling of war flashbacks (below) as a result

Pictures: Steve Dock and Graeme Main



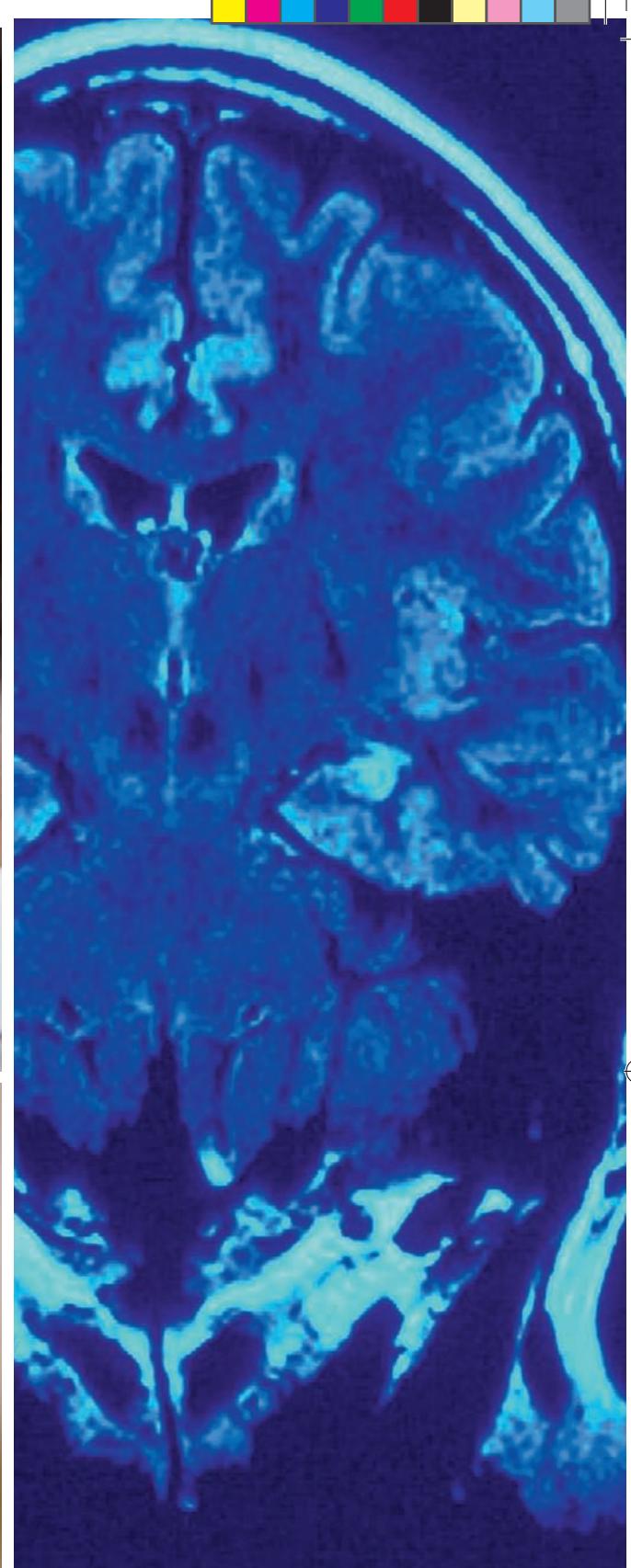
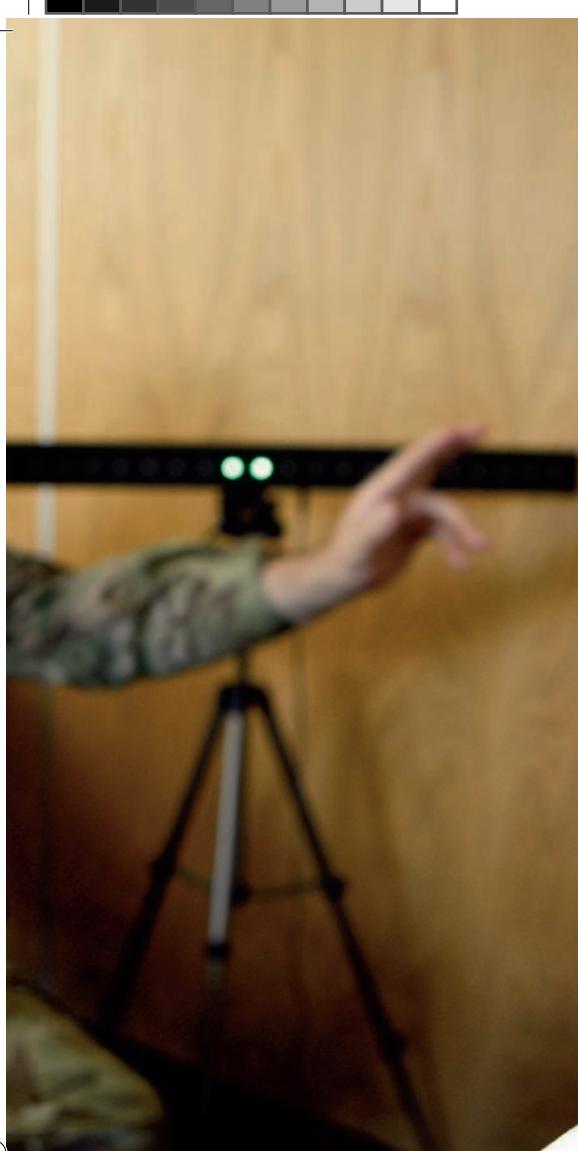
EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITISATION AND REPROCESSING:

HOW IT WORKS



EMDR attempts to unlock those recollections so that the brain can process them properly





The sufferer sits still while being subjected to bilateral stimulation. It could be movement of the eyes from left to right, tapping on different edges of the body or noise being made in one ear then the other



Before any treatment a patient is fully assessed to make sure the therapy is appropriate



The mind's healing process and journey to recovery is jump-started as a result

Practitioners insist patients do not need to believe in the process for it to work





FUTURE ARMY LEADERS UNDERGO EXPERT TUITION ON THE AUSTRIAN SLOPES

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH British combat troops set to withdraw from Afghanistan next year, the upper echelons of the Army have decided that the military leaders of tomorrow may not always be found in battlefield scenarios.

As such, the message filtering down from the Service's chiefs is that adventurous training (AT) will be reinvigorated as the commitment to operations reduces.

To understand why it is being given top priority, *Soldier* took to the Austrian slopes where ski experts put potential instructors through their paces on a nine-day ski leader one course.

Prior to setting foot on the pristine Stubai Glacier, Lt Col David Field (Rifles), commanding officer of the Adventurous Training Group (Germany), explained why donning skis and salopettes is beneficial to military drills.



"In the post-Herrick era, AT can provide a demanding test to prepare soldiers for future operations by developing team cohesion and promoting values such as courage and discipline," he said.

"It actually costs more to send troops on exercise than to something like this and there is a lot to be gained from working on snow."

"This is how we are shaping the leaders of the future as our time in Helmand comes to an end."

The aim of this specific package was to teach Army personnel how to guide groups of students at an introductory level.

If successful during assessment these Servicemen and women will feed the military instructor pool for courses such as Exercise Snow Warrior, which runs until March.

Explaining the importance of the programme, Capt Nick O'Shea (RAPTC), training officer at ATG (G), said: "On Snow Warrior there will be approximately 550 soldiers on the foundation course so we need leaders to facilitate that."

"The overarching goal is to introduce novice skiers to the snow environment and to progress towards the touring aspect from there."

Leaders under tuition ranged from those who have sampled a few weeks of the slopes on winter holidays to senior officers with decades of snow experience under their belts.

But regardless of personal talent, the task was not to impress with racing speeds down black runs or by flying through the air with 360-degree spins, but to learn how to present a textbook example to students.

"They need to be able to do the basics very well," said Capt O'Shea.

"In order to teach, their individual standards on the piste must be high."

With a push now on to make AT an integral element of Army life rather than an optional extra, this course forms part of a wider vision to put soldiers into challenging and rewarding situations.

Generating more teachers is a means to an end, which will eventually see increased numbers of Forces personnel ski touring off-piste in snowy back-country areas.

SSgt Nathan Reeves (RAPTC), a senior instructor, said: "Touring is similar to something like caving or climbing in that it's all about overcoming difficulties and trusting your leader."

"You have to rely on communication skills and your ability to take on the task."

In difficult sub-zero conditions course members honed their techniques for ploughing and parallel turns before focusing on sharpening their performance.

Personnel were also assessed on handling worst-case scenarios, managing risk and their ability to react to an avalanche, utilising shovels, probes and radio transceivers.

Taking time out from a busy session, Cfn Craig McMorrow (REME) said: "Skiing is fun and provides a good chance to lead and command."

"It also involves teamwork because individuals are all involved in improving each other's skill levels and communicating on the slopes."

WO2 Kev Hudson (REME) added: "I have lots of winter sports experience but without any formal qualifications so I am here to attain ski leader status and then move forward to work with adaptive athletes. >>





"Here it's been about getting back to basics, learning how to deliver training from the bottom up, to paint a perfect picture for students."

From humorous *Saturday Night Fever* drills to put an emphasis on transferring weight during ski turns to undergoing video analysis for detailed feedback, every minute on the slopes served to improve each individual soldier.

Sipping on a well-earned brew after a day's instruction, LCpl Troy Ledger (RE) said: "As well as learning new skills, being out here allows you to mix with the hierarchy without a rank structure.

"We all help each other out and at times the junior soldiers are much better than the senior personnel, which is a bit of a leveller."

LCpl Sian McLaughlan (AGC (RMP)) added: "My unit will be going into pre-deployment training soon and when we get a break I want to take them away skiing, so that's why I'm looking to get qualified.

"Before this course I wouldn't have been confident speaking in front of big groups but now I won't have any problems because we needed to show we can instruct."

These future leaders are now inspired and ready to spread their knowledge as far as possible among their own units and beyond.

When the Army finishes a tough job in Helmand province, soldiers will continue to overcome fears and test their mettle in other demanding environments. ■

For more information about skiing in the Alps contact the Adventurous Training Group HQ on 0049 5254 982 2920/2918 or military 94879 2920/2918. For details of UK-based winter activities and skiing in Norway contact the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre on 01248 718305 or military 95581 7905.



Avalanche aware: The ability to use digital transceivers is paramount to operating on snow



Moving target: Technique is monitored closely and used to improve students' course progress



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People behind the paperwork

Chief administrator sheds light on the work of SPVA

SOME one million troops and veterans depend on the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) to ensure they receive their salary or pension on time.

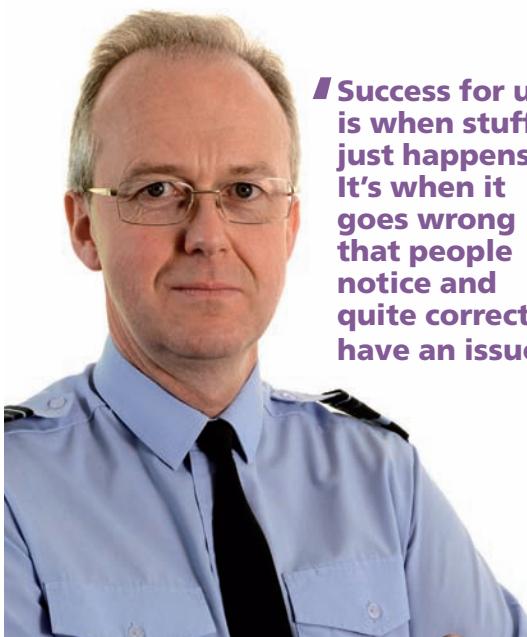
In addition, the organisation runs the joint personnel administration system (JPA), issues medals and veterans' badges, stores Service wills and oversees both the Armed Forces compensation scheme and Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre. Here, its chief executive, AVM Ross Paterson, reveals how his team keep such crucial cogs turning for the Army. ■

What are SPVA's main tasks and responsibilities?

Our JPA helpline gets about 1,200 calls a week and the veterans' number a similar volume. Most are relatively minor issues but there's massive variation. Not many people understand the small print around pensions or compensation, especially youngsters – why should they? There are also some people who have mental health or financial issues and our other key role is signposting so that individuals know where to go for help.



Success for us is when stuff just happens. It's when it goes wrong that people notice and quite correctly have an issue ■



How could your service improve?

We have ten million transactions a year so statistically, I'm sorry to admit, it won't always be perfect. But this is not a bureaucracy, it's about looking after people and one of my priorities since taking up the post has been to try and put myself in their shoes – from a family that has received the worst news they'll ever get to trying to put compensation or pension language into plain English. A lot of work goes into achieving that and I'd like it to continue.

When should people contact you about medal queries?

We deal with entitlement – to the Accumulated Service Medal, for example. If a query is around policy or qualification criteria that's not a matter for us. However, the first port of call is always the chain of command and regimental admin office. They should be in a position to answer a question.



What can Servicemen and women do to get a response more quickly?

In an organisation as large as the Army there is a lot of casework. Unit admin staff are also under huge pressure. My plea would be for folks to take an extra minute when filling in forms or go and speak to their local experts. About 25 per cent of the work we see could have been sorted out at source. All that will help you get your money sooner if you're entitled.

What challenges will Army 2020 and FR20 present?

We're looking ahead to the fresh pension scheme that has to be delivered in 2015, the new employment model and the fact that there will be a shift to Reserve service... and that's in addition to the day job of 250,000 pay slips and 400,000 pension statements every month. We work closely with the policy makers to explain the complexity of delivering any changes. There's no question it will be tight but we need to make it right for people on the ground.

What are the limits of what you can do?

We provide information, not advice. A lot of what we do is about money and that is very emotive so the challenge and skill is to be straight with people, even if it's not the answer they hoped for. If they have real issues there are organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau or financial advisers where help can be sought. Success for us is when stuff just happens. It's when it goes wrong that people notice and quite correctly have an issue.

The stats behind SPVA:

Customers: 250,000 serving **750,000** veterans

Phone calls received:
3,000/week

Home visits to veterans:
15,000/year

Transactions:
10,000,000/year

Staff: **1,300** civil servants, contractors and troops

Medals issued: **26,000/year**

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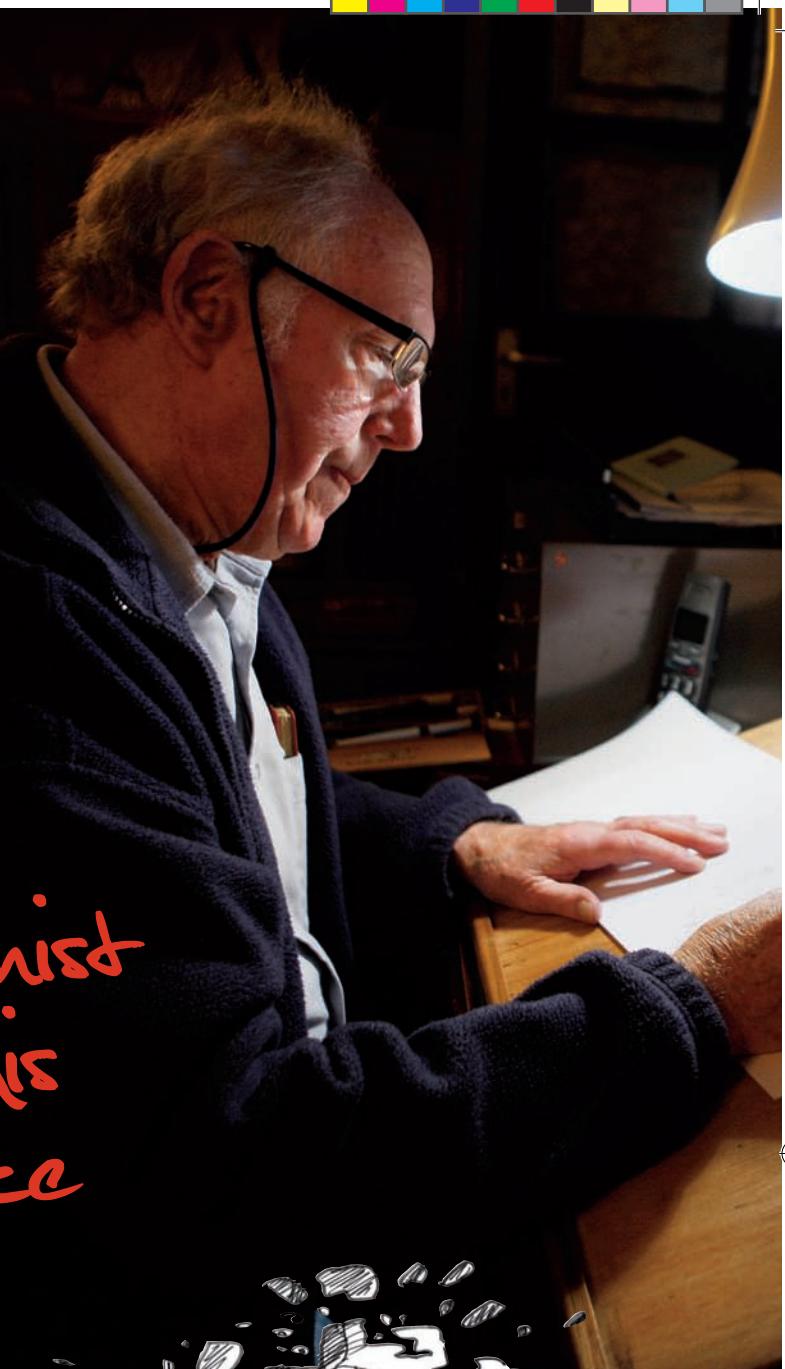
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DICKIE DRAWS BACK

*Soldier's cartoonist
calls time on his
sketching service*



Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH an organisation as large as the British Army, operating across the world on a range of tasks, come endless tales of bravery and excitement but also of disquiet and angst.

For more than 20 years *Soldier's* resident cartoonist, John Bird, has illustrated these stories – often from a quirky angle but always with an ability to penetrate an important issue with a sharp edge.

However, as the new year is ushered in and despite plenty of Army news to poke his creative pen at, the man we all know as Dickie has retired from his drawing duty.

Soldier travelled to Preston to speak to the person behind the sketches and learn where his inspiration came from.

Inside the ex-colonel's farmhouse in front of which the Service flag was proudly flying, the 85-year-old former Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) member explained how he came to be part of the British Army magazine's furniture.

"I sent a few cartoons over during the first Gulf War and that was it, we went from there,"

he recalled.

"I began with a series called Bird's Eye-View in black and white and then the publication began printing my work in colour. I've drawn a wide range of topics."

Prior to taking up the pen (sometimes pencil), Dickie deployed across the world to regions including Malaya, the Middle East, Germany, the Far East and North Africa, in what was a full military career.

"The variety of it all is what sticks out," said the doodlesmith.

"I tended to live outside the barrack walls and made friends with many civilians along the way and it's that experience which has helped to build an ammunition patch for cartooning, drawing on what I've seen."

The honorary Lancastrian went on to explain that while he tried to poke fun at some deserving subjects, he was always conscious that a balance needed to be struck.



"If he's not doing any more drawings what are we going to stick on the walls?" Cartoon: Bill Tidy



BIRD'S EYE-VIEW

From overseas missions to Service sights, Dickie has captured the Army's mood for more than 20 years. Here are some of the *Soldier* team's favourites . . .



"Hardly necessary to call Green Flag, miss . . . I'm a technical officer."



"I say again . . . cease fire or we sue!"



"I accept we're a dying breed, Peter, but dammit, the band's choice of *Ten Green Bottles* is bloody impertinent."



"Hurry sir . . . the brigadier's on his way up."

"A number of my cartoons reflected Pte Eccles having run-ins with awkward regimental sergeant majors and the inspiration for this came from my days in uniform," he added.

"There are all sorts of real-life episodes that could have turned into a disaster but didn't due to a good platoon sergeant and I used that in my work."

"However, it's not always been easy to capture the right tone because the job of a soldier deals with quite a lot of sombre occasions, while cartoons are usually associated with humour."

Dickie's sketches for this magazine have sat alongside its articles, letters and photographs to provide a personal take on events as diverse as live operations, moans about medals, state occasions and MoD policy on pay as you dine.

"Looking back over the years, the mission in Bosnia was a good one to record, mainly because of how it affected the lads," said the pensioner.

"In terms of subject matter, defence sales

and new kit have always been ripe for the picking as well."

"And then there's the issue of medals and whether people deserve to be recognised or not and that is one that will go on and on."

As he sat back in his armchair, satisfied that his work at *Soldier* was done, it was clear that this old Serviceman is still as sharp as ever and despite an impressive catalogue of drawings, refuses to take himself too seriously.

"I wouldn't go so far as to call myself an artist – I'd say I'm a soldier who dabbles," he said.

"It's the doodle that I was most interested in and seeing the funny or ridiculous side of life and recording it for posterity."

Laying his pen down on his desk, the veteran added: "I have had the best of both worlds with a full Army career and then managing to do some cartoons."

"I would have hated to have been a good cartoonist but a rubbish military man."

Dickie, thank you for dabbling in doodling for *Soldier*. ■

'In terms of subject matter, defence sales and new kit have always been ripe for the picking.'



7

ARM YOURSELF

TRAINING your arms will not only develop their shape and look but improve your weapon-handling technique. Most systems are heavy and the ability to react and raise equipment quickly could be the difference between life and death. For biceps, don't cheat yourself. Keep the arms pinned in at the elbow joint and pull the equipment towards your chest without swinging your body forwards and backwards.

8

DO CONFINED CARDIO

IF you wish to improve or maintain your cardiovascular fitness it can be easily achieved within a patrol base or confined area. Those of you who are lucky enough to have CV equipment, use it as it is safe and serves a purpose. Even in the middle of the desert, cardio can be achieved with the humble skipping rope or by varying circuit-training exercises to get you blowing.



CONTROL YOUR CORE

A SIX-PACK may well look good but from a practical point of view having strong abdominal muscles improves your core stability and your body's stabilisation, which is effective in reducing injury when you are placed under physical stress. Vary your sit-ups to gain great results and improve your overall balance and performance.

5

SHOULDER THE STRAIN

YOUR shoulders are also under continuous strain when on foot patrol. Varying your exercises to incorporate shrugs, a shoulder press and the lateral and frontal raise will improve your conditioning and strength. From utilising vehicle tyres to lifting sandbags, select your equipment carefully from what is available on the base and train safely, with the correct technique.

4

WATCH YOUR BACK

WHEN patrolling, the back is under constant exertion. Carrying kit and body armour will test the fittest and strongest of Servicemen and women so it is essential to train the large muscle group. Overarm heaves are the exercise of choice; they will improve your upper body strength, enable you to conquer those compound walls and give you extra power to lift kit wherever it needs shifting.



9

COOL IT

FAILING to cool down will have negative side effects, no matter how fit you are. If you are training and suddenly stop, the heart will continue to pump blood around the body which will cause pooling in your muscles. This leads to cramp and a build-up of lactic acid. Cool down for ten minutes by gradually reducing your work intensity and interspersing a variety of flexibility exercises.

10

REFUEL

TAKE on a carbohydrate-based food or drink within 30 minutes of your workout and make sure you keep hydrated. Extreme dehydration can be dangerous and potentially lethal. Drink at least 1.5 to two litres of water throughout the day and take on extra to flush out toxins from your fitness session. Limit your consumption of caffeine as it can cause dehydration.



FOB FITNESS

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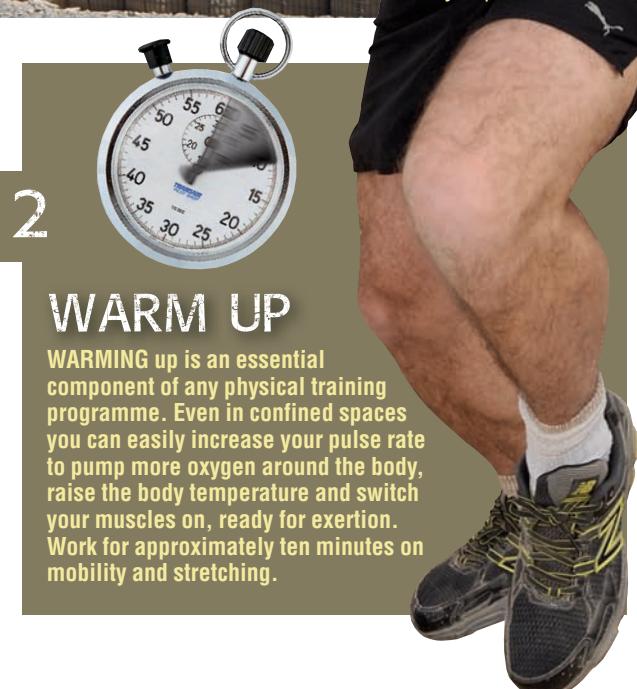
TEST YOUR CHEST

DON'T fall into the trap of just pumping out a standard bench-press as a way to boost your chest strength. Vary the exercise with decline and incline movements to ensure you work the whole pectoral region. The old-fashioned press-up shouldn't be forgotten – bend arms at a 90-degree angle at the elbow joint, push the body up in a solid mass, lock your arms out and do not flex at the waist.

2

WARM UP

WARMING up is an essential component of any physical training programme. Even in confined spaces you can easily increase your pulse rate to pump more oxygen around the body, raise the body temperature and switch your muscles on, ready for exertion. Work for approximately ten minutes on mobility and stretching.



Pictures: Cpl Mike O'Neil, RLC



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JANUARY JACKPOT

Christmas comp kicks off 2013 in style

SCORES of *Soldier* readers are enjoying a happy start to 2013, thanks to the thousands of pounds' worth of gifts dished out by this magazine in our annual Christmas giveaway.

For the fourth year running, Operation Reindeer's Hoof offered a tantalising selection of treats to Service personnel and their families.

Among the items dished out to the lucky winners were signed football shirts, outdoor kit, hundreds of pounds' worth of vouchers, jewellery and holidays.

The freebie frenzy takes the total value of prizes distributed by *Soldier* HQ over the last four years to a whopping £50,000. ■



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Two minutes with... Lee Nelson

Servicemen and women are known for their sense of humour, cheerfulness through adversity and being eager to raise a smile in all situations.

To show his appreciation for his uniformed audience, "marmite" comedian Lee Nelson spoke to *Soldier* about his love for Army personnel and his plus-size friend, Omelette.



■ Who would you say is your target audience?

Everyone's welcome at my shows! As long as they turn up and pay £20 I welcome them.

■ Your live shows involve quite a lot of interaction with the audience – has anybody ever taken real offence to one of the jokes you made at their expense?

Nah, it's always treated like the laugh that it's meant to be. I tell audience members at the start of the show that I'll take the mick out of them and they can take the mick out of me. That way at the end of the night, someone gets bottled!

■ What do you find is your best way to respond to aggressive hecklers?

Get Omelette to sit on their face.

■ How do fans generally react to a fat man (Omelette) dancing on stage in his pants?

He either gets a standing ovation or people run for cover in case the stage collapses.

■ You have a new DVD out. Why do you think it would appeal to the Armed Forces community?

Cos soldiers are a bunch of legends who love a well good laugh. And cos the DVD's qwaliteeeeeeee!

■ Can you describe what it offers viewers?

Two hours of proper funny, well mental live fun for all the family. I rip in to the crowd, chat up the birds, get punters in on the action and you don't have to pay for a TV licence to watch it.

■ What does the future hold for Lee Nelson?

My stand-up DVD *Lee Nelson Live* is out now, I hosted *Live At The Apollo*

in December and I've got my brand new TV show *Lee Nelson's Well Funny People* coming out this year. And that's all in-between a lot of drinking and playing Xbox.

■ Do you have a message for the Servicemen and women who watch your shows?

Keep up the good work you legends. I know just how tough the job you do is, I've gone paintballing myself.

■ Do you have a hero? If so, who is it and why?

I like a lot of footballers. Ryan Giggs is a big hero of mine ever since I found out he got with Imogen Thomas. What a legend! Also David Beckham cos we both named our kids after where we done it. He's got Brooklyn (he done it in America), Cruz (he done it on a boat) and Romeo (he done it in an Alfa). I've got Stairwell. Gary Lineker's another hero of mine – I'm a massive cheese and onion fan.

■ Have you ever thought about joining the Army?

I'd only join if Omelette did it with me – I'd never get shot with him stood in front of me!

■ What is the funniest thing you've ever seen?

A DVD of *Lee Nelson Live* of course.

■ What is the most dangerous thing you have ever done?

I tried giving Omelette a piggyback once.

■ If you were prime minister what would be the first thing you would make a law?

I'd reverse the smoking ban. If you don't want to smoke you can go outside. Why should the people with the dodgy lungs

be forced to go out in the freezing cold every 20 minutes?

■ Catch up with Lee Nelson's antics on the DVD of his live show, available to order at www.leenelson.com





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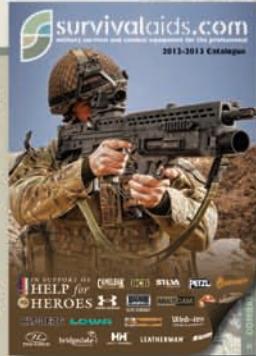
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TALKBACK

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



TRASH 'TA' TERM NOW

■ WHEN attempts are being made to grow the Reserves, why has the Service not renamed the TA to help achieve this?

The term does not apply to the current role, is out of line with the rest of the Reserves (Royal Navy and Royal Air Force) and carries with it many negative and frankly laughable perceptions given to us by television shows and the media.

It simply must be replaced with a more appealing and accurate brand.

The Duke of Westminster announced this was in consideration late last year but as yet there has been no change.

As a volunteer myself I find the "one Army" concept a complete failure when underneath its main brand are written two very different names, clearly communicating a divide.

I have no attachment or sentiment for the name Territorial Army, if anything I avoid using the term at all.

When is the Service going to realise this needs addressing and finally make the rebrand to the Army Reserve? — **Sgt Dennis, R Anglian.**



Camouflage medal muddle

AS a Reservist who hasn't been issued Service dress, I was involved in a debate lately about medals and the multi-terrain pattern uniform.

In recent years my colleagues and I have paraded in Combat 95 with our decorations, which is rubbish but there are many of us who have honours and this is the only chance we get to show them.

Are there any rules about wearing our medals in this way?

If so, can it please be clarified so as not to cause any arguments next year?

It is such a shame that people in possession of these honours pay so much money to get them mounted only to keep them hidden away. — **Cpl Lesley Baker, RAMC.**

Brig Matthew Lowe, Director Personnel

Operations, replies: ABN 100-12 issued towards the end of October provides details of the policies concerning the wearing of poppies and appropriate dress for remembrance services and parades.

It was recognised that not everyone in the Reserves has been issued with the new No 2 Dress, so for the 2012 events those who did not possess this were permitted to wear their medals on their combat uniform.

I agree with you that sporting medals in this way looks very strange and is still not authorised for any other occasion but I also agree it would have been a shame if individuals could not wear them.

By the middle of this year the issue of No 2 Dress to volunteers should have been completed and you will then have appropriate clothing for medals.

Conditioning conundrum

MY annual Territorial Army assessments require me to undertake and pass the combat fitness test.

However, I have recently been told that I am not allowed to wear uniform or carry a military Bergen outside of drill nights for insurance reasons.

When I was a Regular soldier I would train in kit in the evening and at weekends to make sure my physical fitness was maintained to a good level — so why can't I do the same in the Reserves?

Drill nights only take place once a week and although there are a number of training serials throughout the year, these are not enough to maintain the required standard of fitness.

I go on routine runs and trips to the gym but marching with weight requires conditioning and this cannot be achieved with these sessions alone.

Can anyone offer any guidance? — **Name and address supplied.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:

I am commandant of the Royal Army Physical Training Corps (RAPTC) so I applaud your attitude and that you take your military fitness responsibilities as seriously with the Army Reserve as you did during your Regular career.

I understand your frustration but I am sure you will also understand that we have certain responsibilities to you and your civilian employer. This includes endurance training.

Clearly your chain of command cannot condone you undertaking these exercises in your own time as it cannot provide the necessary assurance to discharge its duty of care but it cannot stop you.

Therefore, I would recommend that in the first instance you take advice from a qualified TA physical training instructor or better still your Army Training Unit where a RAPTC warrant officer can advise on how to conduct safe exercise in your own time, perhaps using a civilian pattern Bergen.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...





WHY STALL SETTLEMENT?

■ WHILST I recognise the importance of the five tri-party agreement principles enabling Gurkhas to serve in the Army, some of the policies underpinning them are outdated.

Under the rules, all such soldiers must remain Nepalese citizens throughout their service and are later able to apply for settlement in the UK.

Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas policy allows leavers to request this visa ten weeks prior to their discharge date, meaning there is a very tight timescale for the Home Office to process this paperwork.

Often Gurkhas are waiting for months after they leave, and without a job.

In the current financial climate, this situation is not beneficial to the individual or the government. It provokes unnecessary uncertainty on top of the daunting task of trying to resettle into a civilian environment.

Why are these troops not allowed to apply for settlement at least one year ahead of discharge? They will still be Nepalese citizens and in line with the principles. — *Name and address supplied.*

Margaret Gilmour, Assistant Director Manning, Structures & Equipment, responds: Uniquely in the Army, Gurkhas serve as a formed unit and to maintain this position special arrangements have been necessary.

One of the fundamental principles of this is that troops must remain Nepalese while serving.

Gurkhas can apply to transfer to the wider Service after five years in the brigade and are then able, if they wish, to request citizenship.

The Home Office has considered granting settlement (also called

“indefinite leave to remain in the UK”) while serving. However, because Gurkhas and foreign and Commonwealth troops serve under an exempt immigration control status, it is not possible to apply a form of visa control until they are discharged.

The UK Border Agency agreed some years ago that Armed Forces personnel can apply for settlement ten weeks before discharge which is a longer timeframe than civilian counterparts. For redundancy, they have extended this to six months.



Picture: Steve Dicks

Service housing highs and lows

■ WHEN leaving my quarters in Harrogate I decided to save money on cleaning costs and spend three days of my leave doing it myself.

The housing officer that inspected it afterwards found the oven was not up to scratch and noted some dust on top of a couple of doorways.

I was told a bill for a full clean would be raised and on asking why I should pay £270 to rectify so few points was told that in addition the carpets were not clean enough – despite the fact I followed Defence Housing Executive advice and hired a machine to do this.

My options were another inspection, (impossible due to my new job), sign the bill or get a housing officer over to tell me the same thing.

Why was I levied for a full clean when this was not required?

There should be a range of charges to reflect the true state of a house and the work needed.

When a soldier loses an ammo pouch he is not told to pay for a full set of Osprey.

So do accommodation staff have an agenda to debit tenants for a full clean, no matter what?

Is the Defence Infrastructure Organisation financially incentivised to do this?

Coincidentally, my payment came to exactly the same amount I was quoted by a cleaning company personally recommended by no less than three different York-based housing officers.

With little choice I obliged but couldn't help feeling that I was fighting a battle I was preordained to lose.

I know defence quarters are cheap but that's no excuse to shaft soldiers in order to make up profit margins for civilian contractors. — *Name and address supplied.*

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation responds: It is the responsibility of all licensees living in Service family accommodation (SFA) to prepare their property to the correct move-out standard.

Having investigated this case the housing did not meet the necessary criteria and the appropriate charges were therefore made.

Our records show that the property needed a much more extensive clean than the writer suggests. The unit welfare officer was present at the move out and agreed with the findings.

If a home is not left at the required standard, the MoD incurs extra costs to ensure it is cleaned correctly and these charges are recouped from the outgoing customer who did not prepare it correctly.

These particular dwellings are managed under a private finance initiative and are not covered by the pre-payment cleaning scheme which applies to many SFA properties in England and Wales.

A list of local companies that have provided a good service to Forces families in the past was collated by the HIVE and prepared in conjunction with the Army Foundation College. This was provided at the pre-move visit.

We do not recommend, endorse or profit from any of these bodies.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation is categorically not financially incentivised to impose charges or improve the profits of any private sector firm.

This writer declined both a re-inspection and the opportunity of a second opinion from their military chain of command.

■ LIKE many of your readers, I have been on the receiving end of some horrendous accommodation moves in the past.

However, my last relocation from Northern Ireland to south west England could not have been better.

Both movers and housing staff kept me informed throughout with courtesy calls, turned up to appointments on time and everything generally went very smoothly.

Whatever changes have been made to this service (including those to the self-preference form) are most welcome.

Thank you. — *Name and address supplied.*



TALKBACK

Troops thunder in protest at prairie prices

SOLDIERS at the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) are being ripped off.

Because they are a captive audience, the Canex shop off camp is charging a steep markup on goods compared to prices in the nearby town of Medicine Hat.

Troops do not have any other choice of places to shop apart from two cafes on-base which sell items at a similar price.

At the end of their time there, personnel cannot clear camp until they have settled their debt with a well-equipped junior NCO establishment (not mess) called the Longhorn Club.

However, many eligible individuals never have the opportunity to use these facilities as they are on the prairie from 0400 to 2100 for four weeks with minimal leisure time.

They must nevertheless pay a monthly bill which does not take into account the fact there has been little chance to enjoy the club. Even if you didn't join, you are expected to sign up for a membership card and pay.

It's the most expensive piece of red tape in the Army, basically charging a levy to leave BATUS.

Having spoken to the regimental sergeant major who put a lot of effort into clearing this up, his hands are tied due to a constitution written 40 years ago.

In danger of sounding like a barrack-room lawyer, Queen's Regulations only cover senior NCO and officers' mess rules.

The club's attitude to Servicemen and women leaving is despicable – "if you want to go home pay the bill" and "not interested, pay the bill".

As a result, many are reluctant to return to Canada. A better and fairer system is needed. – Name and address supplied.

BATUS responds: We value the contribution made by all temporary staff and make every effort to ensure their time here is both professionally rewarding and enjoyable.

It is a shame that this individual's experience has been marred by what he perceives to be a bad deal from the

Canex shop and Longhorn Club.

The retailer is run by a Canadian personnel support programme welfare facility just like our NAAFI overseas, and provides a service for both local troops and UK nationals on the base.

Operating in a very similar manner to the British version, the store suffers from some common issues. Maintaining small outlets in remote areas means they don't have the buying and selling advantage of large retail chains.

Many goods in Canex are sold at the Canadian recommended retail price but cost more than they might downtown or back home. This is taken into account when the local overseas allowance is calculated.

The shop makes a significant contribution to the base fund and this money is reinvested into welfare facilities for temporary and permanent staff.

The Longhorn Club is governed by Canadian regulations as a junior ranks' mess and runs to a £2.50 monthly subscription which goes towards providing facilities and benefits to its members.

This includes Wi-Fi, cable sports channels and a weekly pizza night.

While work commitments may dictate how much individuals are able to utilise the centre, it has generally been viewed as a good resource offering something for everyone and I am not aware of any previous complaints.

We will, however, look into this and see whether the cost of membership could be met elsewhere – although this is likely to come from welfare funds which will of course have an impact on other services.

There are some anomalies to life in BATUS which stem from the relationship we have developed with the Canadians over many years via a memorandum of understanding.

We are not complacent and put a great deal into making the experience a positive one for all.



Picture: Greene Main



'SUSPEND SERVICE RETIREMENT'

AS part of its austerity measures, the government has extended the state pension age from 65 to 66.

So with the Territorial Army recruiting to 30,000, why doesn't the Ministry of Defence increase the retirement age for volunteers who can meet the required standards to mirror civilian employment?

Important skills would be retained and value for money delivered by hanging on to trained Servicemen and women without structural blockages to promotion. – Name and address supplied.

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TALKBACK

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#DISCOUNT DEBATE (P9)

@BeattieDoug

I look forward to going into Currys in west Belfast with my Forces discount card. Anyone want to come with me?

@hwallop

Great idea. MoD: Armed Forces shopping discount card. But top deal is 10% off at Iceland. Don't our troops deserve better?

#THE MILLIES (P14)

@rickygervais

It's true. I did indeed "blub". Possibly the most humbling, moving, yet fun and uplifting event of my life. An honour.

@simonjward

The @rickygervais video from *The Sun's* Millies is really heart-warming. Captain Si Maxwell is an absolute legend.

@tnewtondunn

Great to see @David_Cameron and @Ed_Miliband bury the hatchet for one night at *The Sun's* Millies. Stories so moving.

@CorporalScotty

Since the Millies on Thursday we've had great support from people, we are only going one way from here! #scottyslittlesoldiers

@hannahwhiteuk

What an inspiring night at the #Millies. We are so indebted to our Servicemen and women, who risk their lives daily...

#MILITARY TOURNAMENT

@BearGrylls

Well done @RHGDband and all at the @Soldierscharity Military Tournament! Fun to meet you guys

@joeshotbolt

British Military Tournament fantastic even the strangled cat pipe band Wellington school gun crews very impressive...

#BASE MOVES

@johnwyllie

Do we have decent housing stock for them [troops] when they come back?

@Steve_Lewis_

Shame, young lads missing out on adventure, join the Army-travel the world & all that stuff.

@soldiermagazine



Picture: Steve Dolk

Superfluous specialists? Most parachute training has become unnecessary, a *Soldier* reader argues

'Drop The Parachute Regiment'

INSTEAD of disbanding units that have centuries of tradition in order to reduce spending, why not get rid of a formation with only 72 years of history?

I am referring of course to The Parachute Regiment.

Let's face it, drops such as those made during the Second World War, or even the last one in Suez, are never going to take place again.

For a start, we don't possess the planes to move enough personnel plus their support units.

Also, modern anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems mean that most platforms flying at the necessary speeds to deliver troops wouldn't arrive in the drop zone. And most that did jump probably wouldn't make it to the ground alive.

Savings could be made by scrapping parachute training for all but a few specialists who could come from any cap badge.

I concede there may still be roles for the likes of the Pathfinders to mark out helicopter landing zones, but not for whole battalions.

Take away the need for airborne units and you take away the need for the cap badge as well.

Scrapping this sort of training for other arms is definitely a money saver too.

I have never understood why, for example, a vehicle mechanic from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers needs to be parachute trained.

He is not going to jump with a toolbox and bag of vehicle spares.

Since Vietnam, insertions have been done much more efficiently by helicopter.

Everyone is delivered together in the right spot, not scattered over a wide area. Landing zones can by their nature be a lot smaller than a drop zone. It's time to admit that

the future is with heli-borne assault troops, which makes everyone, even Paras, "hats".

My opinion may cause controversy but this method of warfare is now as outdated as the cavalry charge. — Pte Corfield, MPGS.





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British Forces News
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TALKBACK

Air Mile 'meanness' triggers reader malaise

SURELY by blocking soldiers from collecting Air Miles the Ministry of Defence is invading the rights of Service personnel?

I have checked with four major airlines and they are quite clear that this benefit is attributable to the individual flyer and not the organisation paying.

The MoD is therefore refusing us something we are clearly entitled to.

Air Miles do not come free and must be costed in by companies. So the department has no problem in paying UK and foreign firms money only to let them retain this.

Yet individuals who repeatedly put their lives on the line are denied what is theirs. – Name and address supplied.

Sheila Watson, SO1 Defence Travel, responds: In accordance with MoD standards of conduct and behaviour, personnel travelling on departmental

business are not permitted to make personal gain from public expenditure.

As a result, Air Miles may only be collected in order to obtain associated benefits such as priority boarding or access to special lounges but the traveller must enter any such privileges and points collected into the hospitality book.

The MoD has previously investigated ways of redeeming Air Miles that have been collected through duty journeys but this has proved not to be cost effective.

Through its contract with Hogg Robinson Group, the department receives alternative discounts from some airlines including reduced fares, extra baggage

and other favourable terms and conditions which exceed the value of the Air Miles we do not claim.

The Defence Fraud Audit Unit has advised that loyalty and membership details must not be entered into a traveller's profile because in no circumstances should gifts, rewards or hospitality be solicited from private companies.

Crown servants are remunerated for their service through their pay and, if appropriate, allowances. The above policy is only applicable to duty or business journeys – that is, trips paid for by the MoD.

Privately arranged and self-funded travel is not included.



Penalised over partnership with police officer

I AM extremely disgruntled about the rules in place for claiming involuntary separation allowance.

I am based in Cyprus and have been happily married for three years.

My wife is a serving police officer in the UK and does not wish to leave her job of nine years as, just like me, she is mapping her own career.

I recently applied for the allowance through my unit admin officer but was told that it would not be granted because my wife could transfer her job to my location.

Unaware that the British Police had jobs on the island, I investigated and found that there were in fact only three vacancies and for high ranking senior officers within the Sovereign Base Area Police.

I was also told that my wife could transfer into the Military Provost Guard Service which is not true. Even if she could, there are no such posts in Cyprus.

On resubmitting my claim with all this information it was again denied. This time I was told that my wife is not classed as a civil servant.

However, I have looked on many websites including the government's and they state the opposite. It seems the MoD is the only

organisation that classes the UK's civilian police as an emergency service.

I have now discovered that I am one of around 300 serving soldiers to have experienced this problem.

Why are we being discriminated against for marrying another person in uniform? – WO2 A Backhouse, RRF, Cyprus.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds: One of the qualifying circumstances for involuntary separation allowance is where a Service person's spouse or civil partner is in the military or civil service and you are posted away from them.

It is frustrating there is no single definition that states police officers are not civil servants but is clear from a variety of sources that this is the case.

The YouGov website categorises police as members of the emergency services and not UK civil servants, who are directly employed by a department of state and able to move between these branches.

Police are employed regionally, have a separate pension scheme and a different union representation.

As your partner will be aware, there are many civil servants who work in support of constabularies but are not officers.

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency's pay and allowance casework and complaints cell may consider

changing a person's status to involuntarily separated if there are genuinely compelling circumstances, one of which might be if your wife has a binding contractual commitment to her job that cannot be broken at short notice.

If you feel this is the case you should consult your RAO about submitting paperwork to this team.

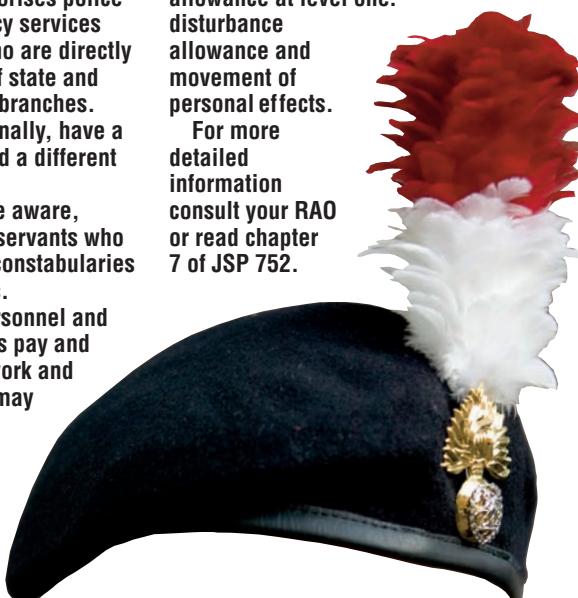
Your spouse is entitled to accompany you to Cyprus but you have both made the difficult decision that she should remain in the UK to continue her career.

The Army over-37 provision is specifically intended to support those who choose to serve unaccompanied in the later part of their careers.

If you qualify and opt for that, you would be entitled to claim longer separation allowance at level one:

disturbance allowance and movement of personal effects.

For more detailed information consult your RAO or read chapter 7 of JSP 752.





COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Jane Sinski, Darlington, Co Durham; Lt A Lappin RN, RNB Chivenor; Lt Col A P Gladen RE, HQ Royal Engineers, Minley, Surrey; D McCollan, Crosby, Liverpool and Mrs B-J Lawton, Shrivenham.



DIARY

January 2-July 2013: The Imperial War Museum, London, will be closed for redevelopment in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 2014. Visit www.iwm.org.uk for more.

Until January 2013: Warriors of the Plains: 200 Years of Native North American Honour and Ritual. A new display at Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum offering visitors a contemporary insight into warrior societies of the past. Visit www.exeter.gov.uk/ramm for more information.

January 19-20: Free family activity on HMS Belfast. History in Your Hands is a chance for visitors to explore the ship and hear the stories behind the craft and the men who served on-board. At 1100-1230 and 1400-1600. www.iwm.org.uk

February 19-23: The Glorious Georgians. A free drop-in family craft event at Surrey History Centre. For more information visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre

Until further notice: Other ranks – honouring the fallen. A new multi-sensory, sound-based exhibition to mark a month of remembrance and bringing to life the role of troops in the British Army. Royal Armouries, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS10 1LT.

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

The Not Forgotten Association: 020 7730 2400; www.nfassociation.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 at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 103/12: Seniority of serving and ex-Regular soldiers on enlistment in the Territorial Army

ABN 104/12: Voluntary early release scheme 2012-2014

ABN 105/12: A2020/FR20 communication – where to find the information

ABN 106/12: Briefings for Gurkhas and Commonwealth personnel made redundant in tranche two on regularising immigration status by applying for settlement in the UK

DIN 2012DIN01-249: Pension rights accrued for various groups in Armed Forces Pension Scheme 1975, Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2005 and Reserve Forces Pension Scheme 2005

DIN 2012DIN01-239: Shift continuity payments changes to shift working policy rules

DIN 2012DIN01-237: MoD Armed Forces support to The Prince's Trust team programme: appeal for short-term volunteer leaders

DIN 2012DIN01-236: Introduction of an L2 JAMES marker for patients with long-term medical conditions or long-term medication requirements

DIN 2012DIN01-235: Officers' new entrants' rates of pay

DIN 2012DIN01-232: TV licensing – commanding officer responsibilities, requirement for Service personnel, visiting forces and MoD establishments

DIN 2012DIN01-231: Volunteers for service with 148 (Meiktila) Commando Forward Observation Battery, Royal Artillery

DIN 2012DIN01-230: Fuel and light charges increases

DIN 2012DIN01-228: Armed Forces Act 2006: higher authorities for joint units and organisations and Service personnel in non-op posts overseas

DIN 2012DIN01-227: HM Forces railcards – administrative instructions

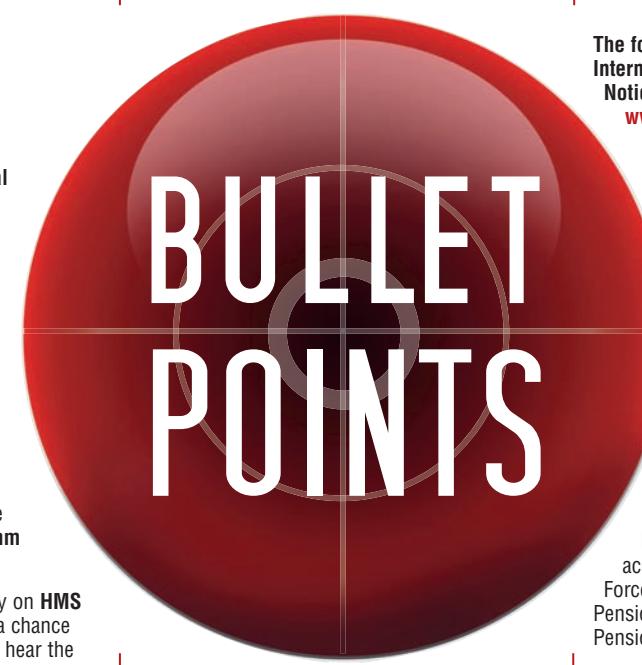
DIN 2012DIN01-226: Equality and diversity combined defence Whitley Council meeting

DIN 2012DIN02-017: Army security clearance requirements

DIN 2012DIN03-040: Defence lessons

DIN 2012DIN03-037: Visits to hospital exercises at the Army Medical Services Training Centre in Strensall, York

DIN 2012DIN04-153: Declaration of obsolete



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.armedforcesshumanists.org.uk

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01264 382324; mil 94391 2324; www.aff.org.uk

Blind Veterans UK: (formerly St Dunstan's) www.blindveterans.org.uk; 0207 7235021

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's



– lightweight tablet data terminal mk 1

DIN 2012DIN04-152: Procedures for the return of demolition kit L2A1

DIN 2012DIN07-167: Volunteers for 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Op Battery, Royal Artillery

DIN 2012DIN07-166: Army Mountaineering Association expedition to Peru in July/August 2013: Ex Northern Altura

DIN 2012DIN07-165: Air Warfare Centre Cranwell courses that are available to the wider defence audience

DIN 2012DIN07-164: Nijmegen Marches 2013

DIN 2012DIN07-163: Operational electronic intelligence training courses 2013/14

DIN 2012DIN07-162: Training by manufacturer or civilian contractor – submissions for financial year 2014/15

DIN 2012DIN07-161: Psychological operations courses

DIN 2012DIN07-160: Military Aviation Authority Centre of Air Safety Training

DIN 2012DIN07-159: Instructions for the all arms commando course

DIN 2012DIN09-025: Royal garden parties 2013 – civilian staff

DIN 2012DIN10-042: Ex White Lion 13 – AGC Alpine Ski Championships 2013

DIN 2012DIN10-041: Infantry Offshore Regatta, February 4-8 2013

DIB 64/12: Relaunch of Gems, the defence ideas scheme

DIB 65/12: PUS writes to staff about MoD Your Say initial results

DIB 66/12: NEM: update on progress

DIB 67/12: Status of resettlement grants

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 417000 or email your name and address to **apt.mod@btconnect.com** with the event you are interested in attending.

January: 15, Manchester; 16, Blackpool; 17, Blackburn.

February: 12, Stamford; Truro, Bath, Cheltenham (dates TBC).

SEARCHLINE

Former soldier Ben Mead has set up **Military Roots**, a social group for ex-Servicemen and women in Eastbourne and surrounding areas. Open to those who have served in any branch of the Armed Forces, the organisation aims to bring together people who may be missing the camaraderie of military life. For further information contact info@militaryroots.co.uk

Mr C Todd would like to find a friend called **David Hadden**, born January 26, 1947, in Rushden, Northants. He was serving in Detmold Germany with the 9th/12th Royal Lancers from 1974 to 1977. If anyone has information please contact Mr Todd on 07531 781455.

Ex-Serviceman John Halsted is cycling the route of one of the **1945 death marches** – from Sagan in Poland to Bad Orb near Frankfurt in Germany. He is looking for UK soldiers and veterans, including those who have been injured or discharged, to take part and a charity to be the willing recipient of funds raised during the 640km trip. Anyone interested should email him via books@abelpublishing.com

Holocaust survivor Agnes Grunwald-Spier, author of *The Other Schindlers*, is seeking help. **Research for her next book on betrayals in the Holocaust has led her to the word "Ratweek".** Can anyone explain the origin of this term? Those with personal information on the Belgian traitor Prosper de Zitter – or Desitter – or with stories of betrayal of Jews in the Holocaust are also asked to get in touch. Email agnesgrunwaldspier@gmail.com

REUNION

The Infantry Boys Battalion and Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion Association will hold its next biannual reunion on June 1, 2013 in Oswestry. Informal lunchtime meet-up in the former officers' mess (now Oswestry Rugby Club) from 1200 followed by dinner at 1930 in the function room of the Wynnstar Hotel, where dress is black tie or lounge suit with medals. For more information visit the news section of www.ijlb.co.uk or contact Graham Fowler via 07778 354188.

NO. 854

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of the "best curry of the day" competition at the annual ABF curry lunch held in Army Headquarters, Andover.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 854, Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,**

Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by January 31. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the March

issue. Usual rules apply. **November's winner:** First correct entry drawn at random was Mr S Hearley, AGC Worthy Down, Hampshire. Runners-up: Sue Manning, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear and Maj C Thapa, 4 Military Intelligence Battalion, Bulford, Wiltshire.



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Sleepless nights over redundancy



Picture: Graeme Main

A If January wasn't gloomy enough, many British Army personnel will have what seems like the sword of Damocles hanging over them as the next round of redundancies are announced.

My family faced this threat in tranche two and we expect to go through the same long and worrying wait this year – many sleepless nights ahead I fear.

I recently attended the Tri-Service Youth Forum, an initiative funded by The Royal British Legion to give teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18 chance to express the difficulties they face as military children.

One of the subjects the youngsters chose to present was redundancy.

It was obvious that the effects were felt acutely, whether that was concern for where they would live, the school they would go to or the strain their family may face if told their soldier was eligible.

For the Armed Forces redundancy really is a family issue, with notices presenting sweeping life changes.

A large number of military partners and spouses have said they find the strain unbearable and I am pleased that the website www.bigwhitewall.com offers a confidential and anonymous resource for anyone wanting to talk.

The Army Families Federation also has a good relationship with the Service's redundancy cell which enables us to answer your queries and we have a wide range of frequently asked questions displayed on our website.

If you have any comments we will be happy to hear them at www.aff.org.uk

Harnessing Army history

BASE moves and the associated changes for individuals remaining in the military will bring significant challenges and decisions for families this year – particularly those whose unit is relocated.

My Serviceman, once a Royal Welch Fusilier but now a Royal Welsh, is currently working on the merging of the two battalions.

What seems clear is just how much history matters to his colleagues and how difficult it is to get consensus over the loss of key elements of the formation's identity to form a single unit that appeals to all.

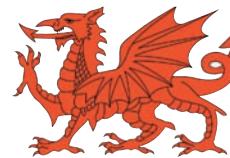
It is amazing how attached even we as a family find ourselves to cap badges and regimental mascots.

Who knew that decisions about whether a goat wears a coat or the dragon stands on all fours could trigger such lively debate?

Sadly the rampant version of the Welsh dragon that I have on my house sign has been consigned to history.

I have been incredibly impressed by how grown-up everyone has been over the imposed changes and will watch with interest to see how two becomes one.

However, the move from Germany to the UK in particular is not without anxiety.



Picture: Sgt Alison Baskerville, RLC

Kidding aside: Troops genuinely care about the traditional elements of their formation's identity

Even with a smaller Army, the AFF is concerned at how we will all fit into the available housing stock.

Education, healthcare and transport must be closely considered to ensure that families are in locations with infrastructure which has been well thought through.

The secretary of state's announcement that investment will be made around remote locations to encourage employment for Service spouses is welcome and demonstrates that the issue of family incomes has been taken seriously.

The AFF will liaise with the Ministry of Defence to ensure that this work really does materialise and we will be taking a keen interest in all new unit locations to ensure they are fit for purpose.



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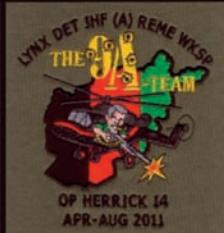
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VIVACIOUS VIEWING



THE EXPENDABLES 2 out now

SLY Stallone's Barney Ross is back with his team of guns for hire in this star-studded, no-holds-barred sequel. The storyline is predictable but it's more about the carnage and there certainly isn't any shortage of that. Sent to recover data from a downed plane, the gang is captured by a bad guy (**Jean-Claude Van Damme**) and one of the group is executed. Naturally, a whirlwind of death and destruction follows. Anyone who's anyone in the action film genre makes an appearance, including **Chuck Norris** and it's worth watching for the special effects alone.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



CODENAME: GERONIMO out now

In May 2011 the mission to kill or capture Osama bin Laden was launched. We already know the ending but learning about the mysterious intelligence-gathering and training behind the operation is gripping. Much of this film is conjecture but complex hypotheses and the palpable tension of the final minutes make for a cracking movie. The appreciation of the agony of choice between a surgical strike versus the eventual manned aviation assault is impressive to see and the concise study of group dynamics in high pressure situations is rare in this genre.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



THE AGGRESSION SCALE out now

THE plot of this low-budget thriller is simple enough. Mr Bellavance is a mobster out on bail and wants his missing money back. He sends his men to retrieve it within 48 hours. The action is ramped up with the violent shooting of three people and unfortunately for the bad guys their behaviour towards their targets results in an act of aggression by the survivors. A victim's son is an emotionally disturbed teenager with a history of vicious episodes. This is an entertaining revenge film that stands out, with plenty of brutality to boot.

Prakash Prema, MoD civvy



TOTAL RECALL out now

THE original *Total Recall* is one of my favourite movies and the remake isn't a bad effort. It has plenty of eye candy in the form of **Jessica Biel** and **Kate Beckinsale** but the choice of **Colin Farrell** as the main protagonist is a poor one as he's no Arnie. The story has been updated and adapted to represent our modern day world, so it isn't just a rehash of the old film. Effects are great and the action is pretty decent, but it will always be in the shadow of the former version and simply isn't as big as its predecessor. It is a good bit of fun, though.

Capt Nick Mazzei, AGC (ETS)



THE BAYTOWN OUTLAWS out now

THE redneck Oodie brothers bite off more than they can chew when they agree to rescue Celeste's godson from mobster Carlos. They soon have various assassins including biker chicks and Red Indians on their trail. A cross between *The Dukes of Hazard* on acid and a hillbilly *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, this rips along at quite a pace, cutting a violent swathe through the deep south of the US. Although despicable at first, you will be rooting for the eponymous outlaws by the end of an entertaining 90 minutes.

Cpl Jools Finch, MPGS



WIN... UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

THE famous franchise renowned for high-octane fights to the death has returned to reunite action legends **Jean-Claude Van Damme** and **Dolph Lundgren**. Here, the surviving Unisols must battle anarchy to build a new order ruled without government oversight. *Soldier* has teamed up with Optimum Home Entertainment to offer a copy of *Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning* to five lucky readers. To have a chance of winning, tell us who stars with Lundgren. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: January 31



Interview: Joe Clapson

WITH legal disputes over the film rights finally settled, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* has arrived on the big screen to the sound of much excitement about the revolutionary technology and sweeping landscapes it showcases.

Shot at 48 frames per second, compared with the usual 24, Sir Peter Jackson's movie certainly provides a viewing experience like never before.

Aside from any debate about its loyalty to JRR Tolkien's original story, the first instalment of the trilogy is visually stunning with incredible 3D imagery from the beginning as Erebor comes under siege.

Explaining the expertise used to create the *Lord of the Rings* prequel, its director admitted: "I had the most incredible family of skilled artists around me.

"This is a great time to be making films because I can shut my eyes and anything I imagine can be put on-screen. There really are no barriers anymore."

The three-hour journey to Middle Earth, or New Zealand, sees hobbit Bilbo Baggins played superbly by Martin Freeman (*Sherlock*, *Nativity*, *The Office*).

The character (pictured right) is persuaded to join a band of dwarves and Gandalf the Grey (Sir Ian McKellan) on an adventure to reclaim their kingdom from the dragon Smaug.

As the adaptation unfolds, Tolkien aficionados may well argue it strays too far from the epic novel.

Even co-screenwriter Philippa Boyens accepts the late author may have disapproved. However, she also believes he would have seen merit in the feature.

"When Tolkien wrote the mythology he said he hoped it would have a life of its own," Boyens said.

"I can imagine that he would have huge issues with a lot of it because it was not his job to make it into a film but I think he would've enjoyed Gandalf's part."

McKellan and Freeman front a stellar cast that includes Richard Armitage and Cate Blanchett, producing an air of elegance in a movie that is full of perfectly-timed humour.

Speaking at the London press launch, Jackson revealed that securing Freeman as Bilbo had been paramount to the entire project.

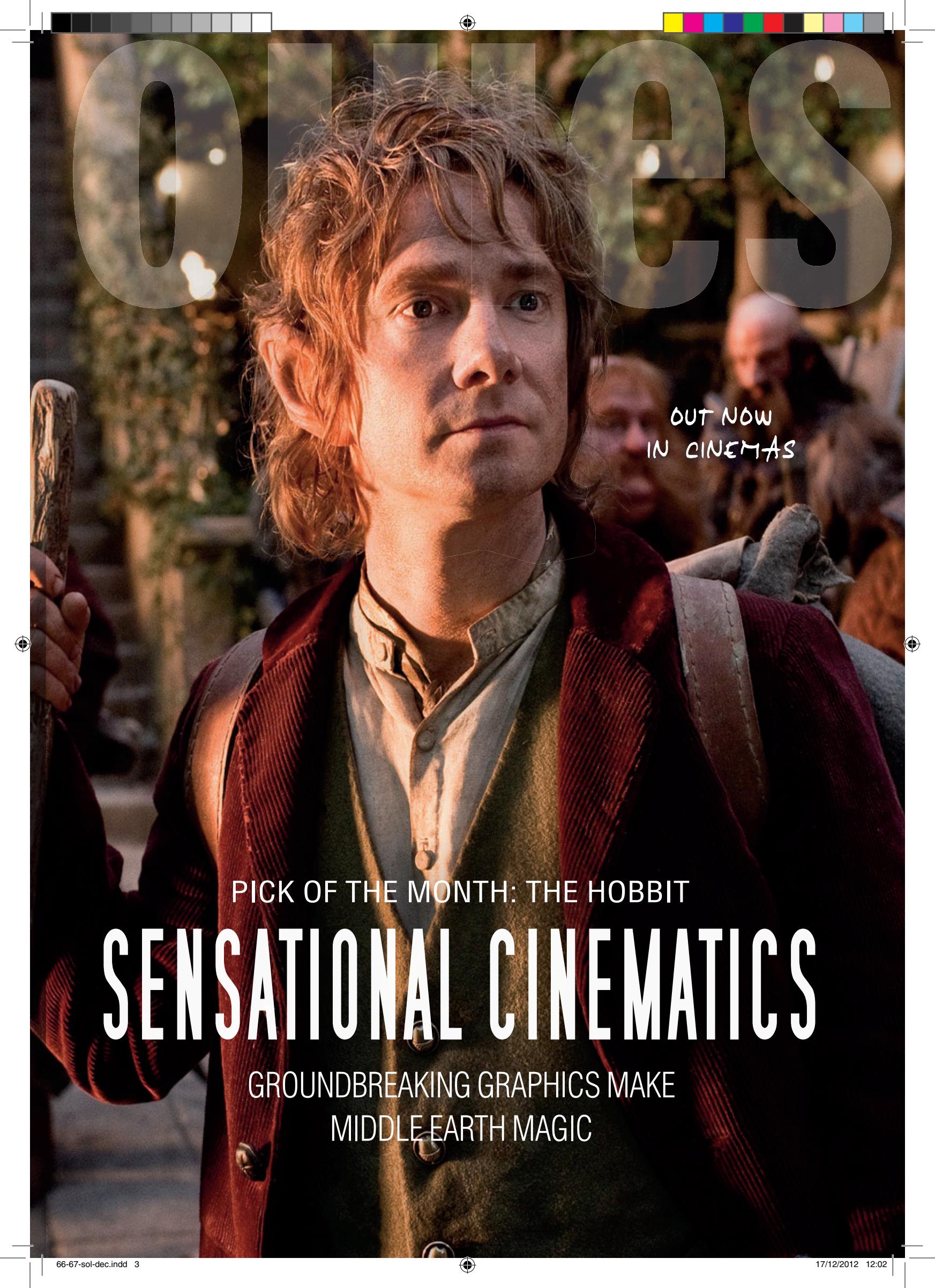
"I was in a state of panic because we couldn't think of anyone else," the Kiwi admitted. "If a piece of casting isn't absolutely perfect you are really jeopardising the release."

Thankfully for the filmmaker, his British colleague was prepared to travel to New Zealand to be involved.

"I didn't get a chance to unwind and spent 2011 being quite knackered," commented Freeman.

With cast body clocks readjusted and public anticipation high, this remarkable work of art is being enjoyed by audiences across the world.

If you refuse to accept plot tinkering you may struggle to enjoy the feature but for admirers of pioneering cinema and jaw-dropping graphics, it is sensational stuff. ■



SOULS

OUT NOW
IN CINEMAS

PICK OF THE MONTH: THE HOBBIT

SENSATIONAL CINEMATICS

GROUNDBREAKING GRAPHICS MAKE
MIDDLE EARTH MAGIC

games



JANUARY'S
LEADING LIGHTS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

HITTING NEW HEIGHTS

FEARED ASSASSIN RETURNS TO ACTION AFTER LENGTHY SPELL IN THE SHADOWS

Review: Richard Long

WITH more than six years passing since the last instalment in this hit franchise dropped on the shelves, fans could be forgiven for thinking they had seen the last of the fearsome Agent 47.

But worry not, after an overly long absence our hero makes a welcome return to action in *Hitman Absolution*.

The story starts with the famed assassin being sent to kill former handler Diane Burnwood after she betrayed the duo's shady employers, The Agency.

Agent 47 duly delivers on his mission but his one-time ally delivers a dying wish – to take care of Victoria, a young girl she had dramatically freed from the clutches of the lethal organisation.

In a predictable twist he accepts the challenge and turns his back on his superiors, the job and the ruthless skills that defined him as a character.

This initial plot hints at a promising storyline and narrative but as the game progresses it quickly descends into the ludicrous, with increasingly far-fetched developments failing to hold the imagination for long.

As a series, *Hitman* is renowned for boasting vast, open levels that allow players to eliminate targets as they see fit.

It is a case of stalking the area, tailing your mark, observing routines and keeping an eye out for any potential obstacles that could scupper the assignment.

This attention to detail gives proceedings a strong air of realism and while *Absolution* makes an attempt to recreate this magic, it ultimately lacks the scale and depth achieved by its predecessors.

However, it does triumph at times and an early level set in a thriving Chinatown with multiple kill options and escape routes harks back to the good old days.

Agent 47 is ordered to take out a hideous crime lord and has a vast array of methods of disposal ranging from poisoning his food to pushing him down a manhole.

Unfortunately these success stories are few and far between.

While the campaign struggles to hit previous heights there are some shining lights to be found within this release.

The contracts mode proves to be a great addition and allows players to create hits based around the main levels and then challenge friends and the online community with their creations.

The designer selects the target and awards bonus points depending on whether you are spotted and which weapons are used to deliver the fatal blow.

Those attempting the task have to match the stipulations set out and post high scores by completing the job in a faster time.

This injects a much-needed element of fun into the title and *Absolution* also deserves great credit for delivering some stunning visuals and high-end presentation.

It's just a shame that a lukewarm storyline and a lack of depth combine to make this an average offering when it could have been so much more. ■

VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND

HALO 4

for Xbox 360

WITH developers Bungie no longer making *HALO*, 343 Industries, the new custodians of the franchise, were under pressure to deliver. But there is no need to worry, the fourth instalment is the best yet. After some amazing introductory graphics this title plunges you into a spectacular and alien world that is filled with deadly enemies. The campaign is challenging and fresh while the online experience offers a more personalised view via the superb spartan ops and war games options. My advice is simple – buy it now.



David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen

MEDAL OF HONOUR WARFIGHTER

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

PUBLISHERS Electronic Arts launch another attempt to seize control of the first-person shooter market from Activision's heavyweight offering *Call of Duty*. While this is highly polished and visually appealing, it offers nothing new. At five hours the campaign is shorter than that of its rivals and the action lacks variety as the game switches between two Special Forces operatives who have a penchant for blasting terrorists. The online options fare slightly better as *Medal of Honour* comes into its own, but you are advised to stick with the original and best.



Richard Long, Soldier

F1 RACE STARS

for Xbox/PS3/PC/Wii

DESPITE its appearance, *F1 Race Stars* is a game that both children and adults can enjoy. A host of Grand Prix aces have been recreated, such as Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button, and your chosen character speaks to you as the action unfolds. This release has a cartoon feel and boasts tracks with jumps, loop-the-loops and hairpins that reach up into the sky – all the features you would expect in a *Scalextrix* set. With four-player split-screen racing, a 12-player competition and an extensive career mode, there is plenty to keep petrol heads more than entertained.



Josh Main, civvy

ASSASSIN'S CREED III – LIBERATION

for PS Vita

THIS PS Vita spin-off sees female assassin Aveline immersed in 18th century America as Spanish forces attempt to take control of Louisiana. The action flows quite swiftly and the gameplay, although somewhat easy at times, is exciting and enjoyable. As with most titles on this platform players need to get to grips with the dual analogue stick controls and an online mode offers a welcome bonus once the campaign is complete. Ubisoft have succeeded in giving *Assassin's Creed* a lick of paint and this will appeal to the franchise's newcomers and veteran fans.



ATpr Andy Lavery, AAC

FAR CRY 3

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

THIS title is a fantastic mix of *Borderlands*, *Rage*, *Skyrim* and *Assassin's Creed*. If you enjoyed these then you will definitely find something you like in *Far Cry 3*. However, it is not without its shortfalls. The action can slow a little when things get hectic, the sound is left wanting at times and it is far from polished. But it is tremendous fun, the characters are well written and the island is a joy to explore. Hats off to Ubisoft Montreal for taking a game with greater potential than execution (*Far Cry 2*) and turning it into one of the best releases of the year.



SSgt Graeme Russell, Scottish Tpt Regt

RISE OF THE GUARDIANS

for Xbox 360/PS3/Wii

CHILDREN'S icons the Easter bunny, Santa Claus and the tooth fairy work to protect the world from haunting foes such as Pitch the Nightmare King. Despite being aimed at youngsters this game provides some decent twists. Attacks are generated with one button, keeping play easy, and the main characters have three special moves each. Otherwise, it's pretty much the same old missions of running through the environment with Pitch often, but not always, stepping in to stop you. The multiplayer offers a fun alternative but this is definitely one for a youthful audience.



LCpl John Murphy, QARANC



mus

PICK OF THE MONTH:

COMEBACK QUEENS

SUPERGROUP CELEBRATE DECADE OF HITS



JANUARY'S
SOUND
SENSATIONS



Review: Richard Long

WITH many of today's overnight pop sensations dropping off the musical radar almost as quickly as they are catapulted on to it, Girls Aloud deserve credit for surviving ten years in the industry.

Having formed on *X Factor* predecessor *Popstars: The Rivals*, the group have enjoyed a decade of success that has spawned 20 consecutive top-ten singles, four number ones and five platinum studio albums.

To celebrate their achievement the five-piece have released new offering *Ten*, which features a selection of their finest work alongside four original tracks.

While diehard fans will undoubtedly be delighted with the record it may also come as a surprise to the more casual followers, many of whom assumed the singers had gone their separate ways after a three-year hiatus.

However, once back in the studio they soon rediscovered their groove.

"We recorded an awful lot of new material for this album," explained band member Nicola Roberts.

"We didn't want to let people down but we didn't want to let our past music down either. We knew we had to live up to the greatest hits that would already be on the record."

"As soon as the chorus for *Something New* was there, we realised we had it."

The track ticks all the boxes of a Girls Aloud hit thanks to its energetic pop feel but it was *Beautiful Cause You Love Me* which really caught their attention.

"After I heard the first line I said 'stop, that's our song now,'" said Kimberley Walsh, who has been lighting up Saturday nights on BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing*.

"We knew we had to get our vocals on it quickly or we'd lose the track. It was just like the old days – 'get the gang together we've got work to do'."

"Fortunately, after ten years, we've learnt that we sometimes do our best work under pressure and 48 hours later it was done."

The original material sits comfortably alongside the more established tracks but anyone foolishly expecting these tunes to push the boundaries will be disappointed.

The greatest hits are immediately recognisable and have stood the test of time, which perhaps highlights a lack of innovation in the pop market over the past ten years.

While this is enjoyable enough you can't help but feel that after such a long absence an album of new numbers would have been an ideal way to celebrate a decade at the top. ■

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

Coldplay Live 2012

THIS film/live album documents **Coldplay's** *Mylo Xyloto* world tour, which was seen by more than three million people



including shows in Paris, Montreal and the band's headline set at Glastonbury. The sound is surprisingly sharp and although the picture quality is poor in places it can easily be overlooked as the performances are amazing. The idea to give LED wristbands to fans was pure genius and makes a visually stunning experience. This is a 90-minute kaleidoscope of emotions encapsulating the energy, atmosphere and magic that is a Coldplay concert.

Ray Kalaker, ex-RE

Unapologetic by Rihanna

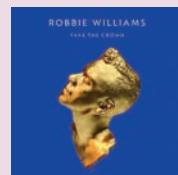
TO be brutally honest I didn't like this at all. I realise **Rihanna** has a few fans and occasionally gets a song or two onto the radio – some of which are quite catchy – but the tracks on this album are just not in the same league. Apart from not liking the tunes that much, the other negative is the language used. Surely a large part of her fan base is kids? I don't want to sound miserable but if your career revolves around having large groups of children listen to your music and be influenced by it you could be a bit more creative than just banging in swear word after swear word.



Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

Take The Crown by Robbie Williams

DESPITE a *Take That* reunion and a short break in his solo career, **Robbie Williams** is back with a vengeance on his ninth studio album. *Take The Crown* is the big, brash, confident Robbie at his best and this release is what fans have been longing for – huge pop hits from start to finish. Given the fact he has sold more than 60 million records and has won more Brit Awards than any other artist in history, you'd think he'd have run out of steam and fresh ideas. Quite the opposite, this guy just carries on going and more importantly keeps delivering exactly what his adoring public craves. Pure class.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

The Female Boss by Tulisa

NOT an album I would have personally picked, but *The Female Boss* makes a promising start with the smash hit *Young*, which topped the UK singles chart. However, it soon descends into disjointedness as the tracks alternate between dance, RnB and pop, leaving you with the impression that **Tulisa** is somewhat confused about which direction to take in her musical career. Unless you are a devoted fan, or tone deaf, I would not recommend this record; it severely lacks any connection between the music and listener and would only gather massive amounts of dust, rather than any friends.



Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds

DNA by Little Mix

THE debut offering from 2011 *X Factor* winners **Little Mix** is full of amazing, bouncy and calming music that will keep a smile on your face and a spring in your step all day long. The 12 tracks just keep giving and almost immediately get stuck in your head and there is something to suit nearly every occasion. The hit singles *Wings*, *DNA* and *How Ya Doin'?* are among the many standout tracks from this exciting girl group and the album is a must-buy if you and your friends like to sing along to some classic pop tunes, dance around the room or both.



Charlotte Main, civvy

Celebration Day by Led Zeppelin

THIS is a chance for the 20 million fans who tried but failed to get tickets for **Led Zeppelin's** one-off gig in 2007 to hear what kind of show the rock masters produced. The three surviving band members plus **John Bonham's** son, Jason, took to the stage at London's O2 Arena for an impressive performance of 16 of their most famous songs including a spine-tingling *Stairway To Heaven*, a fully-loaded *Whole Lotta Love* and an enjoyably intense *Dazed and Confused*. Unsurprisingly, this two-disc set is firmly from the top drawer. The likes of **The Wanted**, **One Direction** and **JLS** really should be embarrassed.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

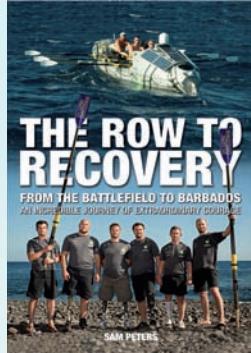


BOOKS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

ATLANTIC ASSAULT

SIX EX-SOLDIERS WITH EIGHT LEGS
ROW 2,800 MILES TO BARBADOS



Sea soldiers: Personnel
braved the waves in aid of
the Row2Recovery charity





Interview: Joe Clapson

FOR 51 days last year a team of six ex-soldiers – including four who were severely wounded – overcame broken equipment, horrendous weather and dwindling hydration supplies to row across the Atlantic.

The Row to Recovery takes readers through the story of the monumental accomplishment with spine-tingling vignettes on each of the 29-foot boat's crew members.

The inspiring tale was written by journalist Sam Peters who used his media savvy to ensure the audacious expedition received as much TV and newspaper coverage as possible.

Speaking to *Soldier*, the author said: "We were just presenting the facts of what was happening.

"The team ended up being on ITV 16 times which is the most appearances for a single story.

"It was about overcoming real adversity and coming through the other side."

The seafaring unit comprised of Capt Alex Mackenzie (3 Para), Capt Ed Janvrin (RGR), Lt Will Dixon (3 Rifles), LCpl Carl Anstey (1 Rifles), Cpl Rory Mackenzie (RAMC) and Cpl Neil Heritage (11 EOD) – a team that had just eight legs between them.

Explaining the gruelling experience, Heritage, the first British soldier of modern times to survive a double above-knee amputation, said: "This sport is about 65 per cent leg power but for me it was completely upper-body work.

"In preparation you can't recreate days and days of rowing but going into it I knew that once I started I was never going to stop and I just cracked on.

"Everyone had low moments but our Army experience helped us out and at stressful times it made things easy to deal with."

The 2,800-mile voyage was fraught with mental and physical obstacles, from having to foot-steer the entire way and eat emergency rations for 17 days to one crew member spending Christmas Day picking shrapnel from his backside in order to continue.

"The really compelling parts of the book, aside from the amazing feat of the row, are the backstories of each person involved and what it took for them to be there," said Peters.

After receiving a satellite phone call from Prince Harry while mid-Atlantic and a personal message from the Queen, the former Servicemen landed in Barbados on January 24 last year to a welcome party they hadn't planned for.

"We weren't expecting anything like the number of people that met us," said Heritage.

"The arrival in Barbados was just unbelievable and I cannot really explain it – you couldn't buy that feeling."

"Cliff Richard was there and strange as it may seem, we were pleased to see him – it's an experience that will be impossible to match."

The aim of the energy-sapping ocean crossing was to raise £1 million for the Row2Recovery charity while inspiring wounded Service personnel and their families.

"We wanted to give a message of what disabled people can achieve and an idea of what goes on away from the public domain," said Heritage.

"We showed that with the soldiers' way we can overcome anything."

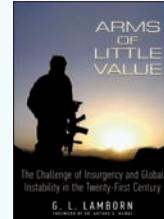
Peters added: "Something that is with the story throughout is the fact that these guys are injured for the long term and society owes a debt of gratitude and support to them." ■

RECONNOITRING READING

Arms of Little Value

by G L Lamborn

I HAVE read quite a few books on counter-insurgency and this is the best so far. It takes a holistic view on the subject; first work out why the trouble started and then you will be able to fix it. While the military is part of the solution, it is also part of the problem and only by looking at the whole can you resolve the underlying issues. The narrative is logical and easy to follow with points backed up by numerous examples from history. That said, it focuses solely on America, which may be of limited interest to the British audience.



Capt Doug Searle, RLC

Hell for Heroes

by Theo Knell

THANKFULLY, the constant stream of titles about life in the UK Special Forces appears to be slowing down, as does the flood of personal accounts about operations in Afghanistan. This is a topical book about PTSD and the effects of continual deployments on a warrant officer who served in the SAS in Northern Ireland and numerous other trouble spots. I was drawn in by the candid and thought-provoking narrative of a career soldier struggling with mental health issues and other problems that can beset those leaving the Army.

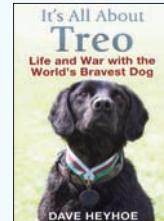


Maj Mike Peters, AAC

It's All About Treo

by Dave Heyhoe

AN emotional journey of one dog and his handler working hard to keep colleagues safe throughout their tour of Afghanistan, this title is more than good; it is excellent. Once I had started, I couldn't put it down until I had finished. The story brings a lump to the throat and provokes the deepest admiration for the sacrifices made by the battle-hardened author, as well as for the work our four-legged friends perform in return for nothing more than food and a cuddle. If you only read one book about the conflict, it should be this one.

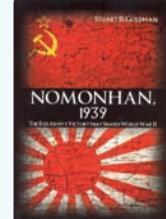


Rick Wilson, civvy

Nomonhan, 1939

by Stuart Goldman

NOMONHAN was a short, vicious war between the Soviet Union and Japan over the disputed border of Mongolia and Manchuria. The author contends that the 1939 battles set the scene for the Second World War because the Japanese were so thoroughly beaten by the Russians that they moved their sights to South East Asia, enabling Stalin to fight a campaign on one front against the Germans. This is an excellent book about an important encounter which greatly affected the events of the next six years.

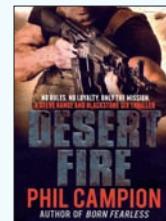


Andy Kay, Ex-RS

Desert Fire

by Phil Campion

THIS debut novel by "Big" Phil Campion is well written, easy to read and keeps up a cracking pace. The plot sees Steve Range and his team of ex-Special Forces soldiers venture deep into enemy territory to rescue a hostage – Col Gaddafi's son – before he reveals information to his captors that could bring down the British government. Along the way they must seize a hoard of gold; the payment for their services. There is excellent attention to detail in weapons, equipment and tactics throughout. A good read and a great boys' own adventure.

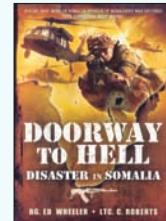


John Corr, Ex-RGJ

Doorway to Hell

by Wheeler & Roberts

OFFERING a US-centric view on the intervention in Somalia, this title highlights the frustrations of a complex peacekeeping operation in a failed state. The authors criticise all actors outside the American military; the UN secretary general, the restraint – or otherwise – shown by other nations' forces and the perceived inadequacies of the rules of engagement. The failure of command by the Clinton administration is a theme that borders on a rant. Whilst exposing the horrors of the conflict, this text is not a balanced analysis.



Lt Col Toby Hamnett, AGC (ALS)



CLAPSON'S KIT: THE FROZEN FINDINGS

GIRO G10 FROM £70

WITH a matte pewter finish, this snow helmet won't necessarily set the winter catwalk on fire but it certainly ticks the performance boxes. The lightweight, comfortable design meant I barely noticed I was wearing it, while the extended padded lining covering my ears was a real treat. Buy at www.blissnowboards.co.uk



BOLLE NOVA FROM £46.99

FITTING easily over the helmet were these goggles, which stepped up very well to the challenge of low light beaming onto the white surface ahead. The more UV light was exposed to the lens, the darker it became, helping me pick out rogue bumps in my path. Buy at www.rxsport.co.uk



DUKE JACKET £399

THE tech-spec of this Sweet Protection head-turner is top end. Its numerous accessible pockets are fastened with easy-to-operate water repellent YKK VT9 zips. With two-layer Gore-Tex, a sleeve compartment for your ski pass and a removable swivel snow skirt, this is worth its fairly sizeable price tag. Buy at www.sweetprotection.com



PORTER PANTS £329

MATCHING sharply with the Duke jacket, these two-layer Gore-Tex pants are as stylish and comfortable as any upper-half counterpart. Even with large pockets on the side and rear there is unrestricted movement on the slopes. Powder gaiters, inside leg vents and an adjustable waist add to a very decent and sleek package. Buy at www.sweetprotection.com



BASE LAYERS FROM £55 EACH

THE close-to-body design of the Bodyfit 200 leggings and the Oasis Crewe from Icebreaker allow for comfortable temperature regulation. The 100 per cent merino wool items are lightweight, breathable and remarkably odour resistant. On the cold Austrian slopes these garments kept me gratifyingly warm. The gusset in the leggings allowed free movement while the seamless underarm in the long-sleeve shirt was a welcome feature for reduced friction. Another bonus is that these base layers are machine-washable and very quick drying in the shade. Buy at www.natureshop.co.uk

WIN... £300-WORTH OF SPORT AND OUTDOOR KIT

ALL the items on this page, plus an array of other outdoor garments, can be purchased at the online store Sport Pursuit. *Soldier* has teamed up with the UK company to offer readers chance to win £300-worth of gear. To enter, log on to www.sportpursuit.com/soldier and sign up to receive sales updates. The winner will be picked at random on January 31 and notified by email. Every entrant can also get £5 off their first order over £25 by using the discount code SOLDIER25.

Top 9

Review: Joe Clapson

WHETHER you're a soldier or a civvy it is crucial to dress appropriately for the ski slopes – regardless of your ability on the piste itself.

Finding an appealing look in snow-based apparel is worth focusing on, but more important still is the search for garments with high technical performance.

On Austria's Stubai Glacier I put this season's latest kit to the test from the perspective of an average skier wishing to keep warm, have clear visibility, look sharp and, of course, perform his or her best turns.

With temperatures descending below minus-ten degrees, I tentatively donned a pair of Bodyfit leggings and an Oasis Crewe base layer – desperately hoping its 100 per cent merino wool would keep me both well-insulated and smelling fresh.

A pair of midnight blue Performance Shell Porter Pants from Sweet Protection set off a striking Duke jacket in scorch red from the same brand.

As someone who is more likely to attract stares by creating a human snowball on a slope than for my masterful poise on a mogul run, the infamous "all the gear no idea" phrase did spring to mind.

However, these items removed the need for numerous layers despite the icy wind.

Feeling smug with easy-access outer pockets and an inside compartment perfect for my MP3 player, I was content.

"Nice Sweet Protection kit, awesome stuff!" an unknown fellow slopesman shouted across to me. My satisfaction soared.

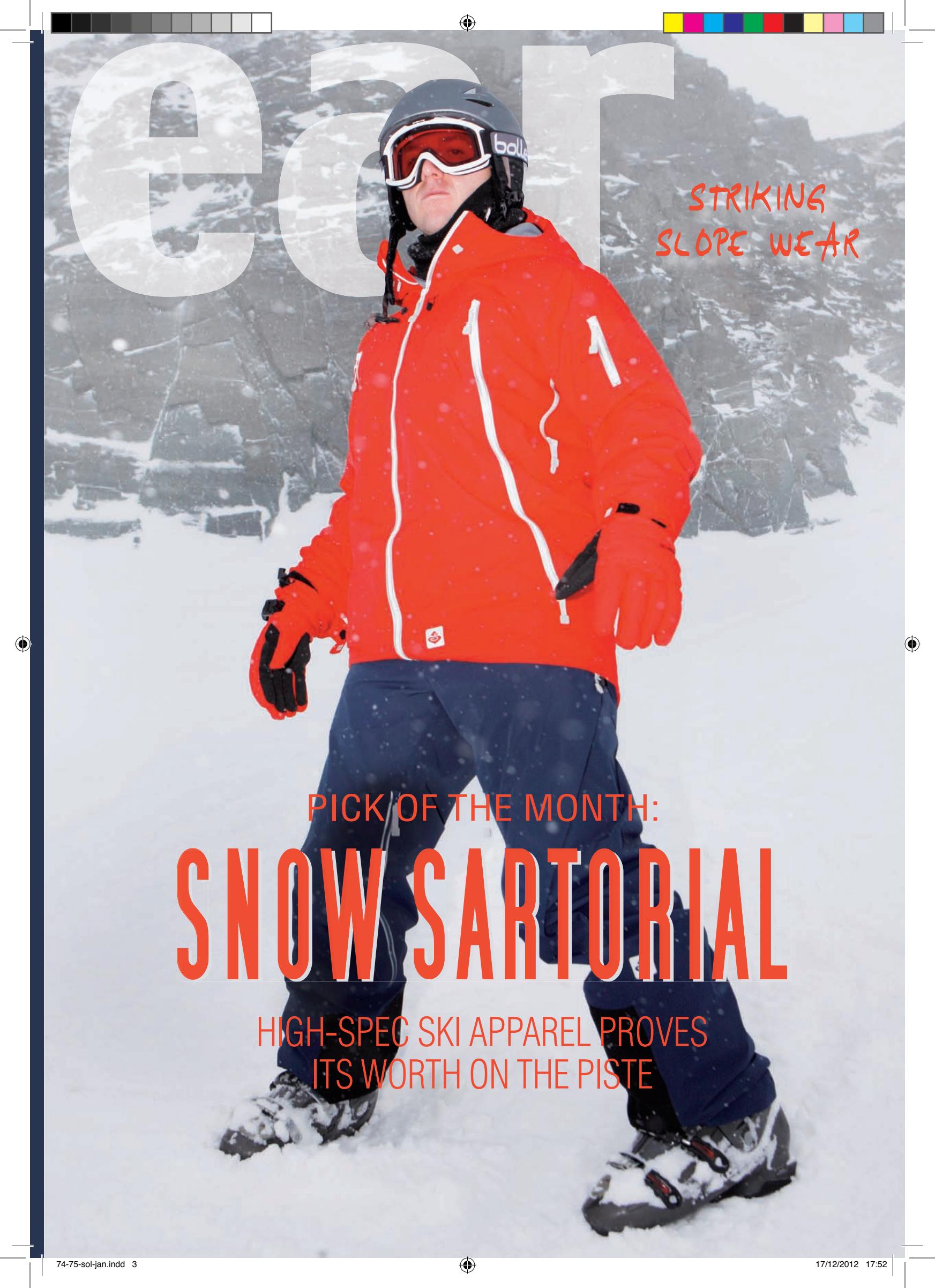
Admittedly, the garish colour had already won me over but it was this clothing's specifications that seemed to impress those in the know.

The two-layer Gore-Tex shell with 100g of Primaloft insulation kept me dry and warm with unrestricted movement.

And at no point during my stop-start outing, which may have involved a few tumbles onto wet snow, did I feel the cold.

The wide cut of the trousers made for easy fitting over my boots while its powder gaiters ensured I remained dry.

If ski gear performs well then users have a head start on the slopes, enjoying free range of movement and a clear view of what lies ahead. If it looks good, that is a bonus. This kit achieved all of the above. ■



com

STRIKING
SLOPE WEAR

PICK OF THE MONTH:

SNOW SARTORIAL

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SOLDIER SPORT

ARMY CYCLISTS ISSUE CALL TO ARMS AHEAD OF NEW ROAD CAMPAIGN

PICTURE: STEVE DOCK





Olympic heroes hit awards trail

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

THE Service's Olympic stars dominated proceedings at the Army Sports Awards with Games participants taking four of the five honours on offer at the annual ceremony.

Rowers Capt Heather Stanning (RA) and Capt Nick Beighton (RE), judo star Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) and shooting coordinator Maj Peter Underhill (Rifles) all collected top prizes as their London 2012 success filtered through to military circles.

The unbeaten rugby union sevens squad were the only soldiers capable of breaking the stranglehold as they took the team of the year title.

A host of established stars and emerging talent gathered for the prestigious event, which celebrated another triumphant year across a wide range of disciplines.

A fifth-place finish at the African Championships ensured Nartey (pictured right) qualified for last summer's Olympics and his determination to succeed saw him crowned Army sportsman of the year.

Competing in the under-73kg category, the Ghanaian fighter was defeated in the last 32 by Dutch rival Dex Elmont, who narrowly missed out on a bronze medal.

"It has been a great year for me," the Serviceman said.

"This award shows the Army is happy to support soldiers in the sporting world and proves that you can be a trooper and also go to the

Olympics and test yourself against the very best athletes.

"A medal would have been great. But when you look at the Games it is not all about winning gold, silver or bronze, it is an experience and you are an inspiration for future generations.

"Since competing I have taken four months off from judo. I returned to my unit and they were so supportive.

"Being part of that environment again really helped me. I'm now back in training and am looking forward to the Paris Grand Slam in February and the World Championships this summer."

Stanning (pictured left) was a deserving winner of the sportswoman of the year accolade after she and partner Helen Glover stormed the field to take gold in the women's pair.

The duo won all three World Cup regattas ahead of the Games and they flew to the line in a time of 7min 27.13sec – beating world champions New Zealand in the process.

Stanning has since returned to her unit – 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery – and was unable to collect her prize due to her commitments on pre-deployment training.

She is due to serve on Op Herrick later this year but is expected to return to the boat and defend her title at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Success on the water also saw fellow oarsman Beighton honoured as he collected the adaptive sport award following his efforts at the Paralympics.

The officer lost both legs above the knee in an IED blast in Helmand province and only started rowing in 2010.

After joining the Team GB set-up he was paired with Sam Scowen in the mixed double scull and the duo won World Cup bronze in one of their first competitions.

They battled through the repechage to qualify for the final at London 2012 but narrowly missed out on a medal as they finished fourth.

Beighton said: "To come so far, from being injured to competing for Great Britain at the Paralympics, is more than I imagined would be possible when I was at Selly Oak Hospital.

"The whole country was transformed by the Games and I was honoured to play a small part in that.

"I was disappointed not to win a medal but I took great experience away from it and that will hold me in good stead for the





Top guns: The Army rugby union sevens side [above], shooting manager Maj Peter Underhill [Rifles, top right] and rower Capt Nick Beighton [RE]

rest of my life."

Underhill, who recently left the Army, played a starring role in organising the Olympic shooting competitions staged at Woolwich Barracks.

The former officer was responsible for planning and delivering all events, including the design and layout of venues, transport and accommodation for athletes and the import and export of arms.

"Shooting has perhaps not always been in the limelight but it has a lot of value and tradition," he told *SoldierSport* after collecting the official of the year award.

"I was appointed competition manager for the Olympics in 2008 and I was working in a part-time capacity prior to that.

"It was a long road to get everything up and running at Woolwich but seeing 36 world and Olympic records posted during the Games was testament to all that

hard work and effort.

"The job was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me as an official; a life-changing experience and something that will never be forgotten."

The Army sevens side swept all before them during an impressive 2012 campaign, in which they won seven domestic tournaments and claimed the inaugural international defence title.

"It was an outstanding season and it is a huge privilege to be formally recognised as the number one Service sports team," manager Capt John Voss [CSS HQ ARRC] said.

"A lot of time and commitment has been given by the players who often sacrificed their weekends to compete at different events around the country.

"We do not go on the pitch just for the sport itself, we go out there for all the guys who have lost their lives, especially sevens players such as Pte Joe Vatubua [5 Scots].

"Our goal for the year was just to play the best we can. Pre-season went well and it was great to see that effort pay off." ■



Picture: Intersport Images/GB Rowing Team

AWARD WINNERS

Sportsman

First: Tpr Emmanuel Nartey [1 RTR, judo]; **Second:** Sgt Aaron Hull [15 Sig Regt, powerlifting]; **Third:** Cpl Marc Donnelly [RE, rugby league].

Sportswoman

First: Capt Heather Stanning [RA, rowing]; **Second:** Cpl Alexandra Dand [18 Sig Regt, skydiving]; **Third:** Cpl Hayley Just [ATU (NE), karate].

Official

First: Maj Peter Underhill [Rifles, shooting]; **Second:** Capt Frank Quinn [DHU Chicksands, modern pentathlon]; **Third:** Capt Andy Sangar [RE, rugby union].

Adaptive Sport

Capt Nick Beighton [RE, rowing].

Team

First: Army rugby union sevens squad; **Second:** Team Euphoria parachutists [skydivers].



Williams' Russian advance

Service's Welsh warrior aims for medal success against Europe's elite

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY boxer Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) is targeting European glory after celebrating a medal-winning start to his international adventure.

Having secured bronze at the Tammer Tournament in Finland and silver at the Olympic Gloves event in Estonia, the 21-year-old was in confident mood as he travelled to Russia to face the continent's best young fighting talent.

The 49kg star was in action at the under-22 championships as this issue went to press but told *SoldierSport* he was relishing the opportunity of testing himself on the biggest stage of his fledgling career.

"It is a ten-day tournament and is one of the biggest competitions outside of the Olympics, everyone is going to be there," he explained.

"I'm quite apprehensive as I've never been to an event like this before and it is going to be a tough one to win.

"I'll be facing the best fighters from each nation and as they are all under 22 years old they will be prospects for the Rio Olympics in 2016.

"If you lose a bout you are out; there are no round robins. I'm hoping to get a medal but it's all down to the luck of the draw.

"I don't know who I'm up against but at the same time my opponents will not know much about me."

"I'M MUCH LEANER AND I FEEL STRONG, ALL I NEED TO WORK ON IS MY SPEED"

Williams is in his first season with the Welsh set-up and believes his decision to drop down a weight has been a key contributor to his success this year.

He said: "I used to box at 54kg but I was too big. I'm much leaner and I feel strong, all I need to work on is my speed. Competing in Finland and Estonia gave me an insight into what it

is like at the top level.

"I'm more ready than I've ever been and I'm not going to Russia just to make up the numbers."

As well as excelling with Wales, the Serviceman has caught the eye of the Team GB selectors as he attended his third training camp with the famed squad last month.

He also hopes to be part of his national side at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

"I have been with the Army squad for three-and-a-half years," Williams explained. "We train three times a day

and it is the perfect set-up. It has helped me so much. My commanding officer has also been very supportive.

"I was supposed to do my NCO's cadre in October but my selection for Team GB came through at the same time. They allowed me to pull out of the course so I could follow my dream as a boxer. I am so grateful." ■





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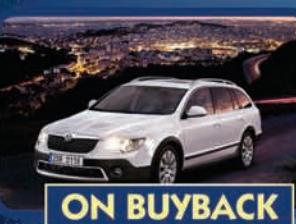
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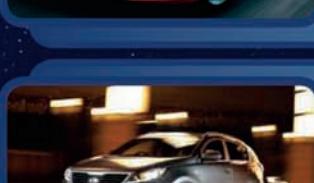
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SPORT SHORTS

■ ORGANISERS of the Annington Challenge are inviting teenagers to sign up for their action-packed summer activities programme.

The initiative is open to youngsters aged between 14 and 18 from Armed Forces families and is based at Outward Bound Trust centres in the Lake District, Scottish Highlands and Snowdonia National Park.

Events include canoeing, gorge walking, camping and rock climbing.

Those wishing to be considered for one of 30 places this summer should fill in an application form and a personal statement outlining how they will raise a £50 contribution towards the course fees.

For more information on the scheme visit www.anningtontrust.org.uk

■ CRICKETERS from the Afghan National Army enjoyed a slender ten-run victory over UK personnel in a Twenty20 contest in Helmand province.

The match was staged on the helicopter landing site at Camp Shorabak and saw the home side set a challenging target of 216-5. In reply the soldiers from 4th Mechanized Brigade closed their innings on 206-6.

Man-of-the-match Maj Adrian Grinnaneau, who scored 82 for the Service side, said:

"The game was closer than many people thought it would be, particularly when you realise that none of us have picked up a cricket bat for three months."

■ THE Army has secured its first ever victory in the annual Monaco Raid.

Set in the principality's glamorous harbour, the three-day event featured a diverse range of disciplines including powerboat racing, kayaking, swimming, pistol shooting and running.

The Service athletes were competing in a field of 18 military teams from around the world and made a strong start by securing second place in the endurance speedboat navigation test.

Further success was achieved in the 12-mile kayak relay and open water swim before the squad celebrated victory in the 16-kilometre relay run.

Despite finishing 12th in the speedboat slalom the Army held firm to take the overall title.

■ ENTRIES are being sought for the Army Indoor Tennis Championships.

The event features mens' and womens' singles competitions and will run from February 7 to 8 at the Aldershot Tennis Centre. Regular and Reserve personnel are welcome and further details are available from Lt Col Mike Thornley (RE) on 94261 3683.



Sharpshooters smash Londoners

THE Army romped to a stunning 7-2 victory over the London FA to maintain their 100 per cent start in the Southern Counties Cup.

Sub-zero temperatures in the capital failed to freeze the Service's attacking force as strikers Sig Sam Agar (R Signals), Cpl Dot Cottam (RE) and SSgt James Lavelle (RAPTC) tormented the hosts in a distinctly one-sided encounter.

The home side took the lead midway through the first half as a headed clearance from goalkeeper Spr Luke Cairney (RE) dropped to the feet of Ricardo Lang, who produced a cool finish from 25 yards.

But the Army fired an immediate response as Agar found time and space

in the area before picking out Cottam for a simple tap in.

The forward was rewarded with a goal of his own moments later as he cut through the London rearguard and fired low into the corner.

And he doubled his tally on the stroke of half-time as a Cottam flick-on sprung the offside trap and presented Agar with a one-on-one opportunity that was ruthlessly dispatched.

The goals continued to flow after the interval as Spr Scally Wright (RE, pictured), Lavelle and Cpl Ian Robinson (Inf) all converted before Agar completed his hat-trick with a deflected shot from a tight angle. London's De Almeida reduced the arrears late on. ■

Novice Barry comes up short

ARMY fighter Pte Thomas Barry (3 Para, pictured) fell at the final hurdle in his bid for glory at the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) novice championships in Sunderland.

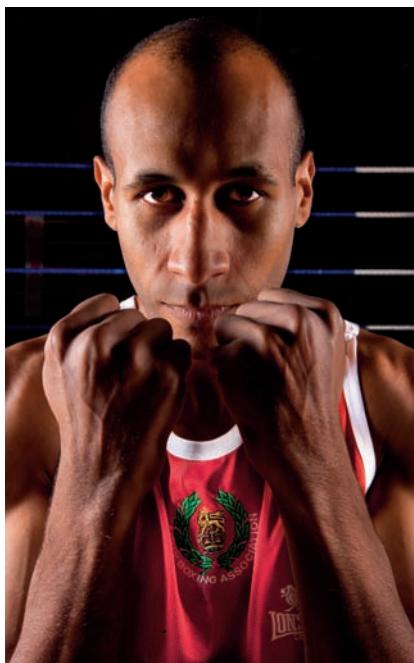
The 71kg star was the sole Service representative at the event after teammate Pte Andy Hassall (1 Mercian) suffered a narrow defeat at the semi-final stage.

Despite returning empty handed from the prestigious competition, coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) believes the experience will hold his boxers in good stead for future contests.

"Barry was in a strong position but he let his guard down slightly and got picked off in the fourth round," he said.

"It is disappointing to lose in the final but it will make him a better fighter.

"He will progress and his goal should be to compete at the Combined Services and ABA elite championships before winning an international vest in a season or two."



Picture: Graeme Main



Super six: Clockwise from top left, LCpl Alanna Murphy, Pte Tracy Ling, Pte Nicki Hunt, Cpl Nikita Silvera, Bdr Siobhan Haynes and Gnr Tammy Bennett

Boxers primed for final test

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE all-conquering Army boxing team has set a new record in the ring after five of its female fighters qualified for the finals of the sport's top national competition.

Having formed one of the strongest squads in recent years the hard-hitting Servicewomen have reached top form in the Amateur Boxing Association championships and are now just a bout away from ending their campaign in style.

Two-time champion LCpl Alanna Murphy (12 LSR) is leading the Reds' charge but a number of newcomers have risen to the challenge in what has been a highly encouraging season.

Bdr Siobhan Haynes (14 Regt, RA), Pte Tracy Ling (RLC), Pte Nicki Hunt (30 Sig Regt) and Cpl Nikita Silvera (21 Sig Regt) will all see action at the showpiece event and coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) believes his young charges will deliver on the grand stage.

"I am hoping for five wins," he told *SoldierSport*. "But being realistic we should get at least three."

"If they continue to perform the way they have there is no reason why we cannot complete a clean sweep."

"Five finalists is a record for Army and Combined Services boxing."

"This is probably the best bunch of girls we have had. They train alongside the

lads and nobody is treated any differently. If they perform badly they get shouted at just like the others."

"At the start of the season I didn't think we would have five finalists but seeing how hard they have worked since then it has come as no surprise."

The team's sixth member, Gnr Tammy Bennett (16 Regt, RA), lost at the semi-final stages but Anthony was full of praise for her performance.

"She was beaten by a bigger, stronger girl," he said. "It was a fair result."

"She suffered a standing count in the first round and took some heavy shots but she did really well and gave a good account of herself."

ABA success would enhance Murphy's international ambitions but the fighter knows she faces a stern test in her final when she locks horns with Team GB boxer Ruth Raper.

She said: "I am up against a tough opponent and it will not be an easy fight but I am confident I can win."

"The training and preparation has gone well and I'm now setting myself up for Commonwealth Games selection with Northern Ireland later this month."

"Women have been boxing for years and the showcase of the Olympics was great for us; it has opened a lot of

peoples' eyes."

"I have been on the Army team for a long time and this is the most talented squad of girls I have seen."

While the experienced Murphy boasts a proud boxing pedigree, fellow fighter Hunt is the exact opposite.

"I joined the team having never had a bout," she explained. "I went to the trials in June and the coaches saw some potential in me."

"I was literally thrown in. I lost my first match but have won four since then. I have faced some difficult opponents but I just go in the ring to fight; I don't really think about it too much."

"Combat sports are a passion of mine and being able to train full-time was an opportunity I couldn't refuse. I'm really grateful to my regiment for letting me come here."

Haynes is another boxer in her first season with the squad and is looking forward to her contest after some tough rounds earlier in the competition.

"It will be a hard fight," she said. "There will be more pressure as it is a final and it is another stepping stone for me."

"You have to have a goal and mine was to win the ABAs. It is hard work but because the Army has such a good set-up you don't mind that." ■

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Racers make Dakar debut

Report: Richard Long

INJURED personnel from the Race2Recovery team will embark on the toughest challenge of their motorsport careers this month as they take to the start line for the Dakar Rally.

Staged in South America, the event is considered to be the ultimate driving, mechanical and navigational test as entrants negotiate a 9,000-kilometre route in the space of just 15 days.

The gruelling race starts in the Peruvian capital Lima on January 5 and moves south into Argentina before finishing in Santiago, Chile.

On an average day the crews will cover anywhere between 500 and 800 kilometres across deserts and mountainous terrain, with drivers facing a minimum of ten hours behind the wheel.

Race2Recovery will have four Wildcat vehicles in the field with a mix of wounded Servicemen and rally experts at the helm.

A fleet of support trucks will be on hand to back the team and the soldiers have

perfected their skills during a lengthy build-up to the competition, which included an impressive tenth-place finish at the Tuareg Rally in Morocco.

"That was great experience for us as it was our first international race," driver Capt Tony Harris (RRF, pictured bottom right), a below knee amputee, told *SoldierSport*.

"The past three or four months have been absolutely full on. It has been an incredible roller coaster with a lot of ups and downs.

"But the effort, improvement and momentum has been fantastic and I am incredibly happy with the team we have.

"We are going to cover 9,000 kilometres and the wear and tear on these vehicles will be phenomenal.

"The completion rate is about 40 or 50 per cent and that includes experienced drivers who have done this before.

"We have got a strategy for the race and we think that will get us to the end. It is difficult to say where we will come as the smallest problem can see you lose 15

or 20 places.

"We need to finish the first week and build on it from there."

Navigator Cpl Tom Neathway (2 Para, pictured bottom left), who will be competing alongside civilian Justin Birchall, said conditions in South America may take their toll but he believes finishing the race is an achievable target.

"I think the heat will be a big issue with my prosthetics but other elements, such as sleep deprivation and working in challenging environments is what we are used to in the military," he explained.

"I am quietly confident about our chances and the only thing that will stop us is the vehicle breaking down."

"For us it is always about competing and we want to be the quickest car in our team. I want to push as hard as I can to achieve that."

The Race2Recovery crew is using the event to raise funds for the Personnel Recovery Centre at Tedworth House.

To donate money to the cause visit www.race2recovery.com





Riders target road to success

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

THE Army Cycling Union (ACU) road race team is looking to build on its success from last year by creating a new-look set-up for the 2013 season.

Having dominated the Inter-Services championships and seen two members compete at elite level the riders are hoping to field development and senior squads to create a more professional feel to the organisation.

As the sport enjoys a boom within the Service's ranks, the ever-expanding corps structure is expected to feed new talent into the system and help the outfits challenge in a number of civilian and military events.

"Historically the ACU has been rather back-to-front," explained road race secretary SSgt Rob Jones (REME).

"In rugby union players come up through the corps system and are then cherry-picked for full honours.

"In the past we have had a gap at that level and people were coming straight into the ACU club but were not part of the Service team.

"We want to separate that so the top riders compete at a representative level

"WE WANT TO HAVE A PROGRESSIVE SYSTEM WITH BOTH SENIOR AND DEVELOPMENT TEAMS"

are recognised for doing so.

"The corps scene is getting more structured. I will become the Army development team manager and will have a direct link to the secretaries who can recommend any guys who are progressing well.

"I can have a look and then try and include them in the squad. It is not about being elitist; we want to have a progressive system with both senior and development teams. We are aiming for the same with the ladies."

Plans are already in place for the upcoming road campaign and Jones believes a new approach to racing will be needed if the cyclists are to build on such solid foundations.

"We have identified riders for each set-up next season," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Civilian races will form 90 to 95 per cent of our calendar for 2013 and we will be up against some top outfits that are almost professional.

"The captains will identify which events to enter and what athletes to put in. We can then compete as a team rather than having individuals turning up and getting their backsides kicked.

"In many ways it is an individual sport but you cannot get into a winning position without your teammates. That is where we need to improve."

In 2012 the riders swept the board at the Inter-Services claiming the first eight positions and taking awards for top male, female, veteran and junior.

Jones said: "We came away with every prize and it was a fantastic team effort. We want to see more of that this year.

"I have never seen as much strength in depth and the corps system is starting to bear fruit. There is a mix of ability levels and last year the Royal Engineers were looking particularly strong.

"I would like to see an inter-corps series introduced with each team staging a round. That would give the younger guys a full season of action so when they get to the final corps championships they are better prepared."

For more information on the organisation, contact details and how to get involved in the sport visit the ACU page on Armysnet. ■





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Forward drive: Under-23s star LCpl Matt Bowman (REME) attacks the Royal Navy lines during the team's 17-17 draw at the Army Rugby Stadium in Aldershot

Misfiring Reds seal Services crown

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Roger Thompson

THE Army's under-23 side battled their way to victory in rugby union's Inter-Services championship following two bruising encounters with their Forces rivals.

A disappointing 17-17 draw with the Royal Navy was followed by a 25-9 triumph over the Royal Air Force as the Reds retained their title in far from convincing style.

Challenging conditions at the Army Rugby Stadium contributed to a below-par performance against the Senior Service, who were awarded a late try to square the contest and leave the hosts with a must-win clash against the airmen.

With the Navy securing a narrow success over the same opponents the defending champions took to the field knowing they had to win by a five-point margin to lift the coveted trophy once more.

An early exchange of penalties saw the contest locked during the initial stages before the Army broke the deadlock with

the first of three tries as they crossed in the corner.

The RAF stayed in touch as two further kicks sailed between the posts and they were handed a significant advantage when their rivals were reduced to 14 men following a perceived stamping incident at a maul.

But the setback galvanised the Reds and a strong drive from the forwards saw them reach the line for a converted score before Gdsm Rob Burnell (Coldm Gds, pictured left) sealed victory with the final try of the match.

"We are battered and bruised after two very hard fixtures," academy manager Maj Lee Nash (AGC (SPS)) told *SoldierSport*.

"We didn't play to our strengths and I think the occasion may have got to some of our guys.

"The Navy played a very good game

and spoiled our attacking plans. I think we were concentrating too much on trying to be expansive.

"We took an early lead against the RAF but again we made hard work of it; the ball was not going to hand and they defended very well.

"The team knew they could win and were disappointed to draw the first match of the tournament.

"We went out thinking we were the better side but we just could not get into the game.

"Then we had the pressure of having to win by five points against the RAF and it took its toll early on.

"We were confident and positive at half-time and managed to steady our nerves after the break.

"It is nice to retain the title but we are disappointed with the way it was done. We made hard work of it."

Burnell's heroics saw him crowned player of the tournament while skipper LCpl Craig Fillier (AGC (RMP)) was named Army player of the season.

Nash said: "They were superb and I would like to think there will be opportunities for them in the senior side.

"It has been an encouraging year for us. Our attention now turns to the development team, where we will be helping those with less experience to progress on the field." ■





Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army Rugby Stadium had the honour of hosting the second autumn international between England women and world champions New Zealand. After beating the tourists in the first game at Esher, the hosts took to the field in fine form and fought their way to a 17-8 victory to take an unassailable lead in the three-match series. A 1,250-strong crowd saw flanker Hannah Gallagher and centre Joanne Watmore both cross for tries, while the boot of Emily Scarratt yielded a further seven points. Flying winger Shakira Baker touched down in the corner for the Black Ferns and centre Kelly Brazier kicked a penalty.

Goat major steps down

HE'S held the reins for nearly two decades in a role that is now as recognisable as the rugby players he leads out.

But Sgt David Joseph (3 R Welsh) performed his last official duty as goat major when he marched onto the Millennium Stadium turf last month.

The Reservist has become a firm fixture at Welsh rugby internationals over the years by walking Shenkin, the regimental goat, out in front of the home captain ahead of kick-off.

The tradition has endeared Joseph and his companion to an audience of thousands but he has also been a key figure at ceremonial duties and charitable events.

"There's no doubt I'll miss the job," the proud soldier said.

"There are so many great memories of meeting so many different people.

"The noise of the crowd and the atmosphere is always very special."

Joseph signed up to Service life in 1969 and after a 25-year career in the Regulars he joined the Territorial Army in 1994, when he had the honour of being appointed goat major.

He started the tradition of walking the Welsh team onto the field in 1999, when his request to carry out the role was surprisingly accepted.

"At some point before kick-off I asked



the team if I could lead them out and was told yes," the 59-year-old recalled.

"So when the band were going through their final preparations I headed off towards the tunnel.

"I could hear the drum major saying 'where's he off to?' and then they watched as I led the team out. Ever since then I've continued to do it."

● Harnessing Army history – page 57

SPORT SHORTS

■ RUGBY For Heroes has launched its latest fund-raising campaign by enlisting 112 Premiership players and 12 top models to pose for its 2013 calendars.

Patron Mike Tindall called upon fellow England internationals Ugo Monye, Tom Croft and James Simpson-Daniel to help boost the project, which is supporting the work of the charity Remount.

Professional models including Emma Frain, Monica Harris and Sam Bowden also posed to create an alternative ladies' calendar.

Rugby For Heroes chief executive Alan Lamb, whose son Ryan plays for Northampton Saints and stars as "Mr July", said: "The money raised from each sale will make a real difference in helping our Servicemen and women make the difficult transition from military to civilian life."

The calendars cost £9.99 and are available at www.rugbyforheroes.org.uk



■ WELSH hooker Huw Bennett was the special guest at the British Army Germany rugby dinner and auction.

The Lyon star was joined by former Ospreys coach Sean Holley, who hosted the evening, and the duo helped raise more than £2,400 in aid of Rugby For Heroes.



final word



We asked troops undertaking Exercise Urban Warrior 5 in France about their experiences of the forward-facing serial

INTERVIEWS: BECKY CLARK
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Maj Mark Suddaby (Scots)

As a lead observer mentor, my job is to watch troops conducting their plan and feed that back into the data capture for the experiment. Based on that, we can identify whether we've got the right structures and the right equipment and tactics. It's interesting because it's about setting the Army in the future context, post Herrick, and making sure we're equipped and trained for any eventuality.



Pte Grant Gale (R Welsh)

We've been going forward into the village and practising entering houses in different ways, depending on what the section commanders tell us about who could be in the building. They reckon we'll be doing this kind of thing more in years to come so it's a good serial to be involved in. It is great to see the bigger picture and say we were the first to help model the future.



Pte Ross Curry (Scots)

I've only been with the battalion for two months so this is my first big exercise. Learning about fighting in built-up areas is new to me and is the best bit about it. We're an air assault battalion so don't normally work with tanks. Some of this will go towards developing Army 2020. I'm young and will be doing this kind of thing in the future so it's really good to be a part of the serial.



OCdt Ashley McMahon (UOTC)

As officer cadets we've been acting as members of the civilian population, helping the infantry troops but also being insurgents, picking up weapons and firing rockets at tanks. I was a bit unsure about joining the Armed Forces but now I'm 100 per cent certain. It's been a great insight and I'm proud to make some contribution even though I haven't fully joined up.



LCpl Mark Sainsbury (R Welsh)

I've been playing the enemy in vehicles acting as main battle tanks, so we've been getting eyes on the friendly force and seeing whether we can engage. The experiment is all based on a script so we have to play by the rules. Operating in a built-up area is totally different from an Afghan environment. I think it's good for the battalion to take part in the serial.



LCpl Robert Brown (RTR)

We've been giving support to the infantry platoon going through the scenarios. It's hard taking a tank into a village because it's difficult to navigate within enclosed areas. This is about reorganising our tactics for future operations and Army 2020. It's incorporating everything we've learnt in Afghanistan and Iraq and showing the hierarchy what we can do.



Pte Matthew Smith (R Welsh)

I'm one of nine Reservists here from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh and I volunteered to come. The Army has to look at what its next moves are going to be and it seems like it will mainly be operating in built-up areas. The urban training facility is amazing and a privilege to use. It's actually better than my home town – I'm thinking about moving in!



LCpl Mark Anderson (REME)

My primary role is commanding the Bulldog ambulance to pick up simulated casualties and extract to the rear of the battle. The urban fighting training is perfect and it's what we need to move forward. By the end of the serial we'll know what impact we've made. I feel a bit of personal pride in it as well, that I have had input into changing the Army's future.



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