

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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NOVEMBER 2025

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS
THIS MONTH...**SSGT BRADLEY MORTIN, INT CORPS**

HE enlisted without a single GCSE to his name, but now has more than one degree thanks to the army. As Get the Nation Learning Week kicks off, the senior NCO explained what soldiers can achieve ([page 18](#)).

**REV MICHAEL PARKER, RACHD**

WHO would have thunk it? Church-going is on the increase among younger troops. We interviewed the army's most senior padre to discover what is going on – and why ([page 26](#)).

**Lt WILLIAM JONES, LANCS**

THANKS to our cover star for taking time out on Sennelager Training Area to chat to *Soldier* last month. Media interviews might not be a perk of the job – but on [page 82](#) he and others tell us what is.

Recent history in our thoughts

AS EVER, November's magazine is dedicated to all personnel who have laid down their lives in service of their country. And this month we focus on the fallen of Afghanistan.

As you've probably already noticed, our pages are dominated by portraits of the servicemen and women killed during that conflict.

These individuals would all have featured in *Soldier*'s pages at the time of their deaths – indeed, the very first obituary I wrote when I joined the mag in 2011 is still etched in my brain.

But bringing those faces together in one place – seeing that scale of loss before our eyes – was such a poignant moment for our team this month.

Thank you to artist Kev Wills (ex-RLC) for allowing us to run his stunning tributes in full. You may have heard about his artwork online, but when he handed over the final portrait in Nepal earlier this year we knew we wanted to immortalise the images for future generations in November's *Soldier*.

For many of you, there will be faces here who still occupy your thoughts on a daily basis.

But amid the drive to be ready for war – and as more Afghanistan veterans reach the latter stages of their careers – we thought it a fitting time to remind ourselves what selfless commitment can look like on a major combat operation. Anyone who has worked on Op Interflex will be highly aware.

The contract between soldiers and their employer is unlike any other job in the world. On your side, the agreement to put your life on the line should that be necessary. Among the army's obligations, an unspoken promise to never forget those who died in service of their country. As an officer in Army HQ put it to us this month, "that's just part of the deal".

As pints are poured and set down at empty bar stools this month, I hope this issue allows you to feel pride in what you do for us all.

Sarah Goldthorpe • **Editor**

‘It was such a
poignant moment’



Lest We Forget.



As we remember the fallen this Remembrance Day, we also reflect on the anniversaries of VE and VJ Day – poignant reminders of the bravery and sacrifice that secured our freedom and brought an end to the Second World War.

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Reservists ponder their lot

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TAKING AIM AT UNKNOWN DRONES

SOLDIERS could be given expanded powers to shoot down unidentified drones flying over military bases.

The government has unveiled proposals that will allow troops to take faster and more decisive action to knock out unmanned aerial vehicles over such sites, and in time this could be extended to certain critical civilian locations such as airports.

Currently, armed forces personnel have licence to divert, disrupt or hijack drones through electronic jamming and other non-kinetic countermeasures such as nets.

The intruders can only be shot down in so-called "extreme circumstances" such as where there is an obvious threat to life and in some other defined situations under current law.

But that looks set to change after a major policy speech by UK Defence Secretary John Healey, who declared: "As we speak, we are developing new powers to be put into law through our Armed Forces Bill to shoot down unidentified drones over UK military sites."

The measures will be part of a broader security response to the rise in UAV activity and what are growing Russian military provocations

across Europe.

Recently, an estimated 19 drones crossed the Russian border with Poland while others have forced airports in Germany, Denmark and Norway to close in recent weeks. They were suspected of having been launched from a Russian ship but were not officially identified as none were brought down.

Late last year small drones were also seen over four RAF bases used by the US Air Force, including Lakenheath in Suffolk and Fairford in Gloucestershire, where B-2 stealth bombers are based. Their origin remains unknown.

Firing on drones presents a risk to civilians and infrastructure – a missile from a Polish F-16 during the Russian drone incursion hit the roof of a house in the eastern Lublin region, though nobody was injured – so it's likely the rules of engagement for the UK's armed forces will be tightly defined.

The army's latest cutting-edge counter-drone tech already gives it a potential advantage when dealing with unwelcome guests overhead.

The SmartShooter Smash smart weapon sight fire control system (above) gives dismounted soldiers a high probability of hitting micro and mini UAVs.

It achieves this by using integrated AI technology to recognise a target, track its movements and maintain a lock, even if the object or user moves.

The device can be fitted to the SA80 A3 assault rifle as well as other in-service individual weapons.

An initial order of more than 200 sights have been delivered to various units under an MoD contract with Yorkshire-based Viking Arms, and more are due to arrive with the UK's armed forces in the coming years, based on deployments and readiness levels.

'Troops can take faster and more decisive action to knock out drones'

WHERE TO FIND SOLDIER



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1 GERMANY

What's in a name?

CHANGES have been made to the structure of the army in Germany.

Nato Forward Holding Base (Sennelager) has been renamed the Nato Support and Training Centre (Germany).

And the organisation now sits under Regional Command instead of Field Army.

Commander Col Mike Foster-Brown explained to *Soldier* the changes would "better match our role as the significance of the organisation grows".

The officer added: "The last 12 months have seen 25,000 troops visit Sennelager to work, train and support the Nato base, and that tempo will continue.

"We look forward to working with Regional Command to take this forward and better align to the delivery of our purpose, which remains to enable Nato and UK forces to fight and win wars in Europe from the land, providing a logistic hub for vehicles, material and personnel, and a centre to develop combined-arms excellence."

Among the latest soldiers to deploy to Sennelager were personnel from 19th Light Brigade (shown above, with report on page 36).

Meanwhile, the Germany Enabling Office has now become part of the Cyber and Specialist Operations Command.



2 UK

Going underground

A MAJOR test of Nato's readiness was wrapping up in the south of England as this issue went to press.

Exercise Avenger Triad saw the UK-led Allied Rapid Reaction Corps operating under the command of US Army Europe and Africa to rehearse their collective response to an invasion of member state territory.

Involving some 1,000 personnel across four locations, the command post drill was split between the British formation's Gloucester base and Buckley Barracks and Corsham Mines in Wiltshire, with supporting units also deploying to Grafenwoehr, Germany.

A significant focus was assessing the survivability of an underground headquarters, as well as communications infrastructure, interoperability and command and control procedures. Last year's drills tested a similar scenario in an urban setting.



3 MOROCCO

Partnership milestone

BRITISH and Moroccan troops marked 25 years of cooperation with a series of desert drills.

Reservists from The Royal Gibraltar Regiment teamed up with their long-time partners from the 2nd Parachute Infantry Brigade for Exercise Jebel Sahara. The UK personnel deployed in a mentoring role, while the hosts shared their knowledge of working in hot and arid terrain.

Having expanded over time to include other British units, this year's training was led by A Company, 3rd Battalion, The Rifles.

CO of the Gibraltarian troops, Lt Col John Pitt, was present when the package was originally conceived and said his regiment had been proud to serve as the constant link between the two armies while "enduring friendships and operational trust" developed.

Reflecting on the early days, 2iC Maj Dayan Pozo added: "I remember when this was a new and ambitious project."

"To see it now, 25 years on, with the RG still at the heart of it, is truly special."



4 SOUTH AFRICA

Soldiering showcase

DETERMINED officers overcame a string of organisational hurdles to get their troops onto an international live-firing package in South Africa for the first time.

Five personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh competed in the South African National Defence Forces Military Skills Competition in Potchefstroom, in the north-west of the country.

As well as learning more about other countries' tactics and procedures, the event saw the infantry build relationships with their host-nation counterparts.

Serials included shooting, grenade throwing, an obstacle course and an eight-kilometre combat run.





NEPAL

Aiming high

INFORMATION operations specialists from 77th Brigade will take on one of Nepal's most technical peaks in the coming weeks as part of Exercise Himalayan Mountaineer.

Eleven troops are deploying on the month-long expedition as they aim to become the first on-duty military personnel to reach the summit of Ama Dablam.

Team leader Capt Will Brant (RAPTC) said the 6,819-metre mountain is regarded as one of the "jewels of the Himalayas, requiring advanced climbing and mountaineering skills".

The mixed group of regulars and reservists (shown above during a training serial in France in September), have spent the last 12 months preparing for the challenge.

'To walk around and say I'm seventh in the world is crazy'

Weightlifters flex their muscles – page 79

FINLAND

Axe sharpener

PERSONNEL from C Company, 3rd Battalion, The Rifles are gearing up to help familiarise their Finnish counterparts with Nato TTPs early next month.

Exercise Northern Axe will see them working with troops from the Kainuu Brigade as the host nation continues its integration into the alliance, having formally joined in April 2023.

Following a winter training package in the north of the strategically important country, the soldiers will travel south for more serials in Vuosanka, some 25 miles from Russian territory.

Battalion 2iC Maj Euan Gorrie (Scots) said: "This represents an excellent opportunity for C Company. They will be able to exploit their recently-learned cold weather skills, develop understanding of the new role as a tactical recce strike company, and deepen their interoperability and partnership with the Finnish army."



CYPRUS

Hitting the ground running

COLDSTREAM Guardsmen kicked off their six-month tenure at the helm of Operation Tosca with a lung-busting ultramarathon in the Troodos Mountains.

Gdsm Cooper Buck, lance corporals Adam Simpson and James Brett, LSgt Alex Coysh, and Lt William Vaughan – all from Number 3 Company – completed the 44-mile course in under 12 hours.

Their feat was made all the more impressive by the fact they had just three weeks to train.

The team and their colleagues recently arrived in country to take over UN peacekeeping duties from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.



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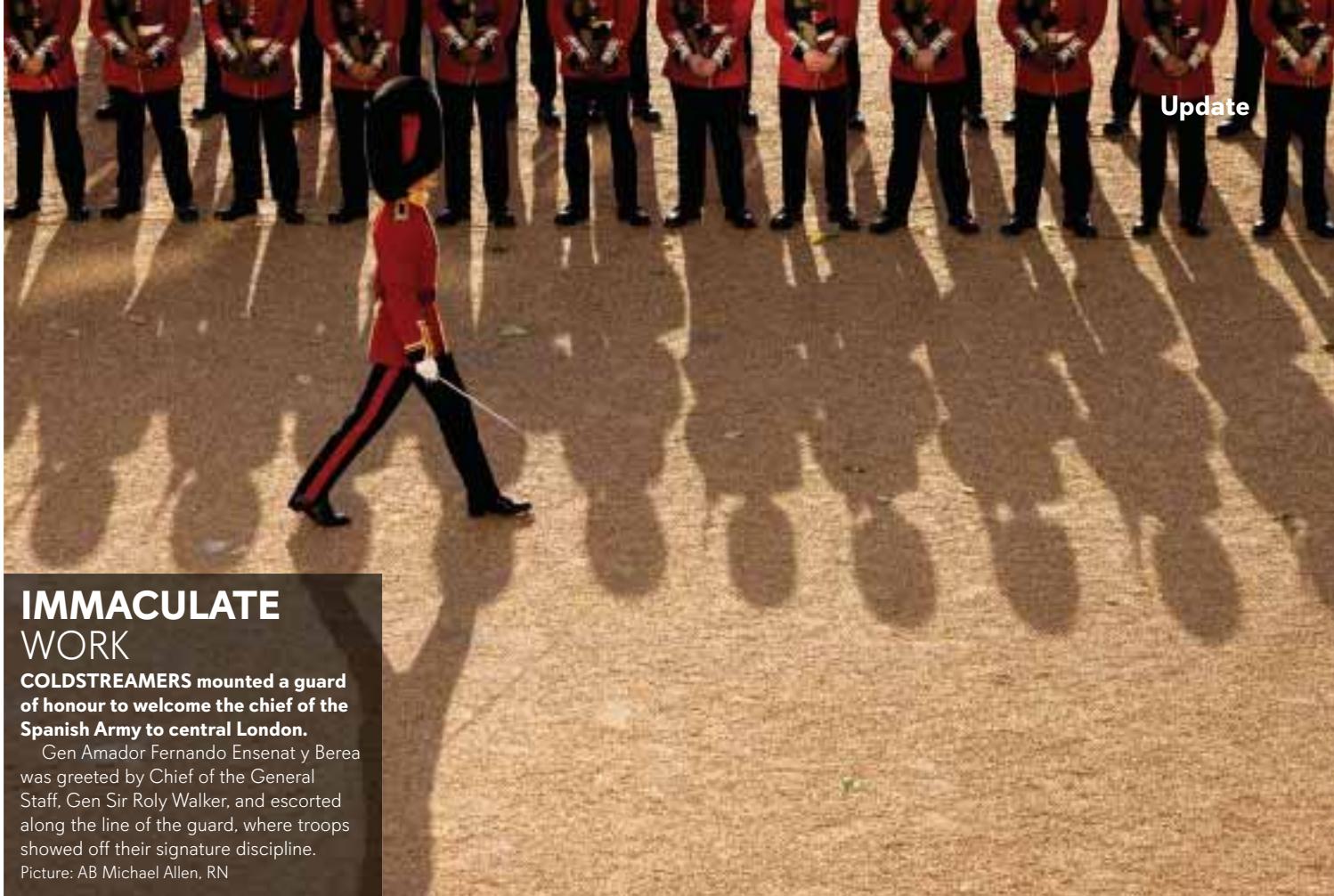
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IMMACULATE WORK

COLDSTREAMERS mounted a guard of honour to welcome the chief of the Spanish Army to central London.

Gen Amador Fernando Ensenat y Berea was greeted by Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, and escorted along the line of the guard, where troops showed off their signature discipline.

Picture: AB Michael Allen, RN

COURT MARTIAL: SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM 'HAD EVERY RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE' WITH SOLDIER WHO ATTACKED HER IN BED

TROOPS guilty of sexual assault should expect no mercy from the justice system, a military lawman has warned as he locked up a logistician who shared a bed with fellow drinkers after a night out.

Assistant Judge Advocate General Edward Legard told 25-year-old Pte Samuel Hodgetts that he had shown "unconscionable" behaviour when he assaulted his female victim following the social occasion.

A trial at Catterick's Military Court Centre heard how Hodgetts – then serving with 4th Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps – had been drinking with the victim.

Along with two other drunk individuals, both had fallen asleep on the same bed before the offender went on to commit four sexual assaults.

"At no point had she consented to being sexually touched," said the judge. "She was quite incapable of giving free and informed consent – in part by virtue of her intoxicated and drowsy state."

The soldier denied all charges against him, claiming the victim had given a dishonest account and the pair had just held hands.

But the serviceman was later found guilty on all counts.

The judge said Hodgetts had taken advantage of the woman, someone who "had every right to feel safe and secure in the presence and company of somebody, a friend, she ought to have been able to trust implicitly".

He handed the soldier a 66-month jail term and dismissed him from the ranks.

The judge added: "All people, whatever their sex and whether or not they are in a relationship, must be able to socialise and share accommodation in the safe and secure knowledge they will not be sexually assaulted but instead be afforded the respect they properly deserve."

The victim had suffered significantly in her life after the attack, he said, with a "deterioration in her mental health" as well as anxiety, depression and issues with personal relationships.

While noting that Hodgetts had a previously spotless record, good relationships with his family and a strong work ethic, he had caused lasting harm.

The judge told him he would serve up to two-thirds of his term behind bars, with the remainder out on licence.

KICKED OUT

THE following service personnel were dismissed from His Majesty's Armed Forces following conviction at court martial between August and September 2025...

■ **Pte Samuel Hodgetts (4th Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps)**, age 25, was convicted of **four counts of sexual assault** at the Military Court Centre Catterick. Sentenced to 66 months' imprisonment (see article to the left).

■ **Cpl Adam Wellstead (36 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers)**, age 38, pleaded guilty to **two counts of disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind** at the Military Court Centre Catterick. Sentenced to 17 weeks' detention at the Military Corrective Training Centre, Colchester.

To read the full transcripts of the sentencing remarks in the above cases log on to gov.uk/government/publications/military-court-service-sentencing-remarks-2025





COMMANDOS ON THE UP

THE new-look commando conditioning course achieved a notable high during its latest intake as 83 personnel completed the five weeks of training that will hopefully propel them towards the coveted green beret.

Having previously been staged by individual units ahead of the 13-week all arms commando course, the approach was overhauled last year when a combined programme for all cap badges was introduced.

Staged at the home of 24 Commando, Royal Engineers at

RMB Chivenor, it includes field exercises, wet and dry drills, navigation and infantry skills before concluding with the pre-joining fitness assessment required for future service with Commando Force Headquarters.

As well as sappers, the course welcomed counterparts from 29 Commando, Royal Artillery, the Commando Logistic Regiment, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, among others.

"This is the fourth combined conditioning course, and these are the best numbers I have seen in a decade," said Maj Mark Woodward (RE), training major at 24 Cdo.

"The results have proved it has been worth doing and this is commonly accepted as being a positive move across the

commando force."

With the programme complete, personnel have now moved on to the full all-arms course – at the end of which they receive the green beret and become army commandos.



Picture: Mat Burch

DO YOUR BIT



A RESERVIST is calling on fellow troops to help maintain military grave sites as part of a volunteer scheme.

Capt Jay Singh-Sohal (GSC) says the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation's Eyes On, Hands On initiative is a way for personnel – and the public – to play an active role in commemorating the fallen.

Launched in 2019, the programme sees supporters trained on how to inspect and care for cemeteries in their region.

"We ask them to report to us on their condition and whether any repairs are required," explained Capt Singh-Sohal.

"Sometimes, they can also do some cleaning and tidying."

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the foundation's overarching body, looks after almost 12,500 locations across the country and 1.7 million memorials around the world.

Some 88 per cent of its UK sites are covered by the scheme already but more help is needed for the remainder.

Trustee Capt Singh-Sohal said units on overseas battlefield studies could also contact the commission to help.

Visit foundation.cwgc.org



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LOVING LIFE AFTER WEIGHT LOSS

A SOLDIER who shed 25kg has marked her amazing achievement by climbing Snowdon while carrying the same weight she lost.

Pte Jessica King (RLC, shown) embarked on the challenge in aid of Combat Stress after completely overhauling her diet and fitness.

The 28-year-old explained she decided to make changes a year ago, cutting back on calories and upping her phys routine with the support of colleagues from the East Midlands recruiting outreach team in Chilwell.

"I wasn't happy with the way I looked and I wanted to

improve my performance," she told *Soldier*. "With the help of my PTI I started enjoying fitness a lot more, found a gym and got stuck in."

Having swapped late-night snacking for "endorphin-boosting" workouts, Pte King said she quickly began to see progress, especially in her soldier conditioning assessment results.

"Within around six months I cut my run time from 15min to 11min 30sec," she continued.

"I want people to know it doesn't matter where you're starting from, you can get better.

"Look at your personal journey, not anyone else's.





Pte King
summitted
Snowdon
with 25kg

"Set your own goals and challenges – that's what the military is about.

"When I was climbing Snowdon I turned to the guys walking with me and said, 'I can't believe I used to be this heavy.'

Pte King has cut her weight from 115kg to 88kg and is still aiming to lose more.

She is also fundraising for Combat Stress to "give something back to a charity that

'It doesn't matter where you're starting from – you can get better'

does so much for veterans".

To support her cause visit events.combatstress.org.uk/fundraisers/jessicaking/hike-for-hope

For advice on fitness, nutrition and losing weight speak to your unit PTI or visit the Army health and wellbeing page on Defence Connect via the QR code.



LIFE'S A BEACH

COMMANDO logisticians were among the 1,000-plus British soldiers to take part in one of the most significant training events of the year.

Op Tarassis saw the ten nations of the Joint Expeditionary Force, plus Canada, conduct serials across Northern Europe to show their ability to collectively respond to a regional security threat.

The exercise saw the troops supporting Royal Marines during a beach assault in Norway. And it included members of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and 11 Brigade HQ, who worked alongside Latvians with remote, uncrewed systems and AI.



GROUND VIEW



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

THERE is a soldier I always think about at this time of year.

His name was Cpl Steven Dunn – like me an airborne signaller in 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron.

We served together in Afghanistan in 2010 and, tragically, he lost his life when an IED hit his Jackal. You'll find his portrait on page 53, in the 'Every face, every story' feature.

I was the main troop sergeant at Headquarters Task Force Helmand at the time.

Remembrance is so important, and November is an opportunity to come together, pause and think about our comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice.

We also hold in our hearts the families and friends left behind – this time of year is especially poignant for them.

As a nation we have been remembering the dead for well over 100 years now – since the aftermath of the First World War – and I'm proud to see the country still unites in commemoration.

It's heartening to see people from all walks of life wear their poppies, attend services and fall silent on Armistice Day.

But it's especially important for us as soldiers as we think about the meaning of our service and this vocation we have chosen.

We can be called forward to put our lives on the line, and we must ensure we respect and look after each other in the same way as those who went before us.

Thank you to everyone involved in formal commemorations for all you are doing – and for helping to keep the memory of those we have lost, in ops past and present, alive.

Elsewhere, last month's Cambrian Patrol was a great success story yet again (page 42). Well done to the participants and to 160th (Welsh) Brigade for organising the event.

There were many international teams entering again this year, showing the reputation of this outing as being one of the most demanding on the global military calendar.

The competition also hones the soldiering skills we need to meet CGS's directive of doubling our fighting power by 2027 and trebling it at the end of the decade. From what I saw, we are well on the way to doing that. Keep up the great work!

WO1 Miller's month...

Visits

- Cambrian Patrol; 3rd (UK) Division

Impressed with

- Cambrian Patrol performances across the board

Areas of focus

- Core skills

Coming up next

- Archer artillery observation event; 77 Brigade and 20th Armoured Brigade visits



YORKS PROVE THEIR WORTH

RESERVISTS from 4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment deployed to Sennelager for a fortnight of live firing and field tactics.

Exercise Broadsword began with rifle and pistol shoots, including close-quarters drills using Simunition and platoon-level defensive serials. It then ramped up with an urban and rural operations phase covering the likes of recce patrols, deliberate attacks and a raid.

CO Lt Col Ken Neilson said the annual training camp had showcased troops' "commitment and capability".

More German drills on Ex Rhino Heart, page 36





GOT BEEF AT WORK?

IF THE answer is yes, you can now get extra help trying to resolve your grievance locally and more quickly thanks to a change in service complaints.

The Army Service Complaint Secretariat (ASCS) is adding a 'voluntary local grievance resolution' option to the process, which can be enacted before a formal complaint is lodged.

It could mean faster resolution times because commanding officers, where appropriate and within their power, will be able to handle the case.

The ASCS central admissibility team must first deem that the issue is suitable for a local grievance resolution, however, at which point it is passed to the relevant CO.

The officer is given 15 working days to attempt resolution, and is required to provide an estimated completion date if a resolution is agreed.

Complainants may, however, revert to the more formal complaints process at any point.

The new rules apply to regular, reserve and full-time reserve service personnel.

Read **ABN 053/2025** for further details.

SPORT SHOW

OLYMPIC glories of the Royal Logistic Corps are being celebrated in a temporary exhibition at the RLC Museum, Worthy Down.

Showcasing the stories of 20 military stars, *From Front Lines to Finish Lines* explores the links between the Games and the corps over 100 years.

Picture: Shutterstock





RED ALERT

VOLUNTEERS from 4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment were among those to test themselves on Cambrian Patrol last month. Out of 109 teams, just 20 scooped gold. Turn to page 42 for the lowdown and final results.

Picture: SSgt Paul Shaw, RLC



Picture: Chris Morgan

FOND FAREWELL

A WELSH Guards bearer party moves the coffin of Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie from Westminster Cathedral last month.

The former officer, who died in September aged 86, served for over four decades, including as chief of the general staff and chief of the defence staff.

His recent funeral was attended by top brass, dignitaries and members of the royal family.

A 19-gun salute was fired by The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, before Lord Guthrie was laid to rest privately at Chiswick New Cemetery.



ZERO GCSES TO CAMBRIDGE PHD

A STAFF sergeant who left school with no GCSEs has graduated from Cambridge University, thanks to the support of the army.

Bradley Mortin (Int Corps, below) bagged his masters degree after reading about the external placement (academic) programme on Defence Connect's MyLearning portal.

He is the first non-officer to graduate from the scheme, having previously used enhanced learning credits to complete another degree.

Things have gone so well for the senior NCO he has now embarked on a PhD – the highest academic qualification.

SSgt Mortin, who built up his achievements over time after enlisting as a teenager 20 years ago, says his advice to other soldiers interested in boosting their CV is "go for it".

"I think there's a belief, especially among junior ranks, that these learning opportunities are only there for officers," he said. "But that's just not true.

"I did things the long way round, but eventually got to where I wanted to be.

"When qualifications become part of your career, it can give you new purpose and a clearer pathway than when you're at school."

News of SSgt Mortin's achievement comes as the army marks **Get the**

Nation Learning Week this month by trying to make troops – especially mid-career NCOs – aware of the many development opportunities open to them.

These include degrees, placements and a wide range of apprenticeships.

Speak to your Army Education Centre or RCMO for more advice.

"The army want people to go for these things because better juniors become better seniors – soldiers carry these skills through their careers," SSgt Mortin added. "I didn't have much self-confidence to start with but if you're in the army, you have a right to apply. Confidence comes later."

"Once you start writing essays on your chosen topic, you find you've become an expert on the job without realising it."

"Plus, it's important to have an exit strategy from the army.

Always have one eye on that."

'You've become an expert on the job without realising it'



ON-SCREEN SURVIVAL

IF YOU'RE looking for something new to watch, tune into the Discovery Channel on Thursday nights for the latest instalments of TV's toughest survival show.

Naked and Afraid: Apocalypse finishes airing this month – and it features a familiar army face.

WO2 Steven Kelly (RA) was one of 12 contestants dropped into the South African bush to fend for himself after acing a previous series of the show in the Amazon (shown above).

Using only survival skills, resourcefulness and mental resilience, the group battled through extreme heat and some scary wildlife encounters.

Speaking to *Soldier* afterwards, the commando gunner – whose survival tips we featured in September – said his military mindset had helped him.

"I think during my time on the show I went through every value and standard in the army, and put it into place," the Scouser said.

No spoilers on how WO2 Kelly fares, but the 39-year-old said he felt he had "something to prove" being a forces man.

He added: "What appeals to me about survival is seeing people overcome struggle – you get to watch them think outside the box and make things work."

"In the military we like to push similar boundaries, but we have logistics, Bergans, rations."

"Out there I had nothing."

The serviceman explained how just ten per cent of the battle had

been down to fitness and skill; 90 per cent was attitude.

"When you're getting bitten by bugs all day every day, you just have to keep smiling like British soldiers do," he continued.

"I think the Americans found it hard to understand my banter – I was turning everything into a joke."

"But that's what soldiers do best; work as a team, survive, laugh."

WELFARE WHEN NEEDED

WELFARE bosses can now recommend personnel for places on an initiative designed to help bolster personal resilience.

Some 80 defence-funded spots are available on the Warrior programme residential course at the Services Cotswold Centre (below). Individuals must be over 18, out of phase one and two training, and not due to hang up their uniform in the next two years.

Read **ABN 056/2025** for more info or to apply.



NEW KINDA PADRE IN TOWN...

THE army has appointed its first ever non-religious chaplain.

Part of a defence-wide change, the move sees humanist Neil Weddell (ex-AGC (ETS), shown right) join the fold. He will be based at Army Training Regiment Winchester.

The ex-major, who served in Afghanistan, will provide the same judgement-free support as the rest of his colleagues. He told *Soldier* he was "honoured" to be making history.

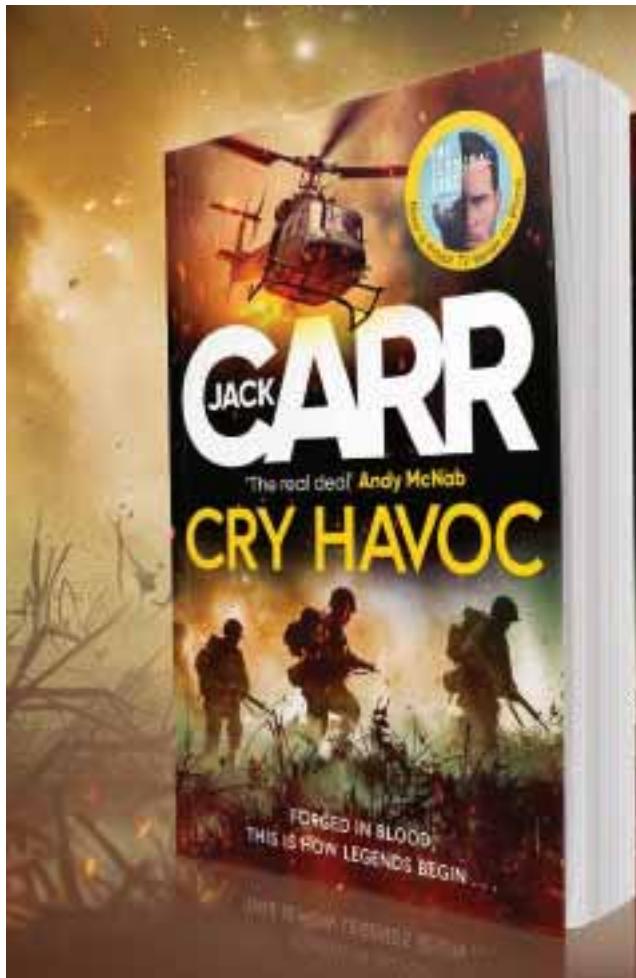
"This recognises that support for soldiers, officers and their families must reflect the full diversity of beliefs and world views in today's forces," he added.

Humanists are non-religious and believe you can live an ethical and fulfilling life based on reason and humanity.

Chaplain General, Rev Canon Michael Parker, said: "We have some religious soldiers who will struggle with this change, but this is not a secular agenda seeking to remove religion from the army – it's simply a broadening of our chaplaincy family."

"All padres are here to work together."





HOW LEGENDS BEGIN

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
THE TERMINAL LIST
NOW ON PRIME VIDEO

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diary dates

8

In memoriam

THE 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War is set to give this year's season of reflection added poignance with events across the weekend of November 8-9. Troops and veterans will lead commemorations at the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday, with the annual wreath laying at the Cenotaph the following morning. The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire is also holding a service to mark Armistice Day on November 11, when all personnel are encouraged to respect the national two-minute silence at 1100. Fields of remembrance will be open at the venue and at Westminster Abbey until November 16. Log on to nma.org.uk and britishlegion.org.uk for more.



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



Picture: Graeme Main

20

Awards season

THE annual Army Sports Awards return to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as the service's leading athletes are recognised for their endeavours over the past 12 months. Find out more on the winners in next month's issue.



Picture: Cat Goryn/Allign Photography

19

Fittest in the force?

THE British Army Warrior Fitness individual finals take place at Army Training Centre Pirbright, with competitors facing six energy-sapping workouts in their quest for glory. Read our December issue for a round-up of all the action from the showdown.

19

Driving diversity

CHIEF of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, will attend this year's Army Multicultural Network Conference, which has the theme of 'the pathway to change'. Held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the event also celebrates achievements of personnel. Network spokesman Lt Alexander Brindle (RAMS) told *Soldier* the day would see a broad range of topics covered. Email him at alexander.brindle100@mod.gov.uk

27

Exercise Combined Warrior

RUN by the Combat Manoeuvre Centre at Sennybridge, this two-week package boosts combined arms integration as those conducting courses and trade training come together to test their soldiering skills in a realistic battlegroup environment.



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

skills

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Infanteers hone dispersal skills in Cyprus



GETTING from A to B has changed significantly since Cpl Keian Daniels (Para) joined the army in 2012.

From patrolling single file, Afghan-style, to manoeuvring under the watchful eye of a sophisticated modern foe, these days the name of the game is maintaining a low profile.

So when the NCO and colleagues from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment were faced with a 12km infiltration tab on Exercise Kronos Warrior, there were a host of complexities to consider...



LESS IS MORE

Basically, the enemy are less likely to unmask their artillery and big guns for small groups so if we operate at platoon-minus rather than company strength, we run a much lower risk of getting hit. We tried to make it standard to work in nothing larger than three sections throughout the insertion so we had as small a signature on the ground as we could.

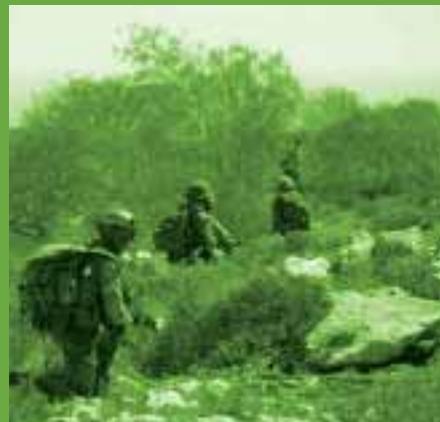


SILENCE IS GOLDEN

We can now be identified location-wise just by hitting the pressel on the radio, so we stay off the net as much as possible. That means orders have to be clear and concise and people need to be navigationally swept up. Ahead of setting off, everyone must understand the corridors they're working in and stick within those parameters so you don't accidentally cross friendly forces. Obviously you have your Atak, but you shouldn't rely solely on it either.

PACING PRECISION

The problem in Cyprus was that the terrain further north was harder to operate in, so we were slower than the guys down south. You need to understand how the topography is going to affect the pace and not just go off the standard 4km per hour. If one group arrives at the forming up point and has to wait for hours for everyone else to get there they are going to be vulnerable to drone attacks.





NOWHERE TO HIDE

Depending on where you are, you may or may not have vegetation to conceal your movements. But even if you do, drones would likely look more closely at potential hiding sites. There's also your thermal signature to think of. Essentially, you might be able to survive a fly-over but if the drone is more static and really looking, you will probably be compromised. That's why dispersal and not presenting such a worthwhile target is important.

LEARNING CURVE

Things are changing so rapidly due to current conflicts that the whole world is playing catch-up. Nothing's getting easier, everything's becoming more complicated and there's a hell of a lot more to think about now. Tactically, this was a very worthwhile exercise and we'll take a lot of lessons away to work on.



TIME TO GIVE BACK?

EXPERIENCED troops are being urged to lend their skills to the Army Instructor School as it creates a new generation of trainers across the service.

Bosses at the recently expanded Pirbright-based outfit said they wanted to attract gifted individuals passionate about passing on all they've learned.

They were speaking after the school rolled out a reworked package to prepare new intakes of section commanders who coach troops at training bases.

Commanding officer Lt Col Ed Thompson (RE, below) has said he wanted to promote a robust learning culture. Ensuring junior NCOs were prepared for instructor roles was key, he stressed, adding: "We now have a new pre-employment training course, which we run for the Soldier Academy."

"The package looks at leadership and behaviours and mental resilience – candidates also complete specialist qualifications such as skill at arms and the mandatory defence trainer course."

Meanwhile, school staff are also involved in other work, including outsourcing their expertise to units, upskilling Ukrainian forces on Op Interflex and assisting army mentors to become more confident.

"We changed our name from the Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command Staff Leadership School to the Army Instructor School about six months ago – put simply, the name better defines our role," said Lt Col Thompson. "Driven by senior command, we have also been expanding significantly, growing our staff numbers here by around 20 per cent."

The officer said he wanted high quality individuals to join his team – a cohort which already has several decades of experience within it.

The latest arrivals included SCpl Tommo Thomas (RHG/D), who is on full-time reserve service after a 22-year regular career and is enjoying the latest challenge of working on the pre-employment course.

He said junior NCOs in training roles needed to be prepared for a huge responsibility. "Nobody is ever going to forget their first section commander – that experience will stay with them forever," he added.

"For me, coming here as a reservist is an opportunity to give back."



fitness



SLOPING OFF

Skiing is a popular sport but a big cause of injuries – so it pays to prepare

LET'S face it, we've all known somebody who has found themselves incapacitated after an unfortunate mishap on a skiing adventure.

Whether it's a spectacular tumble and roll ending in a knockout, or misplaced feet resulting in broken bones, landing in hospital is a real risk of taking part.

And while the sport is an important part of the AT calendar, providing fitness benefits and a great way of socialising, military medical bosses have voiced concern at the high number of troops falling victim to injuries.

Following the publication of a new Army health booklet, *Be Fit, Ski Fit*, which provides an exercise programme to condition personnel for the slopes, we asked sports massage professional and reservist PTI Cpl Mark Bailey (AGC (RMP)) for some extra tips on staying injury free during the winter sports season...



READ UP

ARMY health promotion boss and ex-service skier Maj Tracey Doree (RAPTC) says that good on-slope discipline is underpinned by both mental and physical resilience.

"You're moving in ways that you would not normally, with flexion and rotation across undulating ground – it is a tremendous all-round workout," she tells *Soldier*.

"But it requires a good level of basic fitness throughout – so as well as the exercises in the *Be Fit, Ski Fit* booklet, it is important to stay healthy generally, making sure you are taking on board good nutrition and getting enough sleep."

"You'll be on the slopes for hours and burning lots of calories."

1 Get a head start

Prepare in advance of hitting the slopes, at least three months before. The stronger and fitter you are, the more you'll enjoy skiing.

2 Perfect your pins

Your legs and ankles are going to take some punishment. Strengthen the muscles supporting your joints with exercises such as hamstring curls and squat jumps.

3 Core is key

Good stability and balance are important. You will find exercises in the booklet such as balances with deep squats – you might also find that taking up yoga helps.

4 Get used to the grind

Skiing requires endurance – day-to-day you can build this up through cycling or getting on the rowing machine in the gym.

5 The climb will cost

Remember you'll become more fatigued at higher altitudes and in the cold.

6 Know your limits

Don't try anything too ambitious if you are still a novice. Don't overstretch yourself and make sure you call it quits when you've had enough.

7 Block out booze

Avoid alcohol during the trip. Even a single evening drink will make you more fatigued on the slopes. Maybe have a celebration at the end.

Name: Cpl Mark Bailey

Age: 45

Cap badge: AGC (RMP)

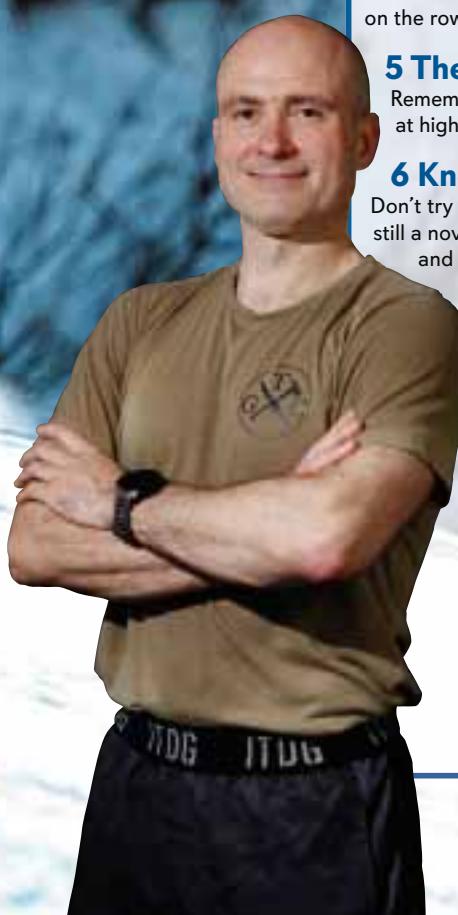
Profession: Sports and

remedial massage therapist

Years in: Six

Current unit: 116 Pro Coy,

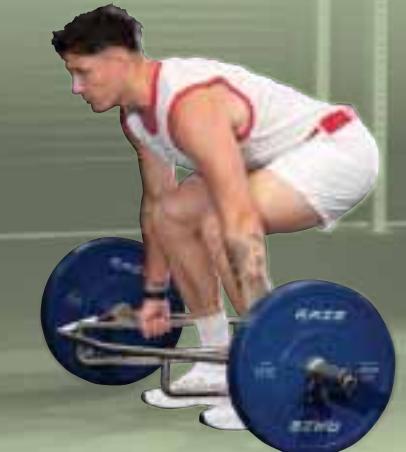
1 Regt RMP



HEX FLEX IN 3

SGT Warren Robinson (RAPTC, shown) on how to give the hex bar deadlift your best for the soldier conditioning assessment

1 Do the basics well and think about your coaching questions. Where should your feet be? How should you grip the bar? What does a braced core feel like?



2 Train frequently and with the kit you'll be using on the test. Find a good balance between improved technique and power, and muscle recovery.

3 Use accessory exercises – extra movements that complement your main lifts. Ask a PTI for advice. Hex bar deadlifts use your entire posterior chain – the muscles on the back of the body, including calves, hamstrings, glutes, and back – so one weak link there will limit your output.



Pictures: Graeme Main

welfare



Picture: Graeme Main

A SWEET REVIVAL?

It's a side to army life in 2025 that no one saw coming – more young soldiers are turning to God. *Soldier* asked the army padres what this was all about...

THE number of people who go to church – and who identify as being Christian – has been in decline across the UK for as long as most of us can remember.

You only need to observe the rows of empty pews during most Sunday morning church services to know that.

But things are changing.

Described as a “quiet revival” by the church press, various data confirms that more

young people are turning to Christianity.

And it is something the man in charge of army padres, Chaplain General Rev Canon Michael Parker, says is also starting to happen behind the wire – particularly at initial training establishments.

“We are certainly starting to see an uptick,” the senior clergyman tells this magazine.

“And gen z – often generalised as sceptical and transactional – are using more spiritual

language in the way they talk about the world.

“They are using language the previous generation may have shied away from.”

He reflects: “I don’t know if we are just seeing this trend because we are looking for it – sometimes you only notice things when you’re looking for them.

“But if we think about where our newest soldiers are – Harrogate, for example – then yes, we are seeing a small increase. We are also seeing it at Pirbright and in Sandhurst.”

So what are the reasons for this? The chaplain general has a few theories.

“Is it something to come out of Covid?” he ponders. “The Covid generation were impacted so much by isolation – are they looking for a new way to connect? Maybe that’s what’s going on.”

“Or might it just be that here is a group

‘The Covid generation were impacted so much by isolation – are they looking for a new way to connect? Maybe that’s what’s going on’

of people who do not share the cynicism of those who have gone before.

“It could be that, as a cohort, they are fed up of being pigeonholed with the hangups of a previous generation. So is this a counter-cultural expression?

“Maybe if previous generations have been saying that religion has no place in society, they are saying ‘hang on, we will decide that for ourselves’”

So what could it mean for soldiering on modern operations, to have more practising Christians? Especially at a time when the service is trying to increase diversity in the ranks (read about the army’s first humanist chaplain on page 19).

“I see this as a good thing,” Rev Parker continues.

“There’s long been a Western liberal tradition that is very dismissive of religion. But religion is so widely followed around the globe, that’s actually a minority approach.

“Soldiers are global citizens. And in the places we operate around the world, we encounter people whose religious identity is inseparable from their national identity.

“Having personnel who understand that, even if they don’t agree, is a good thing.

“I also think it’s good that our young people are exploring and looking for meaning.

“If you are interested in what is happening in the world, you will have a more informed connection with that world.”

Could the political turmoil across the globe be another reason younger British soldiers are turning to God – perhaps they sense difficult times ahead?

“I don’t know if young people feel the world to be a more dangerous place,” Rev Parker responds.

“But they might be looking at Ukraine, Gaza and asking themselves what it might mean to be a soldier in that moment.

“What’s your role in that?

“And you cannot talk about readiness without thinking about the moral component.

“That needs as much thought as the physical and conceptual components of war.

“How are we growing moral and ethical resilience in our young people, so that when they are asked to make difficult choices, they make ones they can live with?”

“The job of chaplains is not to answer that

– but to ask that question in a way leaders can think about.”

The current Land Training System – some of which is detailed on page 30 – includes serials that require chaplaincy interaction.

On the recent Exercise Rhino Heart, for example, where the army’s only fully reservist brigade rehearsed deploying across Europe (page 36), chaplains were tasked with talking to medics about the treatment of dead bodies in accordance with different faiths.

An unsettling thought, but a vital role for the service’s spiritual leaders in addition to the real-world welfare support they offer deployed reservists and help for those facing moral quandaries.

“We are one of the resources leaders can draw on to make decisions,” Rev Parker says. “Not because we have some sort of moral fairy dust, but because we look at things through a different lens.”

Whether religious or not – Christian or not – the chaplain general is clear the army’s band of padres continue to exist for all service personnel.

“They are there to care,” he says. “And that care can be whatever you need it to be; and it can be unequivocally confidential.

“It is really important to me that soldiers know that.”

**Chaplain General
Rev Canon
Michael Parker**



ASKING THE PADRES...

What are your experiences of seeing more troops turn to Christianity?



**Rev Edward
Gorringe,
RAChD**

“I AM getting more soldiers wanting to talk about religion and more going back to the faith they once had. There seems to be more interest in parts of the Christian church that offer something different, too – for example, the orthodoxy or high church. That seems to capture people.”



Rev Tim Close, RAChD

“YOUNG men appear to be the vanguard of this. This generation is also quite experience-driven – perhaps searching for something that lifts them out of the ordinary.

The Church of England has tried to be more relatable in recent times, but if you’re relatable then you are not being different.”

veterans



Picture: Graeme Main

FIRST UP THE LADDER...

MOVES to give ex-troops “first dibs” on houses built at old MoD sites have been welcomed by charities amid growing concerns over veteran homelessness.

Under the new Forces First scheme, both former and serving personnel will be given priority to occupy properties built on surplus military land.

Ministers insist the move will contribute to housebuilding targets as well as prioritising the needs of those who have served.

It has been welcomed by military good causes, who highlight that veteran housing referrals have more than doubled over the last 12 months.

Explaining the plan at the recent Labour Party conference in Liverpool, Defence Secretary John Healey told delegates it would offer those

who had served greater opportunities to get on the housing ladder.

“It gives them first dibs, if you like, on homes on surplus land, making home ownership more of a reality for more personnel and veterans,” he said.

Healey revealed 100,000 properties could be constructed at former defence sites in the long term.

Exact numbers of those earmarked for veterans and personnel would be determined locally between government, councils and developers, he added. And affordable housing would be the priority.

The MP for Rawmarsh and Conisbrough said the initiative was being pioneered at a site in Feltham, where representatives of the MoD, Greater London Authority and Borough of

Hounslow were working together.

Forces First will form part of the Defence Housing Strategy, full details of which will be published in the coming weeks.

Charity Alabare welcomed the news, citing a 122 per cent hike in its veteran housing cases over the last year.

Chief Executive Officer Andrew Lord said the risk of people ending up on the streets was rising as demand for properties increased.

“The pledge to give veterans and service personnel first dibs on housing could go some way to breaking the cycle of homelessness before it even begins,” he added.

“We’re seeing a growing level of need in the veteran community for affordable, high-quality accommodation – we’d be keen to work with the government.”

TOWERING PRESENCE

A PROUD airborne forces stalwart has swapped his maroon beret for a Tudor bonnet to become a Beefeater at the Tower of London.

Lee Fox (ex-Para) is the latest to join the ranks of the Yeoman Warders – embracing traditions dating back some five centuries.

Originally created in 1485 as a personal bodyguard to King Henry VII, the cohort now plays a vital ceremonial role while keeping the history of the capital's iconic landmark alive for tens of thousands of visitors each year.

Yeoman Warder applicants must all have served in the armed forces for a minimum 22 years, be a warrant officer or equivalent rank and hold the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. They also have to be aged at least 40 to be considered.

Fox, who recently left 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, told *Soldier* he was over the moon to join his 34 colleagues in the role.

"It's an honour and privilege to be selected for this amazing position," he said.



Picture: Michael Bowles/Historic Royal Palaces

IS COVENANT OUT OF STEP?

THE Royal British Legion has urged the government to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant is being fully applied across the UK – stating some troops are being failed in areas such as compensation and claiming entitled help.

The charity wants ministers to ensure the deal takes centre stage in policy and is upheld by local authorities, and has asked supporters to sign an open letter to the government on its britishlegion.org.uk website.

It has also found that a quarter of the military population and 67 per cent of civvies still do not know that the covenant exists, or little about it, suggesting better promotion may be needed.

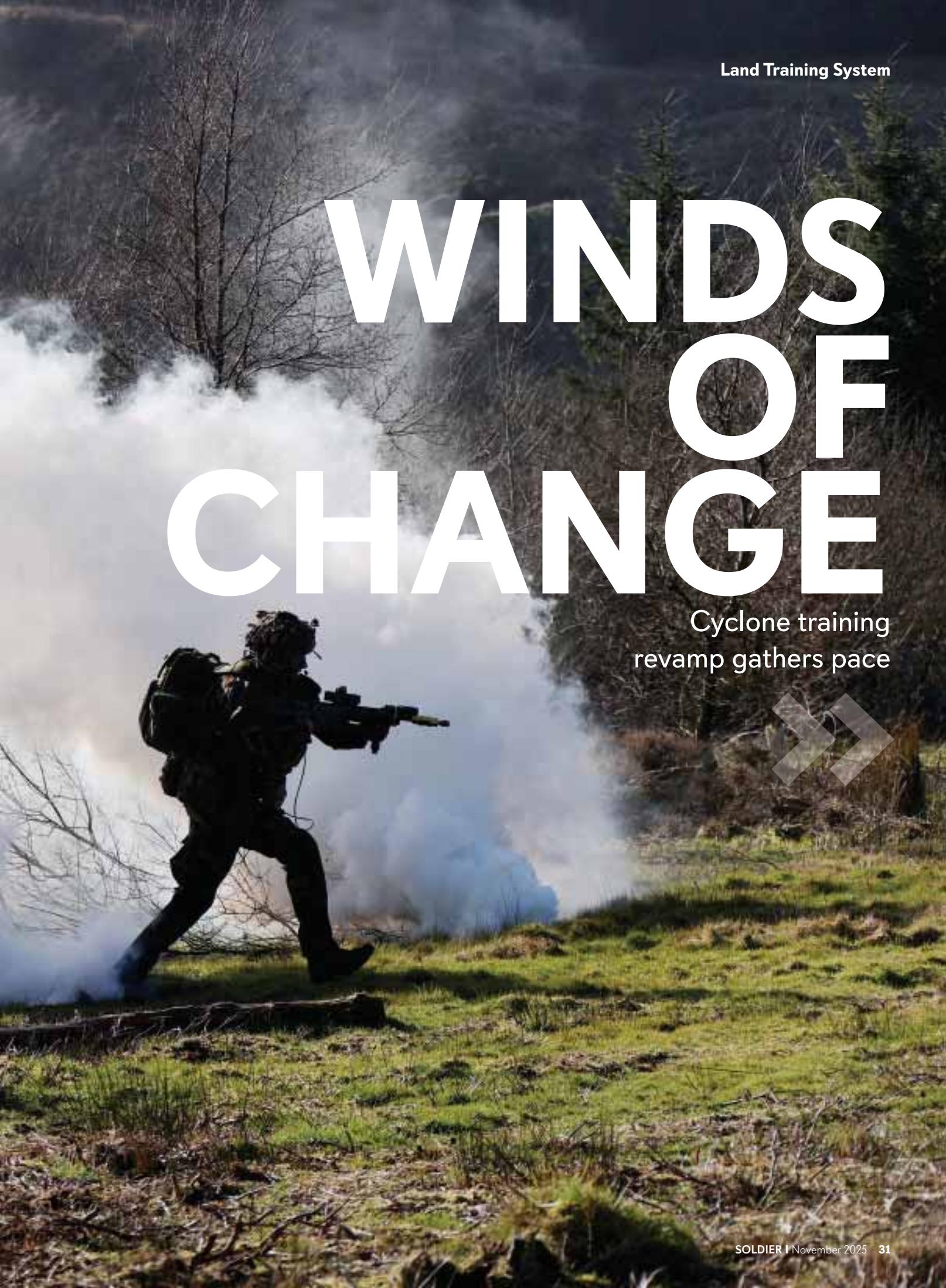




Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main; SSgt Dek Taylor and Cpl Aaron Stone, both RLC

WINDS OF CHANGE

Cyclone training
revamp gathers pace



Main image **Drone tactics and other lessons from current conflicts are fed into the Cyclone programme** Right **Troops from 16 Medical Regiment practise specialist skills during Exercise Brave Cyclone**



'There's been a lot of stuff thrown at us quickly but I think that's the best way'

FIGHTING power and how to increase it – the conundrum facing commanders at every level in 2025.

From multi-billion pound equipment programmes to the most junior soldiers prioritising personal fitness, it's a challenge of epic scale, not to mention urgency given the increasingly aggressive tactics of Nato's adversaries.

At the basic level, affording troops the time and opportunity to hone their expertise is nothing short of mission critical.

That's why last year service chiefs officially rolled out the Land Training System – a restructuring of individual, unit and collective drills that Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, said would prepare the army to take on "bigger and better equipped" foes.

Its three parts – Trade Wind, Cyclone and Storm – take personnel from foundational skills up to full-scale combined arms exercises, with the second element geared towards squadron or company level.

Overseen by the Combat Manoeuvre Centre, Cyclone ensures every sub-unit gets around ten weeks ringfenced in any 12-month period to meet its objectives.

An obvious requirement, perhaps. But with myriad competing obligations – from instructing Ukrainian troops to helping Afghan refugees resettle in the UK – core

business could sometimes take a hit.

"Cyclone gives units protected time where they get no external taskings and can focus on their own development," explained Maj Chris Cookson (R Welsh) from the Combined Arms Manoeuvre Training and Advisory Team (Camtat)

"Previously, they were so busy they were going on to Storm exercises without having been doing their primary roles and were having to relearn basic skills.

"This way, when they go on a big validation serial for combat or mission readiness, the start state is better soldiers and well-trained units coming together in the combined arms context. It's about upskilling and professionalising the army."

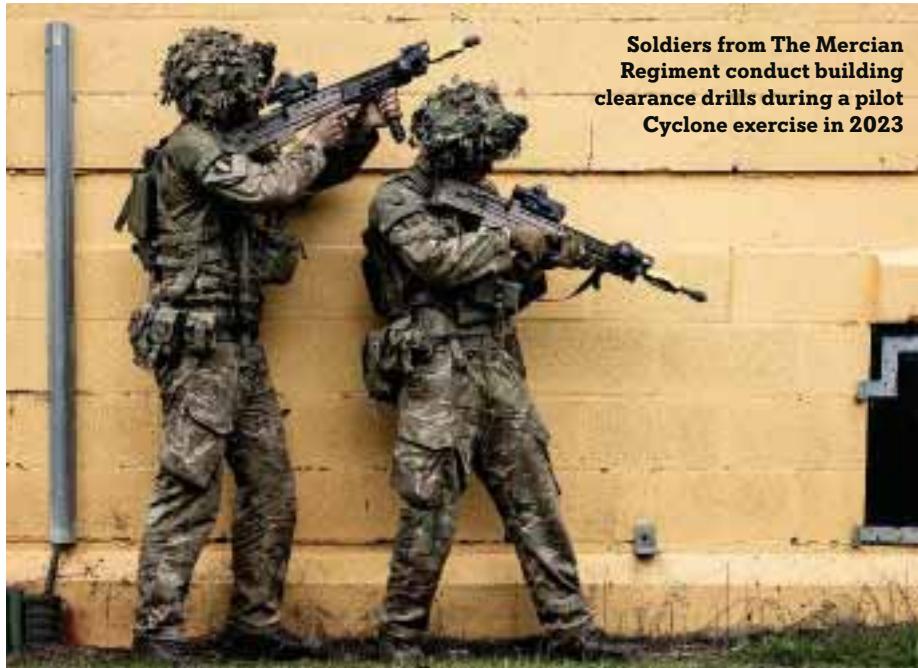
Delivery of the programme, which builds from section through platoon drills up to company-level, is down to officers commanding – with guidance from Camtat – before the CO signs the unit off as good to go.

And Maj Cookson stressed that the training would evolve to incorporate lessons from Ukraine and beyond.

"A formation might complete their ten weeks now, but in a year's time there may be a greater focus on different activity because of developments we're seeing around the world," he said.

"Drone warfare is a good example – gone are the days of sitting out in the open nicely" »





Soldiers from The Mercian Regiment conduct building clearance drills during a pilot Cyclone exercise in 2023

» administering ourselves.

"The latest doctrine is that you don't come together, you disperse and you're always hiding, but in 12 months it could be that something else has emerged that changes what we do."

Following pilot exercises, Cyclone was fully launched in April this year and by the time this issue hits shelves, 279 of the army's 415 sub-units will have completed the pipeline.

While soldiers on the ground will notice little change to the day job, Maj Cookson said they should embrace having the time and space to sharpen their core skills.

"They'll have ten weeks to develop themselves, so a section commander will be able to spend time with their troops, training them, making them better and getting ready for the future," he went on.

Reflecting on how the changes would help boost combat power, he added: "The more proficient you are at your job, the more survivable you are. The more survivable you are, the more lethal you are. It all works hand in hand." «

'IT'S MADE A MARKED DIFFERENCE'



Ex Scorpion Cyclone preps cavalry for combined drills

AS THIS issue went to press, members of A Squadron, The Royal Lancers were gearing up to join colleagues from the Household Cavalry and 3rd Deep Recce Strike Brigade on Exercise Titan Storm.

A series of Trade Wind and Cyclone packages – which included virtual drills in Catterick and Sennelager, plus a 17-day stint on Salisbury Plain last month – brought personnel up to speed individually and collectively.

The final outing saw them meeting training level charlie by operating as a squadron in daylight and at night across a variety of tactical scenarios.

Officer commanding Maj Andrew Meeke (RL) said they were now in good shape to embark upon the forthcoming combined arms manoeuvres.

"By the time we go on Titan Storm we'll have had two solid weeks on the actual vehicles and a further almost four weeks of simulated training, as well as a couple of smaller exercises on our back area," he explained.

"It's made a marked difference. Looking back, there have been times in the army when we've been doing so many things at once.

"Last year was one of those times because the regiment did three

concurrent operational tours.

"But this year the squadron has been entirely left alone. We knew where our protected windows were and could focus on getting ourselves ready."

Lessons from the Cyclone pathway would be fed back to the Combat Manoeuvre Centre so the process could be refined for future rotations, added Maj Meeke.

Lt Sam Vance (RL) agreed that the space to concentrate on core business after the operational commitments of 2024 had been beneficial.

"It's been quite thick and fast," he said of the process.

"There's been a lot of stuff thrown at us pretty quickly, but I think that's the best way to do it.

"To be able to get an entire squadron to this point since January, all organically trained and ready to go onto Salisbury Plain, is quite an achievement I think."

Meanwhile, Sgt Luke Robinson, a Royal Engineer attached to the squadron's guided weapons troop, was looking forward to his first brigade-level exercise in a number of years.

"It's been a big learning curve for everyone, but I think the training has been more organised and the whole programme has gone well," he said.

"Everyone has had a positive approach and been open minded going into it, so I think it's fully prepared us for the next phase."



ELBIT SYSTEMS UK

INNOVATIVE DEFENCE

TECHNOLOGY

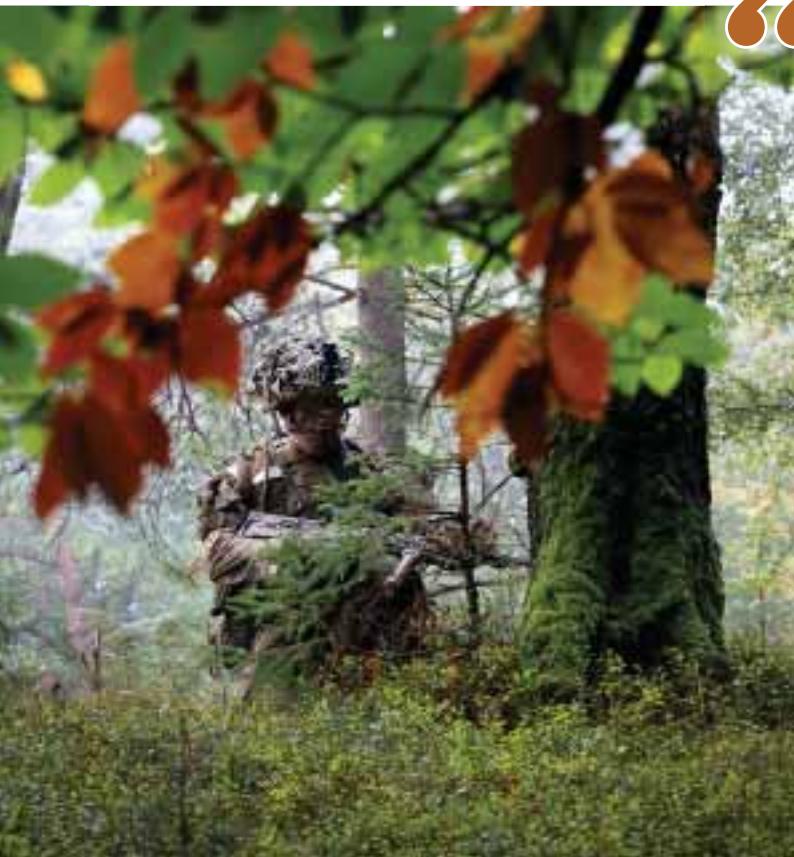


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THE **WILL** TO **WIN**

What a reservist battlegroup
brings to the party



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main

IT'S been a privilege to observe Exercise Rhino Heart and the sense of purpose it's galvanised in our soldiers," comments **Brig Lisa Brooks**.

The commander of 19th Light Brigade (shown overleaf) is standing inside Tin City - a bleak and battered urban complex on Sennelager Training Area, Germany.

She is satisfied that this overseas outing has not only shown her troops' ability to deploy by land across Europe and fight, but their willingness to do so as well.

"There's no one on this exercise who doesn't want to be here," the brigadier tells *Soldier* as the crackle of gunfire rips across our concreted surroundings.

"We have self-employed people deployed with us who charge call-out rates of around £80 an hour back home, so they're actually losing money by being here.

"But they want to come and serve their country. That's powerful - and it creates a will to win."

Badged as the largest deployment of British volunteers since the Cold War era, this package has seen the service's only fully reservist brigade build on similar work done out here in 2024.

This time around, however, combined service support units such as the military police, Royal Engineer bridge builders and REME vehicle repairers have rocked up - as well as a sprinkling of international troops from Estonia and Canada.

A realistic and freethinking opposing force has also been created from within the brigade. The troops have essentially been split down the middle to create two battlegroups, one led by The Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry and the other by 4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

Not only has this cranked up the realism, but it has brought home to everyone the sheer volume of specialisms that must work together seamlessly in order to deliver a credible operational capability. >>

Ex Rhino Heart tested troops from 6th Battalion, The Rifles; 4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and The Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, as well as Royal Engineers, Royal Artillery and Royal Army Medical Service personnel

IN NUMBERS
Ex Rhino Heart

10

units involved from across the UK

164

green fleet vehicles transported to Germany

800+

reservists put to the test





» Even Brig Brooks admits to being taken aback when she steps out among a tidal wave of coloured berets at a drumhead service upon her arrival in country.

"I looked out at the 850-or-so soldiers in front of me and it took my breath away," she tells the magazine. "Not just because of the number, but because of the variety of participating units.

"These soldiers all want to develop themselves, personally and professionally, and this exercise has allowed them to do new things and work with different capabilities they've never seen before, whether that's through composite units, patrols or inside HQs.

"That has been a learning experience, and it's been challenging.

"But behind almost everyone here is a civilian career. And in those careers they are used to dealing with different groups of people.

"We are training en masse, but the reality is that we will all go back to work on Monday morning and probably never work in exactly the same teams again.

"But the skills we learn will remain. It's all about sets and reps."

Out on the training area, every reservist *Soldier* chats with us digesting something new – and for many that is simply the experience of operating at battlegroup level.

"We don't often do this kind of exercise," says supermarket worker Rfn Elliott O'Brien from 8th Battalion, The Rifles. "I've never seen every component of a battlegroup come into one like this.

"It gives you a much clearer picture of how the army works and all the assets you have at hand on operations."

Kgn Lucy Whelan (Lancs) agrees.

"It's been nice to see people from other cap badges and I have learned a lot from just being here," she adds.

"People are always telling you stuff about their role, and you get to see everyone doing their own thing – from the medics and intelligence staff to the engineers blowing doors off."

For Jackal driver LCpl Jack Dawson (SNIY), a professional actor and playwright in civvy life, Rhino Heart has not been just an opportunity to mix, but to hone his trade without limitation. And a week of roadtripping across central Europe, with all the associated mechanical headaches, has certainly achieved that.

"It was quite a crazy drive over from Belfast, via Liverpool and »



'It allowed troops to do new things and work with different capabilities they've never seen before'

**Brig Lisa Brooks,
Commander 19th Light Brigade**

SENNELAGER SNIPPETS

What were troops in the field thinking during Ex Rhino Heart?

ON ENVIRONMENT

Honestly, this has been tough – the ground conditions and lots of tabbing. But I love being in the reserve – we get opportunities thrown at us all the time. I've been in just under a year and joined spontaneously.

Kgn Leah Pickett, Lancs



ON LIFE AND DEATH

When soldiers are physically and mentally exhausted, what keeps them fighting? The spiritual edge, as we call it, helps them to endure the realities of soldiering. How do we help them to get through that? Help them live with themselves afterwards? Our role is all about retaining the humanity in our soldiers.

Rev Tim Close, RAChD



ON SECOND CHANCES

I remember watching the ground invasion of Iraq on TV during my first day at Pirbright when I joined the regulars. A lot's happened since then, but since returning as a reservist I've done my junior and senior Brecon, the skill at arms course and the range management qualification. Soldiers are a bit like professional footballers – you don't stop kicking a ball about just because you retire. I still want to kick that ball about.

Sjt Matt Winn, Rifles



ON LEADERSHIP

This has been very different to weekend training at platoon level, and I'm learning a lot. In particular, having the fire support teams attached to us was great. We were a forward platoon on a delay action, and I think the troops appreciated being tested like that. They have risen to the challenge.

Lt William Jones, Lancs



>>

THERE'S EASIER HOBBIES!

I joined the reserve to do something different and there were transferable skills from my day job as a firefighter. But these last few days have been hard – the lack of sleep, the running, the tabbing. But I've learned a lot. When you join the reserve it feels like a hobby to start with, but this realism brings it home that there is stuff going on in the world.

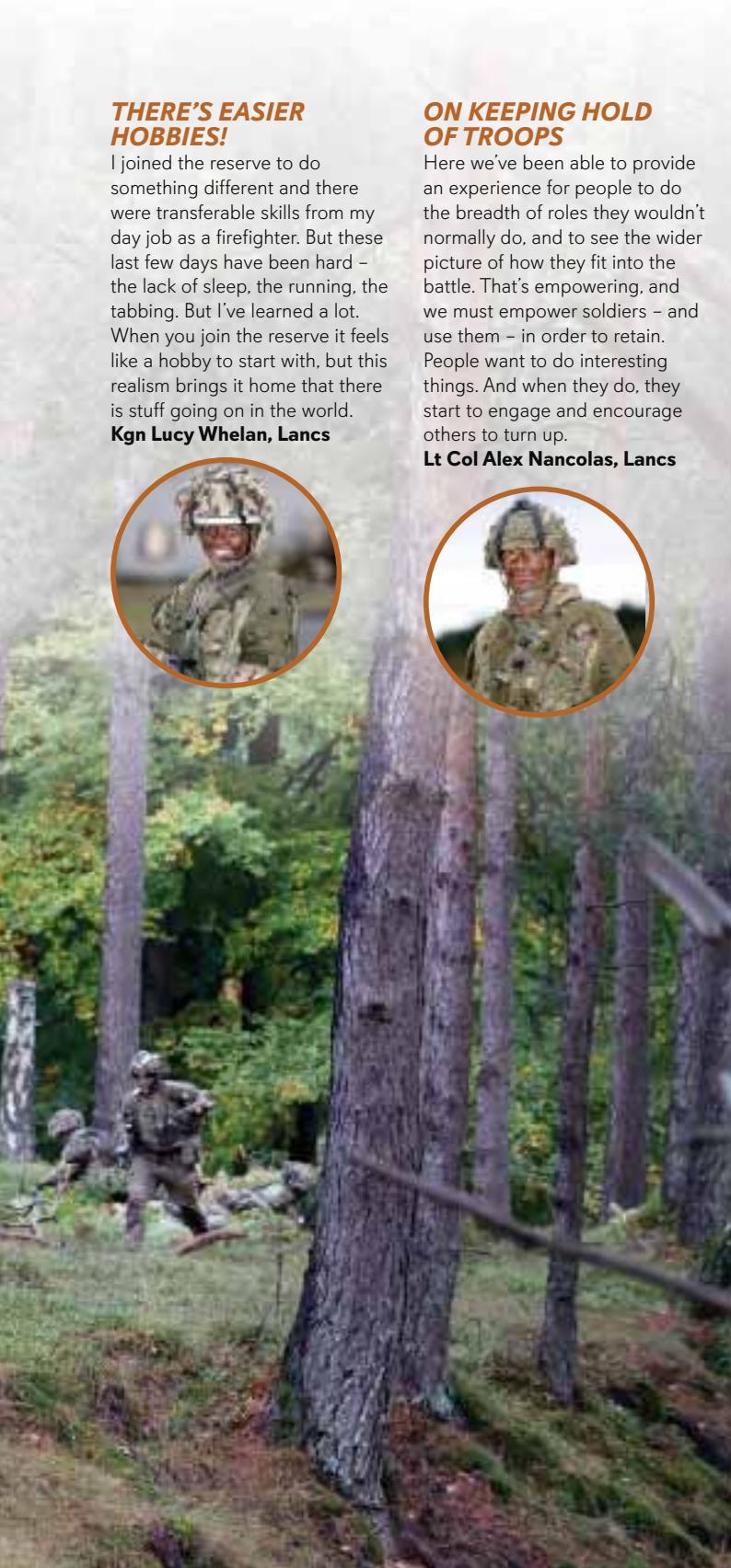
Kgn Lucy Whelan, Lancs



ON KEEPING HOLD OF TROOPS

Here we've been able to provide an experience for people to do the breadth of roles they wouldn't normally do, and to see the wider picture of how they fit into the battle. That's empowering, and we must empower soldiers – and use them – in order to retain. People want to do interesting things. And when they do, they start to engage and encourage others to turn up.

Lt Col Alex Nancolas, Lancs



» Rotterdam," the junior NCO recalls.

"We don't get so much time on the vehicles in the UK because we are limited to what off-road tracks we can use. But I feel more confident now. Getting contacted earlier today in the village was exciting."

Brig Brooks agrees the journey over to Europe was as much a part of the shake-out as any special-to-arm training.

"It set an expeditionary mindset in our soldiers, and we are going to need that," she adds.

Out on the training area at dawn, the silence of a misty riverbank is broken by an irritating buzz overhead.

The yellow tree leaves flutter nervously, and a small UAS comes into view above the canopy – one of several being operated by both of the battlegroups.

Gunfire breaks out, and the attacking force – led by the SNIY – appears through the trees.

This is the very definition of peer-on-peer warfighting – with the two 'enemies' only distinguishable to each other by the differently coloured tape on their helmets.

The freethinking nature of their opposition makes things complex for the soldiers, with serials straying into unpredictable scenarios that even spring a couple of surprises on directing staff, especially inside Tin City where urban battles can be precarious – as the more experienced troops out here know all too well.

"To succeed in this built-up environment you need a troop ratio of about 8-1," says WO2 Richard Wareing (Rifles). "In rural areas that figure's more like 3-1.

"Put a sniper in one of these windows with a good arc of view, and they could hold a whole company up."

"Fighting like this can take a long time."

But even for the ex-regulars who have learnt lessons the hard way, there have been new things to pick up on Ex Rhino Heart – not least how to bring small UAS into the battle effectively.

Experiments see the devices used for both defensive awareness and early warning roles.

Troops from the 4 Lancs defending force – a significant number of whom have now been trained as small UAS operators – use their Parrot Anafis and an Elbit Magni-X to identify and track forming-up points and approach routes, before relaying that information to their commander to help coordinate positions.

A T-6 drone being operated by a team from defence contractor Saab – the one spotted earlier – is also keeping troops on their toes by threatening to drop its payload.

LCpl James Stevens (Lancs) was enjoying putting his newfound skills to the test in a tactical scenario.

"When I left the regulars last year I promised myself I'd never join the reserve, but found myself wanting to be back with my kind of people," he admits. "I missed army life."

"I did my small UAS operative course in June and it's been something new – a fun way to do soldiering."

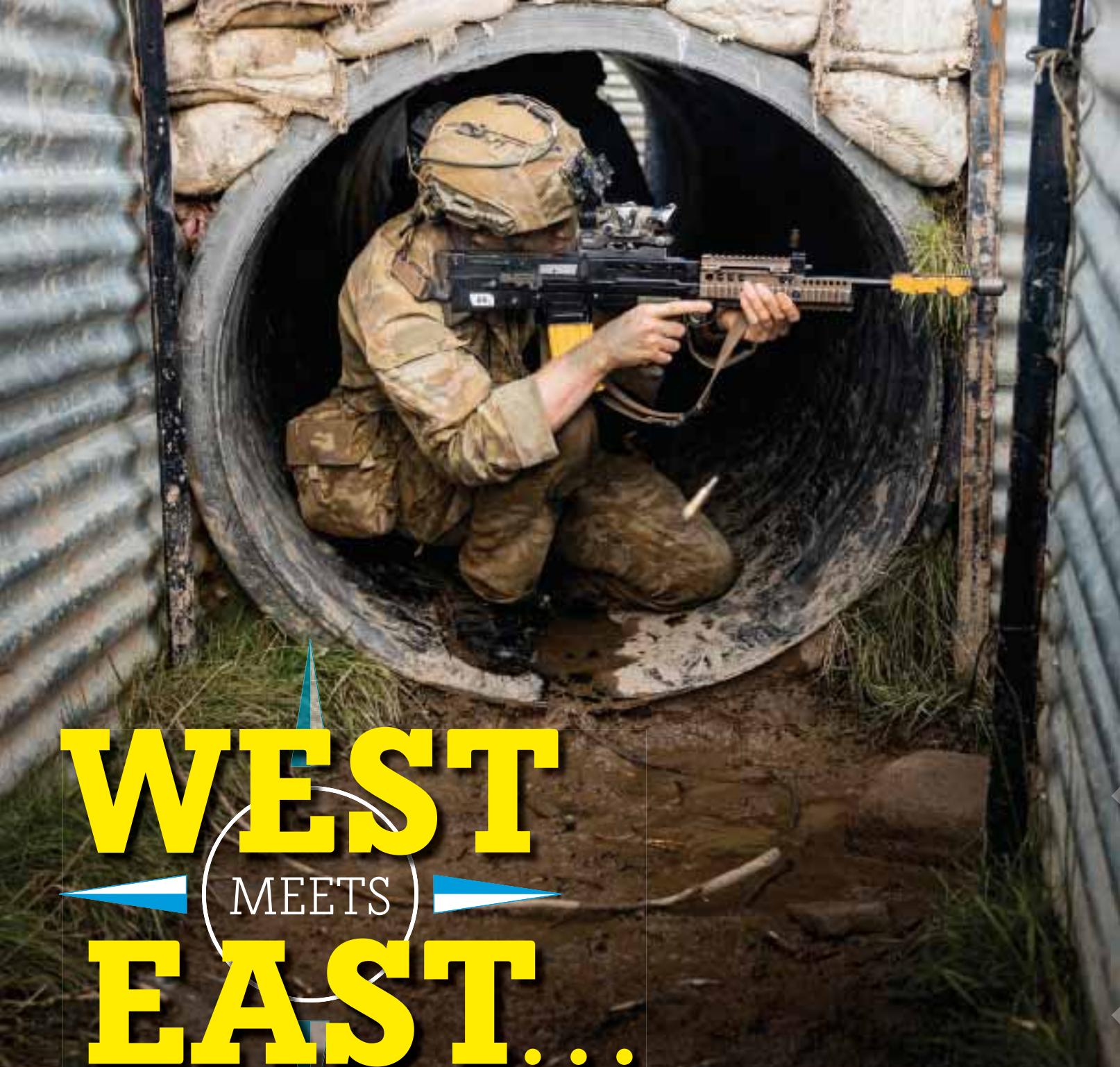
"This is the way the world is going and there's quite a few of us qualified on these devices now in the battalion – I think we're into double digits."

According to the boss, the collective capability of 19th Light Brigade stems from this kind of individual commitment from volunteers to do more and learn more.

"As well as a clear will to win, there's been a determination from everyone involved to make this exercise brilliant," Brig Brooks continues. "These soldiers want to do their bit. And by providing something like this, set against the backdrop of the increasing threat in Eastern Europe and a war in Ukraine, there has been no better time for reservists to serve their country."

"We need to play our part in Nato and demonstrate we are ready. And that resonates with us all – the desire to be the army reserve that our country needs."

"We will be there." <<



WEST MEETS EAST...



Soldiers contend with combat serials inspired by war in Ukraine as they battle through the wilds of Wales



Report: Cliff Caswell | Pictures: Cpl Vincent Price and SSgt Paul Shaw, both RLC



‘You can easily experience all four seasons in one day’

»

A

GRIM combo of vicious weather and attacks from mock Russian armour replicated the rigours of modern warfare for personnel embroiled in the latest Ex Cambrian Patrol.

Soldiers were tested on the full spectrum of combat challenges during this year's event as they were pushed to their limits at range and in demanding conditions.

And contenders soon found that exercise bosses had upped the ante across the rugged Brecon countryside – using lessons from the war in Ukraine to reflect situations they would likely face on the contemporary battlefield.

Obstacles included a Russian-style trench system as well as vehicles adapted to look like the Soviet-era armour still in service with Kremlin forces.

“It was a shock to some of the troops when they were counter-attacked by something looking very much like a BMP-2,” Cambrian Patrol OiC Maj Darren Pridmore (WG) said with a smile.

“The upshot was a definite test for everyone involved.

“There were some difficult conditions too – and while the weather improved over the ten days, the troops had to deal with Storm Amy earlier on in the exercise with high winds and driving rain.

“There is a reason why we train our best soldiers in this part of the world – it's a tough environment and you can easily experience all four seasons in one day.”

This year's Cambrian Patrol was, by all accounts, a fearsome challenge for the eight-strong teams involved.

Each contending outfit tabbed 37 miles in 48 hours, climbing and descending some 3,300 feet in the process, all while facing a raft of serials.

Among them were section attacks, medevacs, integration with drones and the infamous river crossing, all while carrying



FACT FILE

Cambrian Patrol 2025

Hosted by: 160th (Welsh) Brigade
Venue: Countryside around Brecon
Route length: 37 miles
Patrol duration: 48 hours
Climb and descent: 3,300ft

IN NUMBERS
Competition class

109

Teams

20

Gold medals

54

Silver medals

22

Bronze medals

"This is a brilliant debut for a talented historian."

ROBERT LYMAN
*Author of *1000 Days of War**

"A crucial contribution to our understanding of Burma in the Second World War."

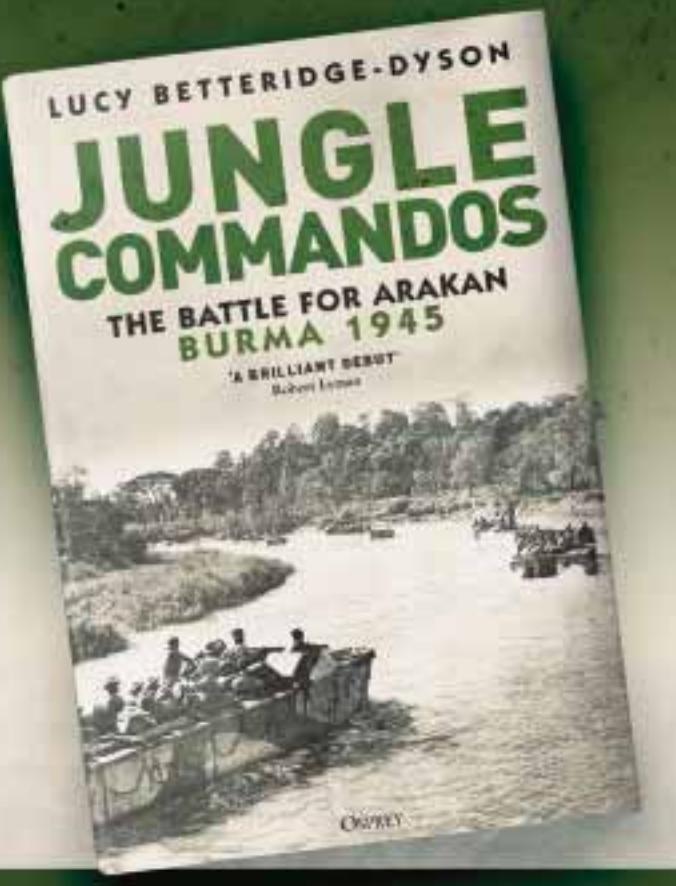
DR SARAH-LOUISE MILLER
*Historian, Commando historian, author of *The Commandos 1940-45**



Jungle Commandos brings to life the chaos and courage of jungle warfare and restores the men who fought and died in these operations – the brave soldiers of the Commando, Indian and West African units – to the centre of the Burma campaign.

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‘There are always things you can learn’



TOP PERFORMERS

Cambrian Patrol 2025

Best overall/Best international team: Nepali army
Best British regular team: King's Gurkha Artillery
Best British reserve team: 4 Mercian

» personal kit across tough terrain.

Of the 109 teams starting out, only 20 were presented with the coveted gold medal. Another 54 took silver and there were 22 bronze award recipients, while eight received certificates for successfully completing the arduous course.

Maj Pridmore, who led the organisers from Headquarters 160th (Welsh) Brigade, told *Soldier*: “One of the units taking gold was Northumbrian University Officers’ Training Corps – which is a really significant achievement in itself.

“As well as teams from the British Army regular and reserve, there were also quite a number of international contenders involved – some 33 in all,” he added. “Among them were the Nepali army, the top scorers, as well as soldiers from countries including the United States, Pakistan, India and Chile.

“We also had interest from new countries – there was a delegation from Japan observing and they are now considering their own team for the 2026 event.

“In addition, we had special guests visiting us throughout, including the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, among other senior officers.”

With the exercise based on the battlecraft syllabus and individual training requirement, Maj Pridmore said troops had soldiered well throughout. In particular, they had shown a dogged determination in dealing with setbacks, including the sudden loss of colleagues to injury.

But the officer pointed out the event had also identified areas for improvement, such as armoured vehicle recognition, which would allow commanders to ensure personnel were as prepared for action as possible.

“There are always things you can learn, including for us as the organisers, and we can take plenty away as we continue to adapt Cambrian Patrol,” he concluded.

“It’s been a great experience and we are already planning for next year’s event.” **«**

EVERY FACE, EVERY STORY

Artist completes four-year mission to
commemorate the fallen of Afghanistan

MORE than a decade on from the height of Britain's involvement in Afghanistan, the conflict has largely slipped from daily conversation.

Yet within the military, those who served in those years – now older, often more senior in rank – still carry vivid memories of comrades who never came home, just as bereaved families will mourn their loss for a lifetime.

For one veteran, though, ensuring those names, faces and sacrifices are remembered became a personal quest.

When Kev Wills (ex-RLC) sat down in 2021 to paint the likeness of a Royal Marine killed in Helmand, he never imagined that one portrait would lead to a project spanning four years, 458 faces and no small amount of emotion.

News of the artwork spread to social media and soon other relatives were getting in touch.

Before long, the 47-year-old had resolved to paint every British serviceman and woman who fell during the campaign, dating back to the first death in 2002.

Although trained in oils, Wills produced the pictures digitally, working late into the night and at weekends around job and family commitments to finally complete the mammoth tasking earlier this year.

"Digital painting is an art form in its own right," explained the father-of-four.

"You can buy apps that convert photos into paintings but that's not the same – it involves no time or effort.

"I use the same process on my tablet as I do for oils. First, I sketch with a pencil tool and a grid, then I build up the colour using different brush effects that mimic the texture of real bristles.

"It's less time consuming and more affordable than traditional paint – and if you make a mistake, you can rework it without starting again."

Conscious that every likeness represented a much-missed family member, he admitted the process weighed heavily at times, particularly when it came to painting two former RLC comrades, WO2s Gaz O'Donnell and Charlie Wood, who lost their lives in the battle against improvised explosive devices in

2008 and 2010 respectively.

"I worked with Charlie in Northern Ireland and Gaz was a legend of the EOD world," Wills continued.

"It was hard painting them but I had to put it out of my mind as best I could.

"Meeting some of the families was emotional, too. They were absolutely overjoyed.

"The whole idea was to let them know that we'll always remember the fallen – and they were all so grateful that people were still thinking of their loved ones."

Having crowdsourced funding for the printing, framing and postage, the portraits were presented or mailed to relatives or regiments free of cost, with the last batch handed over in person to the families of Gurkha troops in Nepal earlier this year.

Reflecting on the ceremony in Pokhara and the final chapter in the mission, Wills added: "Just like the UK families, they were emotional at the unveiling. A few tears were shed.

"They had travelled from across the country to be there, with help from the Gurka Welfare Trust.

"It was an amazing day and a nice thought that all of the portraits had found a home.

"There's more meaning behind a painting than an everyday photograph and they're now a legacy for children, grandchildren and future generations."

With the Afghan series complete, Wills' journey of artistic remembrance was far from over, however.

He has since painted all 41 Australian troops killed in the conflict and has been approached by Canadian families too.

What began as a single portrait has grown into a collective act of commemoration – one man's determination to ensure sacrifice is never forgotten.

For in the end, the 458 paintings are not just images. They are heirlooms and lasting testaments, reminding us that remembrance – whether of Afghanistan, wars long past or those still to come – is about ensuring the names, faces and stories of the fallen live on.







Pte Kyle Adams,
Para



LCpl Jake Alderton,
RE



Rfn Peter Aldridge,
Rifles



Rfn William Aldridge,
Rifles



Mne Sam Alexander,
RM



Rfn Philip Allen,
Rifles



Rfn Jonathon Allott,
Rifles



Flt Sgt Gary Andrews,
RAF



Fus Simon Annis,
RRF



Rfn Carlo Apolis,
Rifles



LCpl James Ashworth,
Gren Gds



Gdsm David Atherton,
Gren Gds



Lt Oliver Augustin,
RM



Tpr Ratu Babakobau,
LG



Capt Ben Babington-
Browne, RE



Rfn James Backhouse,
Rifles



LCpl Jordan Bancroft,
Lancs



Cpl Jason Barnes,
REME



Cpl David Barnsdale,
RE



Capt Walter Barrie,
Scots



Sgt Paul Bartlett,
RM



Pte Gareth Bellingham,
Mercian



Rfn Samuel Bassett,
Rifles



LCpl James Bateman,
Para



Flt Sgt Stephen Beattie,
RAF



WO2 Colin Beckett,
Para



Flt Sgt Gerard Bell,
RAF



Pte Martin Bell,
Para



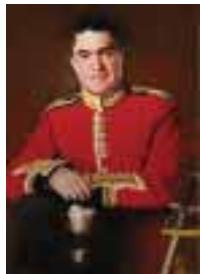
Pte Joseph Berry,
Para



Sgt Sean Binnie,
Scots



Cpl Marc Birch,
RM



Maj Sean Birchall,
WG



Mne Steven Birdsall,
RM



Spr William Blanchard,
RE



Sig Wayne Bland,
R Signals



Cpl Stephen Bolger,
Para



Spr Elijah Bond,
RE



Cpl Darren Bonner,
R Anglian



Cpl Steven Boote,
AGC (RMP)



Pte Johan Botha,
Mercian



Capt Rupert Bowers,
Mercian



Maj Josh Bowman,
RGR



Lt David Boyce,
QDG



Pte John Brackpool,
WG



LCpl Tommy Brown,
Para



LCpl Richard Brandon,
REME



LCpl Andrew Breeze,
Mercian



Sgt Craig Brelsford,
Mercian



SAC Christopher Bridge,
RAF



Mne Adam Brown,
RM



Rfn James Brown,
Rifles



Cpl Lee Brownson,
Rifles



Cpl Sarah Bryant,
Int Corps



LCpl James Brynin,
Int Corps



Cpl Bryan Budd,
Para



LSgt Mark Burgen,
IG



Fus Jonathan Burgess,
R Welsh



Fus Shaun Bush,
RRF



Sgt Robert Busutil,
RLC



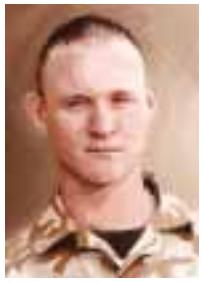
LCpl Barry Buxton,
RE



CSgt Alan Cameron,
SG



LCpl Michael Campbell,
R Welsh



Sjt Steven Campbell,
Rifles



Fus Louis Carter,
RRF



LBdr Mark Chandler,
RHA



WO1 Darren Chant,
Gren Gds



Flt Lt Rakesh Chauhan,
RAF



LCpl Taran Cheeseman,
Rifles



Lt Andrew Chesterman,
Rifles



Lt Daniel Clack,
Rifles



LBdr Ross Clark,
RA



Capt Thomas Clarke,
AAC



LCpl Alan Cochran,
Mercian



Maj Matthew Collins,
IG



Pte Stuart Collins,
Scots



LCpl Daniel Cooper,
Rifles



Sgt Nigel Coupe,
Lancs



Pte Peter Cowton,
Para



LCpl Peter Craddock,
RGBW



Cpl Mark Cridge,
R Signals



Mne Jonathan Crookes,
RM



Rgr Justin Cupples,
R Irish



Cpl Stephen Curley,
RM



Mne Thomas Curry,
RM



Gnr Zak Cusack,
RA



Pte Nathan
Cuthbertson, Para



Pte Andrew Cutts,
RLC



Sgt Lee Davidson,
LD



Lt Douglas Dalzell,
Coldm Gds



Rgr David Dalzell,
R Irish



Sgt Steven Darbyshire,
RM



LCpl George Davey,
R Anglian



Flt Sgt Adrian Davies,
RAF



Mne Damian Davies,
RM

**'They're now
a legacy for
children,
grandchildren
and future
generations'**



Gdsm Christopher Davies, IG



LCpl Lee Davies,
Welsh Gds



Gdsm Simon Davison,
Gren Gds



Kgn Sean Dawson,
Lancs



Cpl Channing Day,
RAMC



Kgn Darren Deady,
Lancs



Cpl Rob Deering,
RM



Cpl Barry Dempsey,
Scots



LCpl David Dennis,
LD



Cpl Oliver Dicketts,
Para



Pte Jeff Doherty,
Para



Capt Sean Dolan,
WFR



Gdsm Tony Downes,
Gren Gds



Sqn Ldr Anthony
Downing, RAF



Rgr Anare Draiva,
R Irish



CSgt Krishnabahadur Dura,
RGR



LCpl Adam Drane,
R Anglian



Capt Martin Driver,
R Anglian



Lt Edward Drummond-
Baxter, RGR



Cpl Steven Dunn,
R Signals



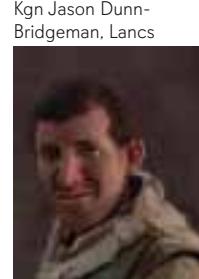
Kgn Jason Dunn-
Bridgeman, Lancs



Mne Neil Dunstan,
RM



LBdr James Dwyer,
RA



Capt Alex Eida,
RHA



Pte Gavin Elliott,
Mercian



LCpl Dane Elson,
WG



Mne Tony Evans,
WG



LSgt Tobie Fasfous,
WG



LCpl Michael Foley,
AGC (SPS)



Cfn Andrew Found,
REME



Lt Mark Evison,
WG



WO2 Spencer Faulkner,
AAC



LCpl Matthew Ford,
RM



Sgt Paul Fox,
RE



LCpl Jamie Fellows,
RM



Pte Ben Ford,
Mercian



Pte Anthony Frampton,
Yorks



Rfn Andrew Fentiman,
Rifles



CSjt Kevin Fortuna,
Rifles



LCpl James Fullarton,
RRF



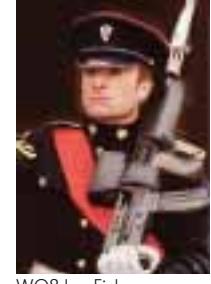
Pte Kevin Elliott,
Scots



Cpl Joseph Etchells,
RRF



Mne David Fairbrother,
RM



WO2 Ian Fisher,
Mercian



Fus Samuel Flint,
Scots



Spr Darren Foster,
RE



Pte Daniel Gamble,
Para



Cpl Darryl Gardiner,
REME



LCpl Darren George,
R Anglian



Bdr Stephen Gilbert,
RA



LCpl Martin Gill,
RM



Cpl Mike Gilyeat,
AGC (RMP)



Mne Dale Gostick,
RM



Pte Chris Gray,
R Anglian



Cpl Richard Green,
Rifles



LSgt Dave Greenhalgh,
Gren Gds



Cpl John Gregory,
RLC



SAC Kinikki Griffiths,
RAF



Capt Andrew Griffiths,
Lancs



Pte James Grigg,
R Anglian



LCpl Duane Groom,
Gren Gds



Rfn Jamie Gunn,
Rifles



LCpl Gajbahadur
Gurung, RGR



Spr Ishwor Gurung,
RE



Rfn Suraj Gurung,
RGR



Cpl Alex Guy,
R Anglian



Capt Mark Hale,
Rifles



Tpr Brett Hall,
RTR



Pte Douglas Halliday,
Mercian



Tpr Joshua Hammond,
RTR



LCpl Scott Hardy,
R Anglian



LCpl Chris Harkett,
R Welsh



Cpl Christopher
Harrison, RM



Cpl John Harrison,
Para



Mne Matthew Harrison,
RM



Mne David Hart,
RM



Cpl Jake Hartley,
Yorks



Pte Matthew Haseldin,
Mercian



LCpl Jabron Hashmi,
Int Corps

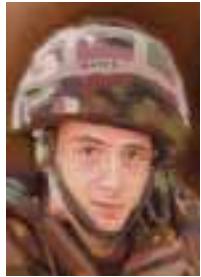


LBdr Matthew Hatton,
RA

‘There’s more meaning behind a painting than an everyday photograph’



LCpl Alex Hawkins,
R Anglian



Pte Robert Hayes,
R Anglian



Capt Lisa Head,
RLC



Capt Stephen Healey,
R Welsh



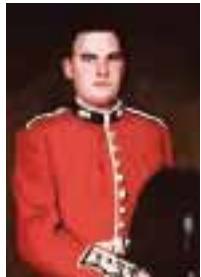
Pte Lewis Hendry,
Para



LCpl Jonathan
Hetherington, R Signals



Pte Robert
Hetherington, Scots



Gdsm Daryl Hickey,
Gren Gds



Capt David Hicks,
R Anglian



LCpl Darren Hicks,
Coldm Gds



LCpl Kieron Hill,
Mercian



LCpl James Hill,
Coldm Gds



Capt Richard Holloway,
RE



Rfn Daniel Holkham,
Rifles



Mne Jonathan Holland,
RM



Mne Richard Hollington,
RM



Cpl Harvey Holmes,
Mercian



CSgt Martyn Horton,
Mercian



Mne Anthony Hotine,
RM



Sgt Lee Houltram,
RM



Pte John Howard,
Para



Tpr Andrew Howarth,
QRL



Rfn Aidan Howell,
Rifles



SAC Scott Hughes,
RAF



Rfn Daniel Hume,
Rifles

**'It was hard
painting them,
and meeting
some of the
families was
emotional'**



Pte Richard Hunt,
R Welsh



Pte Dean Hutchinson,
RLC



Pte Alex Isaac,
Mercian



Pte Damien Jackson,
Para



Gdsm Jamie James,
Gren Gds



Capt Tom Jennings,
RM



Cpl Dean John,
REME



2Lt Ralph Johnson,
LG



Flt Lt Steven Johnson,
RAF



LCpl James Johnson,
Scots



Sgt Lee Johnson,
Yorks



LCpl Michael Jones,
RM



Sgt Andrew Jones,
RE



Sgt Barry Keen,
R Signals



LCpl Tom Keogh,
Rifles



Pte Christopher
Kershaw, Yorks



Gdsm Chris King,
Coldm Gds



Pte John King,
Yorks



Rfn Remand Kulung, RGR



Rfn Martin Kinggett,
Rifles



LCpl Stephen Kingscott,
Rifles



LCpl David Kirkness,
Rifles



Cpl Jamie Kirkpatrick,
RE



Pte Jonathan
Kirkpatrick, Rifle Vol



Sgt Benjamin Knight,
RAF



LCpl Siddhanta Kunwar,
RGR



Sgt Jonathan Kups,
REME



Pte Thomas Lake,
PWRR



Rfn Martin Lamb,
RAF



Sgt John Langton,
RAF



LCpl Richard Larkin



Mne Michael Laski,
RM



Cpl Damian Lawrence,
Yorks



Tpr Phillip Lawrence,
LD



Pte Robert Laws,
Mercian



Tpr James Leverett,
RDG



Pte Conrad Lewis,
Para



Lt Aaron Lewis,
RA



Rfn Sachin Limbu,
RGR



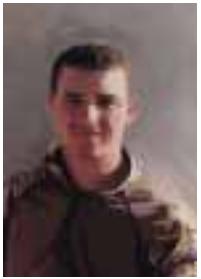
SSgt Brett Linley,
RLC



SAC Graham
Livingstone, RAF



A/Sgt Michael Lockett,
Mercian



Cfn Anthony Lombardi,
REME



Sgt Robert Loughran-
Dickson, AGC (RMP)



Mne Alexander Lucas,
RM



Mne Jason Mackie,
RM



Mne Travis Mackin,
RM



Gdsm James Major,
Gren Gds



Capt Carl Manley,
RM



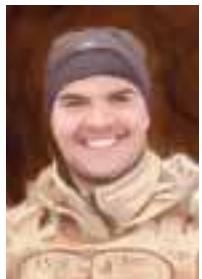
Sgt John Manuel,
RE



WO2 David Markland,
RE



Cpl Loren Marlton-
Thomas, RE



Mne David Marsh,
RM



LCpl Kyle Marshall,
Para



LCpl Nicky Mason,
Para



Cpl Thomas Mason,
Scots



Sgt Jonathan Mathews,
Scots



Pte Aaron McClure,
R Anglian



Rfn Liam Maughan,
Rifles



Sjt Paul McAleese,
Rifles



LSgt Dale McCallum,
SG



Cpl Brent McCarthy,
RAF



Rgr Aaron McCormick,
R Irish



LCpl Luke McCulloch,
R Irish



Capt John McDermid,
Scots



Pte Sean McDonald,
Scots



A/Sjt Stuart McGrath,
Rifles



LCpl Stephen McKee,
R Irish



Mne Robert McKibben,
RM



LCpl Jonathan McKinlay,
Rifles



Hldr Scott McLaren,
Scots



Pte Robert McLaren,
Scots



Sgt Stuart Millar,
Scots



LBdr Liam McLaughlin,
RA



Mne Dean Mead,
RM



Spr Guy Mellors,
RE



Lt Paul Mervis,
Rifles



Flt Lt Leigh Mitchelmore,
RAF



LCpl Nigel Moffett,
LD



Pte Jonathan Monk,
PWRR



Sgt David Monkhouse,
RDG

**'The whole idea
was to let them
know that we'll
always remember
the fallen'**



LCpl Stephen Monkhouse, SG



Cpl Johnathan Moore, Scots



Spr Adam Moralee, RE



LCpl Paul Muirhead, R Irish



Cpl Kevin Mulligan, Para



Cpl Damian Mulvihill, RM



Tpr James Munday, LG



Rfn Joseph Murphy, Rifles



Pte Charles Murray, Para



Rfn Stuart Nash, Rifles



Cpl Lloyd Newell, Para



CSgt Phillip Newman, Mercian



Flt Lt Gareth Nicholas, RAF



LCpl Ross Nicholls, RHG/D



Cpl Daniel Nield, Rifles



Cpl David O'Connor, RM



Pte Craig O'Donnell, Scots



WO2 Gary O'Donnell, RLC



Cpl James Oakland, AGC (RMP)



Cpl Mark Palin, Rifles



Capt David Patton, Para



A/Sgt John Amer, Coldm Gds



Tpr Robert Pearson, RLC



Capt Jim Philippson, RHA



Cpl Michael Pike, Scots



LCpl Joseph Pool, Scots



Pte Daniel Prior, Para



LCpl Michael Pritchard, AGC (RMP)



Gdsm Daniel Probyn,
Gren Gds



Pte James Prosser,
R Welsh



Cpl Arjun Purja Pun,
RGR



Cpl Kumar Pun,
RGR



Sgt Gary Quilliam,
RAF



Rfn Vijay Rai,
RGR



Rfn Yubraj Raj,
RGR



LCpl David Ramsden,
Yorks



Pte Tony Rawson,
R Anglian



Pte Jason Rawstron,
Para



Spr Connor Ray,
RE



Sgt Peter Rayner,
Lancs



Capt Daniel Read,
RLC



Mne Benjamin Reddy,
RM



Sjt Chris Reed,
Rifles



Cpl Sean Reeve,
R Signals



Pte Leigh Reeves,
RLC



LCpl Rob Richards,
RM



Cpl Liam Riley,
Yorks



Maj Alexis Roberts,
RGR



Cpl Andrew Roberts,
RLC



Cpl Taniela Tolevu Rogoiuwai,
Lancs



Flt Lt Geraint Roberts,
RAF



A/Cpl Richard
Robinson, Rifles



Bdr Samuel Robinson,
RA



Gdsm Craig Roderick,
WG



Gdsm Michael Roland,
Gren Gds



LCpl Christopher Roney,
Rifles



Sgt Ben Ross,
AGC (RMP)

**‘They were all
so grateful that
people were still
thinking of their
loved ones’**



Spr Jordan Rossi,
RE



LCpl Kenneth Rowe,
RAVC



Spr Daryn Roy,
RE



Tpr Jack Sadler,
HAC



Capt Tom Sawyer,
RA



Lt John Sanderson,
Mercian



LCpl Paul Sandford,
WFR



Sig Ian Sartorius-Jones,
R Signals



Cpl William Savage,
Scots



Sjt Phillip Scott,
Rifles



Pte Thomas Sephton,
Mercian



LCpl Richard Scanlon,
QDG



SSgt Olaf Schmid,
RLC



Flt Lt Alan Scott,
RAF



Cpl Lee Scott,
RTR



LCpl Graham Shaw,
Yorks



Rfn Adrian Sheldon,
Rifles



Gdsm Jamie Shadrake,
Gren Gds



LCpl Steven Sherwood,
RGBWLI



Kgn David Shaw,
Lancs



Pte Ratu Silibaravi,
RLC



Rfn Daniel Simpson,
Rifles



Capt Daniel Shepherd,
RLC



WO2 Dan Shirley,
RLC



RE



RAF



Tpr Ashley Smith,
RGC



Mne Darren Smith,
RM



Spr Mark Smith,
RE



RE



RA

'It was a nice thought that all of the portraits had found a home'



Mne Georgie Sparks,
RM



Flt Lt Allan Squires,
RAF



Cpl Jack Stanley,
QRH



Rfn Sheldon Steel,
Rifles



Cpl Matthew Stenton,
RDG



Cpl Seth Stephens,
RM



Cpl Graeme Stiff,
REME



Pte Gregg Stone,
Yorks



Paul Stout



Fus Petero Suesue,
RRF



Mne Scott Summers,
RM



Flt Lt Steven Swarbrick,
RAF



Gdsm Michael Sweeney,
Coldm Gds



Kgn Ponipate
Tagitaginimoce,
Lancs



LCpl Sean Tansey,
LG



LCpl Liam Tasker,
RAVC



Sgt Luke Taylor,
RM



LCpl Michael Taylor,
RM



Mne Scott Taylor,
RM



Sgt Matthew Telford,
Gren Gds



Cpl Michael Thacker,
R Welsh



Rfn Cyrus Thatcher,
Rifles



WO2 Leonard Thomas,
R Signals



Cpl Matthew Thomas,
REME

» **'They are
heirlooms
and lasting
testaments'**



Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe,
WG



Lt John Thornton,
RM



LCpl Oliver Thomas,
Int Corps



SAC Gary Thompson,
RAF



James Thompson



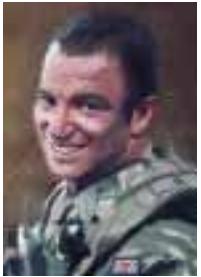
Cpl Stephen Thompson,
Rifles



Rfn Aminiasi Toge,
Rifles



SAC Ryan Tomlin,
RAF



Pte Matthew Thornton,
Yorks



Cpl Peter Thorpe,
R Signals



Pte John Thrumble,
R Anglian



Sgt Gareth Thursby,
Yorks



Rfn Mark Turner,
Rifles



Capt James Townley,
RE



Gdsm Apete Tuisovurua,
WG



Pte Brian Tunnicliffe,
Mercian



Lt Neal Turkington,
RGR



Sgt Simon Valentine,
RRF



LCpl Paul Upton,
Rifles



WO2 Sean Upton,
RA



Pte Daniel Wade,
RM



LSgt David Walker,
SG



Pte Joseva Vatubua,
Scots



Cpl Ivano Violino,
RE



Spr Richard Walker,
RE



Cpl Stephen Walker,
RM



Cpl James Walters,
AAC



Mne Paul Warren,
RM



LCpl Paul Watkins,
9/12L



Cpl Nicholas Webster-Smith,
AGC (RMP)



Spr David Watson,
RE



Mne Richard Watson,
RM



LCpl Jamie Webb,
Mercian



Cpl Terry Webster,
Mercian



Sgt Barry Weston,
RM



LCpl Ben Whatley,
RM



Tpr Christopher
Whiteside, LD



Pte Joe Whittaker,
Para



Gdsm Karl Whittle,
Gren Gds



Mne Jonathan Wigley,
RM



Rfn Daniel Wild,
Rifles



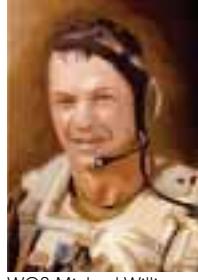
Pte Daniel Wilford,
Yorks



Sgt Dave Wilkinson,
RA



Pte Jason Williams,
Mercian



WO2 Michael Williams,
Para



Mne Joseph Windall,
RM



Cpl Danny Winter,
RM



A/Cpl Marcin Wojtak,
RAF



WO2 Charlie Wood,
RLC



Pte Robert Wood,
RLC



LCoH Jonathan
Woodgate, RHG/D



Pte Damian Wright,
Mercian



Mne Gary Wright,
RM



Mne James Wright,
RM



Cpl Mark Wright,
Para



Dmr Thomas Wright,
WFR



Pte Thomas Wroe,
Yorks



Pte Johnathon Young,
Yorks



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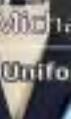
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www.gazebos-galore.co.uk

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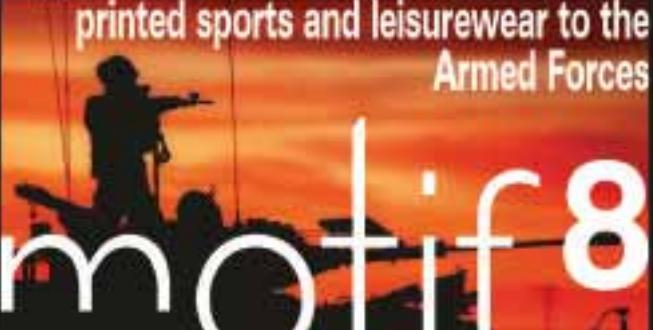
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YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Messages must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters,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

Range anxiety takes an adventurous turn

I AM all for going green where possible, but there's a limit to what is currently practicable.

A case in point is the recent switch to using electric vehicles for any journey, including long distance trips to Europe for adventurous training.

This may save on emissions but the route - for example, the 900-mile drive from Andover to the Austrian Alps - will take twice as long once charging is factored in, with the associated costs for travel and subsistence rising accordingly.

Under the current financial pressures, this will reduce the number of people able to take advantage of such retention-positive opportunities.

In addition, at the location for the exped I'm planning (which is away from main resorts to save money), the round trip to the nearest charging point is 120km - almost half the maximum range of the vehicle's battery in normal conditions, let alone in cold weather.

I wonder if our adversaries tie themselves in knots in the name of green credentials. I suspect not. - **Name and address supplied**



Full-time reservists' teeth fall-out

I RECENTLY left the regular army after 35 years and took up a full-time reserve service contract (FTRS).

I have moved my family back home but now I'm struggling to find a dentist where we can register and be seen for annual check-ups and treatment.

This seems to be a common theme among FTRS personnel, with some I know on waiting lists for many years.

It had occurred to me that, with the relatively low number of FTRS personnel, we could continue to receive treatment through service dental centres and, given our contracts, pay for the treatment in the same way that dependents of soldiers in overseas stations do.

But having enquired about this through my former military dental centre I was advised that it was not an option as FTRS staff must make their own arrangements. - **Maj Russell Ward, Rifles**

Lt Col Wassim Slim, dental policy and plans lead at Army Headquarters, replies: The entitlements to dental care for reservists are outlined in JSP 770 (*Eligibility for Medical Care*) and further clarified in 2025DIN01-040 (*DMS Dental Care for Deploying and High Readiness Reserve Personnel*).

Defence Primary Healthcare is resourced to support force generation of regular personnel and reservists mobilised for

specific service types.

The core issue relates to the availability of resources relative to operational requirements, rather than funding treatment.

We remain acutely aware of the challenges in this area.

Defence's chief dental officer maintains regular engagement with the NHS Partnership Board to raise these concerns and advocate for the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

In addition, we are working collaboratively with the

NHS and the armed forces families federations to improve signposting and access to NHS dental services for both serving families and veterans.

This support is facilitated through the *Discover My Benefits* portal.

There are some 30,000 reservists, of whom 5,000 or so serve on FTRS terms. Extending comprehensive dental care to this cohort would place a significant burden on defence resources, one that cannot be met within existing capacity.

'WHY CAN WE NOT RECEIVE TREATMENT AND PAY FOR IT?'

DIRECTORY

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

WELFARE

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

Army HIVE

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

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

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

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help

Army Welfare Service

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

Forces Connect

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

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

NHS support

Various information can be found at nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/ HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

COMPETITIONS

September 2025 winner

HOAY (WATERPROOF PORTABLE RADIO)

David White, Brecon

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

September 2025 winner

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David White, Brecon

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Prize winners acknowledge and

agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s)

or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever

in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

Defence BHD Helpline

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

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

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

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice

0800 138 1111
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support
0808 808 1677
cruse.org.uk

SSAFA

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

RESETTLEMENT

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

Cardiff - November 5

Telford - November 19

Wrexham - December 4

Newcastle - February 5, 2026

Lincoln - February 25, 2026

HOUSING

Single living accommodation

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

Pinnacle Home Services Team

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

Forces Help to Buy

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

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797
spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

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

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement

116 123 samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

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

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk or Modnet email address. To try it out visit

work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind - The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393 mind.org

NHS

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

Op Courage

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

Samaritans

116 123 samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans
0333 900 1028
theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE**Aurora New Dawn**

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816
aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims
01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate

Relationship support
relate.org.uk

SEXUAL OFFENCES

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

The Defence Serious Crime Command

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

Crimestoppers can be reached at **0800 555 111**

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

To discuss victim support contact the **Victim Witness**

Care Unit, which operates independently from the chain of command, on **07974**

074259 or via people-dscc-vwvugroup@mod.gov.uk. Your information will be treated in confidence and you can discuss your options for

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

STAFF NETWORKS

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

LGBTQ+ Network

elizabeth.corbett117@mod.gov.uk

Multicultural Network

priscilla.quansah100@mod.gov.uk

Parents Network

armypers-parents-network@mod.gov.uk

Servicewomen's Network

samantha.dodge733@mod.gov.uk

NCO ACADEMY**Tea & Toast Talks**

November 19, 1000 – Project Rapstone

December 2, 1000 – Mental health with army sergeant major

Development Days 2026

Feb 19 – Kinloss (39 Engr Regt)

Mar 25 – Grantham (150 RLC)

May 13 – Brancote (30 Sigs)

May 21 – MoD Lyneham

July 8 – Edinburgh

Sept 16 – Thorney Isle (16 RA)

Oct 21 – MoD Lyneham

Oct 26 – Chepstow (1 Rifles)

Search NCO Academy on Defence Connect for more.

SEARCH

Paul Borres is trying to trace a member of the **Royal Army Medical Corps** who was based in Soest, Germany in 1971 and went by the name Shirley. He is thought to have been friends with a couple whose surname was Goodyear. Email paul21_b@hotmail.com

SUMMITS**Army Transport Conferences (North)**

on November 18-19
and (South) on November 25. Read **ABN 051/2025**.

Army Dangerous Goods Conferences (North)

on November 20 and **(South)** on November 26. Read **ABN 052/2025**.

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

Your chance to
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Majority D70X bookshelf speakers

TEN details have been changed in this image of celebrations at the first ever Army Darts Championships finals at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (read more on page 72)

Circle all the differences on image **B** and send the panel to HOAY 1002, **Soldier**, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU, along with contact details, including email address, by November 28.

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

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

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Offering Bluetooth 5.3, USB, Aux and HDMI ARC, they come with remote control, headphone jack, and deliver versatile playback and modern convenience in a compact design. Good luck!



A



B

REVIEWS

★ DOCUMENTARY ★ BOOKS ★ PODCAST ★



Pictures: Grammar/Blackmore

The Last Burma Star

Feature pays tribute to forgotten veterans of the Far East

DOCUMENTARY

Sky History, November 9

AS THOUGHTS turn to remembrance this month, a new documentary by explorer Levison Wood and filmmaker Alex Bescoby will shed light on a widely forgotten chapter of the Far Eastern campaign of the Second World War – the contribution of the indigenous troops who fought for the British.

The Last Burma Star charts the duo's mission to track down a 100-year-old veteran of the Chin Levies forces, former corporal Con Herh, to deliver a letter from King

Charles plus his long-overdue campaign medal.

Having joined the war effort at the age of 17, Herh now lives in a remote corner of Mizoram, India, as a refugee of Myanmar's ongoing civil war.

The geo-political sensitivities saw the production team initially blocked from approaching the border area, but their ultimately successful quest to find Herh becomes the emotional crux of the film.

At the same time, the journey took on a personal dimension for Wood, a major in the reserves, as it gave him the chance to trace the route taken by his grandfather – Levison Hopkin Wood – who fought in the same theatre with The Royal Welch Fusiliers (*Soldier*, August).

The officer described the moment he and Bescoby handed over the letter and medal as "humbling".

"I feel my grandfather would have been both amused and proud by the journey Alex and I made," he went on.

"Corporal Herh is part of a generation whose contributions have too often been overlooked, and



it's vital that we recognise and remember their role in shaping our shared history."

Meanwhile Bescoby, a trustee of Help 4 Forgotten Allies, a British charity that supports Herh and other surviving veterans from Myanmar, described the story as a "powerful reminder of the courage and sacrifice shown by so many during the Burma Campaign, our deep connection to the people of Myanmar, but also of the enduring legacy of that conflict today."

Due to be shown on Sky History on Remembrance Sunday, *The Last Burma Star* promises to be a historically resonant film that poignantly bridges past and present.

Herh represents not only a generation fading from view, but a link to a conflict still shaping lives in the here and now.

The documentary pays rightful tribute not only to one remarkable veteran, but to all those whose actions in the Far East have too long gone unrecognised.

Report: Becky Clark, *Soldier*



Vet to vet

How a former officer is working on all fronts to preserve personal histories...

BOOK/PODCAST

ARMY life has come full circle for Matt Limb – veterans inspired him to join up five decades ago and retirement has seen him working to preserve their stories.

With a career traversing the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and Royal Logistic Corps, the ex-colonel served on deployments from Northern Ireland to the Balkans and the 2003 war in Iraq.

Now a historian, his latest projects include his *Veteran Voices* podcast as well as a new book – *Valour: The Victoria Cross and The Lincolnshire Regiment*.

Soldier caught up with him to find out more...

How did veterans first fire your interest in the army?

My parents were hill farmers and as a child I remember an old man in a tweed suit coming by and sitting down with us. My dad would make him a cup of tea and he would chat about his time as a soldier. It was only in later life I realised he was talking about the First World War, and the Somme. Along with others, speaking with him really inspired me.

So you've always loved your military history?

I'm fascinated how modern conflicts have shaped our lives and a world that has changed so much since it was dominated by the British Empire in the First World War. My interest, though, is in the people involved – there are some unlikely soldiers who did amazing things.



How did you get the idea for your latest book?

I was leading a tour of the First World War battlefields in Belgium and heard the story of Lt Col Pugh Evans. He was the commanding officer of 1st Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Zonnebeke in 1917. By chance I then kept hearing tales about VC recipients from the regiment – there are ten in all – and thought that, collected, they'd make a good read.

What about the podcast?

When I was researching an earlier book about the Second World War, I'd heard stories that I couldn't use because they happened after the conflict. The podcast features interviews with people who served in theatres such as Malaya and during the Cold War. I'm hoping to bring it more up-to-date and am currently looking for people who were deployed to places such as Northern Ireland.

You must have seen your own share of history over the years...

Yes, I have been around the world a bit. But my first involvement in anything was on home soil in 1977 when I was called to help cover a fire service strike. Retiring as a colonel after serving in the regulars and reserves was a highpoint. I also commanded a Territorial Army unit – 165 Port & Maritime Regiment RLC – on Operation Telic 1 in Iraq.

Interview: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

BOOK

Losing James – A Mother's Story

by Caroline Jane Munday



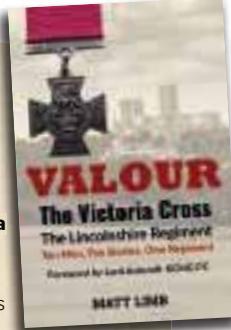
MORE than ten years have passed since combat operations ended in Afghanistan. Time moves on, but as this raw and emotional account brings home, for the friends and relations of the fallen, life is never the same again. Tpr James Munday (LG) was killed by an IED in 2008, plunging his mother Caroline and wider family into their worst nightmare. In her memoir, she writes movingly of her despair – as well as her rage at the politicians whose decisions led to war. It is both a stark portrayal of grief and, as remembrance approaches, a sombre reminder of the human cost of conflict.



Becky Clark, *Soldier*

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SOLDIERSPORT



Cpl Darren McMahon (Scots) wowed the crowd with a 180 from his first darts

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Pictures: Graeme Main



Beaten finalist
Cpl Lee Newbury (RE)

DARTS

THE army crowned its newest sporting champion on the grand stage of Sandhurst's Old College as darts triumphantly announced its arrival on the military landscape.

After being recognised as an official service sport earlier this year, the Army Darts Association swiftly capitalised on the announcement by staging its inaugural championships with qualifying rounds held at garrisons across the country.

The top eight players then progressed to finals night, where Capt Jasper Scarrott (R Signals) had the honour of lifting the trophy for the first time.

The event was a long time coming for Lt Col Gary England (R Yorks), the organisation's chair, a darts enthusiast from a young age who believes the discipline has huge potential moving forward.

"There were a lot of hurdles to get to where we are, with so many unsung heroes involved,"

he told *SoldierSport*.

"In only eight months we have created the first Army Darts Championships and there are so many opportunities that can come from this exposure.

"People can play in barracks, overseas, in aircraft hangars, on ships or in guard rooms – the reach is massive.

"For me it is 23 years too late, and I know a lot of individuals who are now out of the army and are disappointed this did not happen ten years ago.

"Personnel can now play darts on a Wednesday sports afternoon – that is great.

"The players on stage tonight are feeling the nerves, but they are performing well and I'm so pleased we have got here."

With the first major tournament complete England is now looking to the future and the raft of possibilities that exist.

"Hopefully this can encourage people to participate and create teams," he continued.

"Our plan is to form regional leagues, so units across the UK

can take part. That will create averages, which allows us to identify talent.

"It is all about growing the game and giving people another sporting opportunity.

"We want to create an army darts team, have personnel involved in the elite sports programme and bring all three services together on a stage like the Ally Pally.

"There are players here tonight who are capable of competing at televised events and there is so much talent out there, from young soldiers to late entry captains."

The competition's conclusion was not short of magic moments, from Sgt Danny Doyle (R Signals) checking out on 106 to win the opening leg of the evening to Cpl Darren McMahon (Scots) throwing a 180 with his first three darts.

The former went on to lose to Scarrott in the semi-finals, where he threw a 180 of his own, but said the thrill of the night will live long in the memory.

"That was one of the scariest things I have done," he said.

"With everyone watching I was so nervous, but it was also the best feeling ever. Throwing that 180 was electric.

"It is crazy to think this is now an army sport. Everyone just assumed darts was a pub sport and that it would not happen, but there is so much interest.

"The standard is sky high. We have people who have competed on TV, as well as county players, so I was chuffed just to get here. I never dreamed of winning a quarter final and hitting a 180."

Capt Tom Kinsey (RA)

played at county youth level for Leicestershire and Derbyshire before joining the army at 16.

He has served for 26 years - which includes three Herrick tours - and the introduction of darts has allowed him to reconnect with the sport.

"I'm making up for lost time," he said. "It is great that those now starting their careers have this opportunity.

"Since I qualified for this I've had at least six people contact me who play at lower levels but want to get involved at corps or army level, and this event will only create further interest.

"In football terms, coming here is like going from non-league to the Championship overnight. I'm probably a level below the others but I may never get this opportunity again."

One of those hoping for further opportunities is Spr Matthew Richards (RE), who lost 3-2 to Doyle in the quarter finals.

A former youth county player for Glamorgan, he chose to join the army ahead of the Wales youth team eight years ago and is delighted to now be combining his career with his chosen sport.

"When I found out darts was recognised, I was absolutely buzzing," the 25-year-old (pictured below) said.

"It means I can drop football and rugby and continue in the sport I love.

"I'm not disheartened by the result tonight. My average was good, and it could have gone either way. It has been a great experience and hopefully darts can now continue to grow and become more popular."

FAVOURITE SCARROTT SETS THE STANDARD

DARTS

HAVING produced a nine-dart finish in a televised event earlier this season, Capt Jasper Scarrott (R Signals) headed to the Army Darts Championships finals as one of the heavy favourites - and he duly delivered.

A 3-1 win over Cpl Marc Craig (QRH) in the quarter finals was followed by a 4-0 semi-final win against Sgt Danny Doyle (R Signals).

The 53-year-old (pictured below) - who has served for 37 years - then defeated Cpl Lee Newbury (RE) 5-2 in the final to seal the silverware.

"It feels absolutely amazing," he told *SoldierSport* after collecting the prize.

"It was far from straightforward. In my first match I was averaging 104 in the third leg but lost it as Marc came back.

"The semi-final was another tight one. I just needed to keep my focus; anything

can happen if you lose your composure and my experience got me through.

"I made a good start in the final, but Lee was always on my toes. He got it back to 4-2 and then it was a case of 'let's finish this off'.

"I focused and thought I played really well in the last leg, as well as all night.

"It is such an honour to be the first army champion, and I cannot wait for the Inter-Services competitions to come."

For Newbury, reaching the final capped a successful first year in the sport.

The 31-year-old took up darts in memory of his late father Rick, a former county and Derbyshire league player, and has made swift progress.

"I started out as an average pub player but have now won three Amateur Darts Circuit titles and qualified for this," the soldier said.

"When I heard that this had become an army sport I thought 'why has it taken so long?'. It is all about inclusivity and anyone can play, no matter their age.

"The aim now is to keep progressing and carry on my dad's legacy."

'IT FEELS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING'



DARTS BY NUMBERS

2 Maximum 180s from Cpl Darren McMahon in his quarter final triumph

3 Legs dropped by Capt Jasper Scarrott on his way to lifting the trophy

62 Welsh ranking of quarter finalist Spr Matthew Richards

3 Amateur Darts Circuit tournament wins for Cpl Lee Newbury this year

Follow @armydarts on Instagram to get involved





INTER-SERVICES AMERICAN FOOTBALL

ARMY 27 V NAVY 8

DEFENCE IS KEY

Pictures: Murden Photography

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

A WINNER takes all Inter-Services clash involving the Army Jackals and Royal Air Force Mustangs was staged as this issue went to press, with the victors being crowned the military's premier American football outfit.

The soldiers started their campaign with a 27-8 victory over the Royal Navy, and with the airmen also defeating the same opposition the battle for honours went down to the wire.

Capt Jacob Shotton (RRF) scored the first of four touchdowns for the soldiers, while Maj Drew Newiss (R Signals) twice found the end zone to highlight his class.

And rookie running back Gnr John Dawai (RA) enjoyed a debut to remember as he crossed with just his second touch of the ball.

"The navy always give us a tough game," Jackals' general manager WO2 Abe Day (RA) told *SoldierSport*. "They came out

swinging and were considerably better than last year.

"While it was 0-0 for a long while, we were in control and our defence didn't give them anything. We finally got into the end zone for Jacob to score and with Drew getting the extra two points we led 8-0 at half-time.

"We gained confidence from that and never really worried about the result.

"We were missing four or five key players from last year, so this was quite a young team with new people stepping up."

Dawai became the first Fijian, and Royal Artillery soldier, to score for the Jackals and fellow gunner Bdr Rich Ridings also impressed as he claimed one of the game's MVP awards.

Day was expecting a sterner test against the RAF, who beat the senior service 64-4 in the tournament's opening round.

"This will be a lot tougher," he continued. "We run a simple defence that works and unless they do something special, it should win the day."



Pictures: Michael Farfoot

STRONGMAN

THERE was no shortage of power on show in the northern qualifying leg for the UK Armed Forces Strongest Man and Woman competition.

Staged at Leconfield, the contest welcomed 29 athletes who flexed their muscles in five punishing events – the car deadlift, fingals fingers, an overhead medley, a sandbag and atlas stones relay, and a load and pull.

Among those to shine were Cpl Simon Millins (REME), who was victorious in the men's under-100kg ranks, while Sgt Stephen Mars (AGC (SPS)) starred in what was his first outing in the novice field.

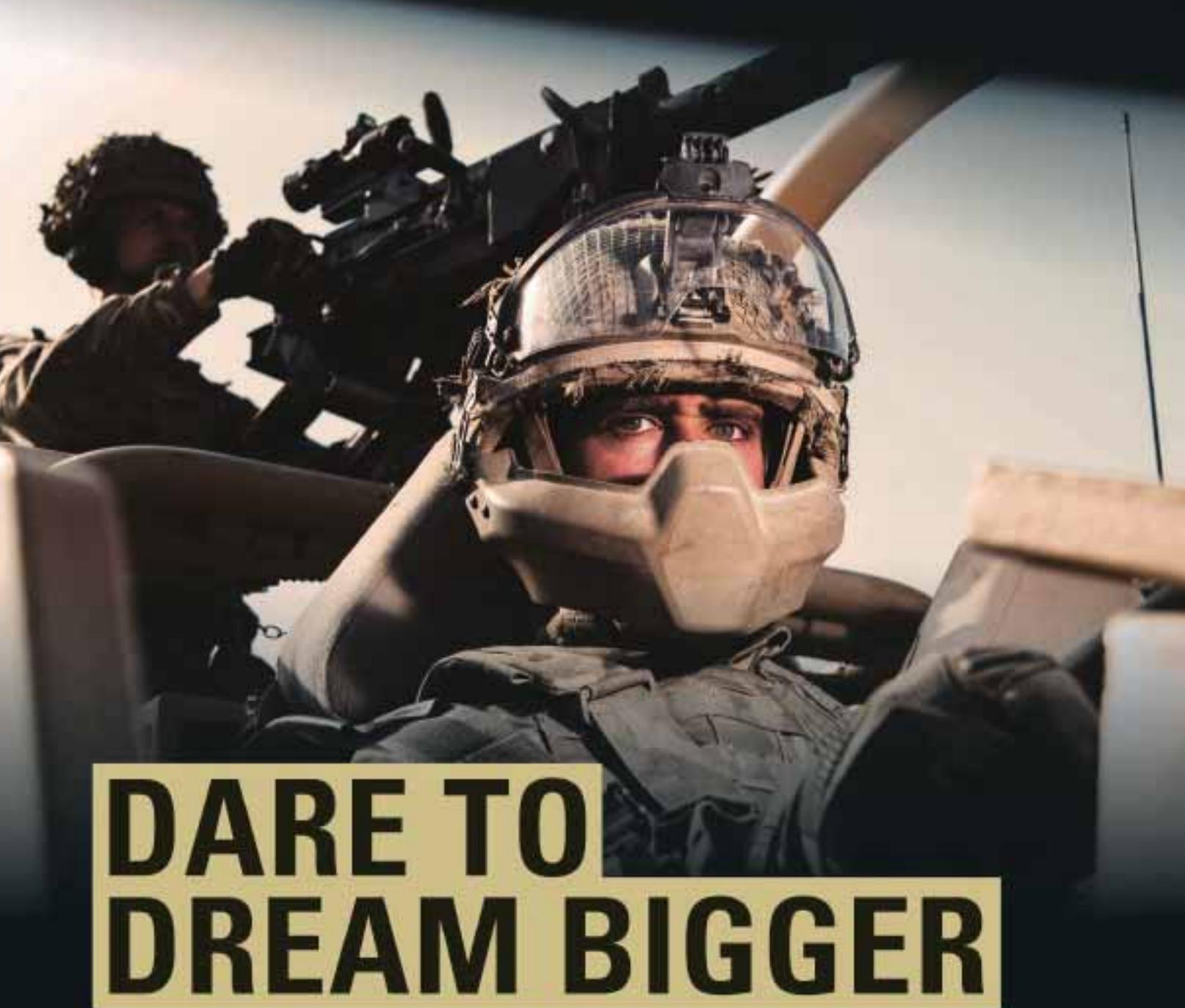
And LCpl Joanna Bastian (RLC) dominated the women's competition.

"They all did brilliantly," organiser Cpl Leigh Graham (RE) said. "The men's novice title came down to the last event, when one-and-a-half points separated first and second. It was half-a-point in the under-100kg, while the over-100kg was decided by one deadlift of a Hilux."

"Strongman is all about moving heavy stuff from A to B – so the army is thriving."

The southern qualifier takes place at Colerne, Wiltshire on December 2.





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Pictures: Dave Greaves and Adam Barton

LEAGUE LEADERS



RUGBY LEAGUE

THE Army Rugby League set-up laid the foundations for a positive future by claiming two of the three trophies on offer in this season's Inter-Services Championships.

After downing the Royal Navy 34-8 in their opening tie, a new-look women's team defeated the Royal Air Force 20-4 at the home of Hull Kingston Rovers to claim a 16th successive title.

Victory marked the conclusion of an unbeaten campaign for the Reds in competitive fixtures as they also reigned supreme in the RFL Women's Southern Championship.

Their feat was made more impressive by the fact senior players – and internationals – aligned to professional clubs

did not feature this year as head coach Cpl Jack Giblin (Lancs) set about moulding a new group.

"I wanted to rebuild, and the team looked very different compared to previous years," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Some of these girls had not played any rugby before coming into camp in May, others had played at a lower level a few years ago and were invited back.

"However, they are natural athletes with backgrounds in sports like football and hockey. We had to strip things back at the beginning, but they picked it up so quickly.

"It could not have gone any better. My main aim this year was just to build, so to be undefeated is fantastic."

Giblin said the experience of skipper Sgt Kat Williams

(RLC) was crucial to the cause, while Pte Evie Litchfield and Pte Lou Kunudua (both RLC) were among the newcomers to shine.

The latter crossed twice against the navy and scored a hat-trick against the RAF on her way to being crowned Inter-Services player of the tournament.

"As a senior player, Kat has been a leader and my voice on the pitch," the coach continued.

"Lou got involved through a friend. We invited her down to train and it turned out she is a Fijian international. After the first session we knew we had to get her in the team, and she has been an ever present."

"Evie came to trials with zero experience. She started on the wing and then moved to fullback, making the position her own. She is a coachable athlete and natural talent and has earned a UKAF call-up."

"The challenge now is to keep building. The players know that no shirts are guaranteed and when we return to training, they will have to put their hands up and push on."

After suffering back-to-back defeats last time out, the men's senior team missed out on Inter-Services glory by the narrowest of margins.

A 20-10 defeat against the navy was followed by a stirring performance in Hull, where the soldiers ran in six tries in a 28-18 victory over the airmen.

The result saw the senior service secure the title on points difference after all three sides claimed a win apiece and head coach Cpl Leigh Paul-Reintoul (R Yorks) is confident the squad can go one better next year.

"We are frustrated, but we are on a journey," he said.

"We gave out 13 new caps against the navy. You would normally see two or three in a fixture like that, but it highlights the turnaround we have had."

"The academy is in a really good place, and we've had 50

INTER-SERVICES RUGBY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

MEN
28 V **18** RAF

WOMEN
20 V **4** RAF

people turn up for training camps, so it is looking positive.

"Next season we will not be coming in as the underdogs, we will be up there, and we can win the Inter-Services."

Scores from Gdsm Semiti Driti (Coldm Gds), Pte Joeli Varo (R Yorks), LCpl Andrew Smyth (RLC), Rfn Kajii Sugavanua (Rifles), LCpl Pita Tamani (Lancs) and Pte Dylan Jackson (RLC) did the damage against the RAF, while the coach praised the efforts of prop Spr Todd Johnson (RE) over the tournament as a whole.

"He is unbelievable, and it will be hard for us to keep hold of him as I think professional clubs will come knocking," Paul-Reintoul continued.

"We had to beat the RAF by 19 points, and had the opportunities to do that but there were some decisions that didn't go our way.

"We were leading the navy 6-4 at half-time and I think the outcome there came down to what we are doing away from military rugby."

"The navy and RAF play a lot of civilian rugby and are conditioned for these games. None of our starting 13 do, and that was the difference."

"It is something I am pushing. We're not saying they should be playing week in, week out but if they join a civvy club and get some training under their belts it will be a huge benefit."

Further success came in the development competition, where the army defeated the RAF by a record 58-0 scoreline on their way to sealing the honours.

LEAGUE BY NUMBERS

14 Army players named in the subsequent UKAF women's squad

5 Tries in two games for newcomer Pte Lou Kunudua (RLC)

8 Winning margin, in points difference, as the navy sealed the men's title

8 Different try scorers in the development squad's record win over the RAF



RIDERS PROSPER IN BORDERS BATTLE

MOUNTAIN BIKING

WORLD-CLASS trails in the Scottish Borders tested army mountain bike riders as they went head-to-head with their forces rivals at the Inter-Services Downhill and Enduro Championships.

The former took place on the Innerleithen trails known for high speeds and steep technical descents and the dry conditions meant times were incredibly tight at the head of the field.

After a strong opening run, every member of the army team was placed in the top 15, with Cpl Tom Nisbet (REME) and LCpl Elliot Downes (RE) tied in second place after clocking identical times of 3min 16.75sec.

The pace quickened in the second run as the soldiers all posted faster efforts, with Sgt Tom Buck (RE) taking seven seconds off his first attempt despite a crash.

Unfortunately, Nisbet crashed out and while Downes was also quicker he slipped down to third place overall.

Sgt Andrew Lochhead, of the

Royal Air Force, claimed the individual honours and then added the team prize to his haul as the airmen triumphed over the army by just a single point in the final standings.

In the enduro event, competitors tackled four further stages at Innerleithen, with 'Repeat Offender' proving the longest and most physical of the day, dropping more than 300 metres of elevation from top to bottom.

A strong showing across the board saw the Reds go one better to lift the team trophy, while Lochhead completed a personal double.

Downes took second spot, with Nesbit third, and the impressive LCpl Ellen Smith (RCAM) was the army's fastest female rider as she finished third in the women's field.

"It was a great week's racing on amazing trails and with some incredible conditions, making for some seriously challenging but fun riding," Downes said.

'IT WAS A GREAT WEEK'



Maj Rosie Wild (RHA) in Inter-Services action

Picture: Graeme Main

PROFESSIONAL PRIDE IN PODIUM PLACE

TRIATHLON

ENDURANCE athlete Maj Rosie Wild (RHA) claimed her first professional podium spot with a second-place finish at Ironman Wales.

Trailing by nearly 17 minutes after the swim, the officer pedalled her way to a course record time on the bike to move into contention.

Wild then triumphed over Katie Phipkin in the run to claim the silver medal behind runaway leader Franziska Hofmann. The result also saw her qualify

for next year's Ironman World Championships in Hawaii.

Elsewhere, former soldier Kat Matthews claimed a silver medal in the 2025 staging of that event after battling a world-class field – and blistering heat – in Kona.

The 34-year-old, who left the army in April, finished 35 seconds behind winner Solveig Lovseth to secure her third runner-up spot at the contest.

"I am proud of my performance and happy to finish strongly," she said. "I experienced the challenge of Ironman for sure today."



RUGBY UNION

THE army men's senior team will host their US military rivals in the Rugby For Remembrance fixture on November 11.

Staged for the first time last season, the match saw the Reds lift the Field Marshal Sir John Dill Shield following a 47-17 victory at Esher (pictured).

Despite the outcome, the Americans earned respect for their efforts in defence and attack and return with renewed energy and determination ahead of the latest clash. The game will be played at the Army Rugby Stadium in Aldershot (1830 kick-off) and admission is free.

Sgt Kirsty Allen (QRH)



Pictures: Graeme Main

HEAVY LIFTERS

WEIGHTLIFTING

ARMY weightlifters will head into this month's Inter-Services Championships in peak condition having honed their techniques during the team's first overseas tour.

The men's and women's squads travelled to Sweden for a training camp at the home of leading weightlifting manufacturers Eleiko before facing off against some of the

country's top athletes.

The visit marked the latest step in the sport's growth, which this year has also seen lifters move onto the international stage with some eye-catching results recorded along the way.

The trio of SSgt Russell Davies (RAPTC), Cpl Alex Parkes (RE) and Sgt Kirsty Allen (QRH) under coach SSgt Tom Hunt (R Signals) all competed at the European Masters Weightlifting Championships in Albania, with

Parkes claiming a bronze medal in the M35 73kg category.

Davies and Allen finished fourth in their respective fields, meaning all three qualified for the World Masters Championships.

Staged in Las Vegas, the contest saw Allen take silver and Parkes bronze, with Davies (pictured below) placing seventh.

"The Europeans were the most competitive they have been for five years," Davies, who is also the operations manager for British Army Weightlifting, told *SoldierSport*. "The standard of athlete coming through is now really starting to show."

"Personally, I underperformed and didn't have my best day. I've suffered a lot with injuries this year, as well as the volume of competitions, and was gutted to place fourth. But it is all part of the learning process and the main goal was to hit the qualifying standard for the World Championships."

"I changed weight categories at the last minute, so the goal

was to just enjoy the moment. To now walk around and say I'm seventh in the world is crazy."

For Allen, a medal-winning performance in the US was an unexpected bonus given the fact it was only her second international competition.

"I just wanted to hit the top ten," she explained. "That would have been a great achievement."

"But when I had a chance of medalling my competitive side came out. It hasn't sunk in yet."

"That first lift was nerve-wracking, and there were some very strong girls in my category. I had Russ and Alex as my backstage support, and they kept me focused."

"I was sitting in third place with two lifters left to go. One of them failed to make her lift and that pushed me up to second; we were watching on the big screen and when the result came through I was overjoyed."

"It was such a big moment for the masters' team."

The forces contest takes place in Portsmouth on November 5.





BRIGADE TOASTS IRON HARTS SUCCESS

BOXING

NOVICE fighters from across the 20th Armoured Brigade Combat Team made their ring debuts at the newly resurrected Fists of Iron Harts boxing night.

Staged at Tidworth Garrison's super-gym in front of a crowd of more than 1,000 personnel, it was the first brigade-level boxing event in several years and featured ten bouts across a host of weight categories.

A total of 80 athletes attended a two-week training camp in the build-up – the vast majority of whom were newcomers.

Boxing stalwarts First Fusiliers took the lead in organising the competition and Fus Sarah Swaddle was among those to shine on the big stage, claiming victory by split decision in the women's 75kg contest.

"I could not believe I had done it," she told *SoldierSport* as she reflected on the result. "I had no idea which way it would go."

"She was knocking me about and I did the same to her. There was so much to take on board and when I got in the ring I'd lost half of it. I remembered to keep my guard up and throw the jab, which worked."

"As I came out, I was bricking it but once I was in there I

thought 'let's go for it'. I was over the moon with the decision."

Trp Mio Verneuil (QRH) – who was inspired to try boxing after watching Mike Tyson videos on YouTube – was another winner on the night as he triumphed at 67kg via a unanimous verdict.

"The plan was to fight the same way I do in sparring, which is move my head, use the jab and create angles," he explained. "I felt comfortable."

"I was happy to see so many people in the crowd – that added to the excitement."

Coach Cpl Lee Prince (RLC) said: "This was one of the best boxing events I have seen in the army over the past three years.

"To go from not being very confident as boxers to stepping into the ring in front of a massive crowd was a huge achievement."

FISTS OF IRON HARTS BOXING

UNITS INVOLVED:

FIRST FUSILIERS
ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS
5TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS
1 MEDICAL REGIMENT
3 ARMoured CLOSE SUPPORT
BATTALION, REME
1 ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY

PROGRESS BUILDS ON DEBUT TOUR

POWERLIFTING

A NINE-strong army cohort boosted the UK Armed Forces powerlifting squad that competed at the Cyprus National Championships.

The nine-day trip marked the set-up's first overseas visit and combined a training camp with a contest featuring some of the host nation's finest athletes, including those who compete on the world stage.

Among those to impress were WO1 James Hopkins (Rifles), who finished second in the under-120kg ranks, women's under-84kg champion SSgt Sara Braham (RLC) and LCpl Tom Beall (RE), a winner in his individual category and third in the overall standings.

Hopkins is also the team's admin and events OiC and believes the tour offered valuable experience for the 23 personnel involved.

'THERE IS A CLEAR PROGRESSION'

"It was a great opportunity to get away in one location for some collective training," he told *SoldierSport*.

"A lot of medals were won across the board. Even though this is quite an individual sport, it was brilliant to have such a large number of athletes from the UK involved."

With the first trip now complete, Hopkins hopes it can serve to highlight the pathway that is in place for those wanting to get involved.

"It goes from unit or station to corps and army level, followed by competing at the Inter-Services and then representing UKAF," he continued. "There is a clear progression."

"We have a memorandum of understanding with Cyprus and are now looking at a possible North American trip in 2026. Powerlifting is really taking off."

The Army Winter Championships – open to personnel of all experience levels – will be held on December 9 and 10 at Minley. Follow @army_powerlifting_union on Instagram for details.





Pictures: Jack Chettleburgh

GROWTH CONTINUES

DRONE SPORTS

THE Army Drone Sports Association is looking to build on the growing momentum in the discipline following a successful year to date.

After a strong showing at the recent Military International Drone Racing Tournament (pictured), the organisation is planning to launch an indoor winter series that will allow pilots to sharpen their skills as

the change in weather restricts their outdoor options.

The sport will be pushed among the Army Cadet Force at demonstrations this month, while the veterans' community is being targeted as links to the 2027 Invictus Games in Birmingham are explored.

And the association's sponsorship drive has hit a significant milestone, with the £150,000 mark now reached in their mission to generate a total

of £250,000.

"As a category three sport, one of our biggest hurdles is funding," chair Lt Col Karl Eze (HAC) told *SoldierSport*.

"This money will allow us to run competitions at grass-roots level throughout the year, get more units involved and deliver low level training."

For more information follow **@british_army_drone_sports** on Instagram or the British Army Drone Sports Facebook page.



Picture: Cat Goryn/Align Photography

DOUBLE DELIGHT

HOCKEY

THE Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers celebrated a memorable run at the Inter-Corps Indoor Hockey Championships as they claimed the two major team titles on offer.

Having won the outdoor trophy in May, the men's squad faced the same opposition – the Royal Engineers – in their latest final and prevailed in a fast-paced contest.

The Sappers held the lead heading into the second half, but the REME found an equaliser before going on to win 4-2.

The two corps also met in the women's final, where the REME triumphed 2-0 against an engineers' outfit that performed well, but couldn't convert.

The action continues at the Inter-Services Indoor Hockey Championships in Aldershot on November 26 and 27, when the army will look to defend their trophies in the men's and women's competitions.

CRICKET

BATTER LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) has been named as Gloucestershire County Cricket Club's women's players' player of the year.

The army ace, who helped the soldiers to an Inter-Services double in 2025, was recognised for her consistency during the campaign, in which her knock of 91 against Sussex was the team's joint top individual score.

She also blasted 51 from 34 deliveries against Middlesex in the Twenty20 competition.



Picture: Graeme Main

MOTORSPORT

THE British Army motorcycle road race team celebrated a trophy-laden end to the 2025 season as they completed a successful defence of their Inter-Services crown.

As well sealing the collective honours, the soldiers claimed the top three places in the individual standings with Sgt Aaron Evangelista (REME) heading the field after eight rounds.

Cpl Jack Morgan (REME) finished 24 points behind in second, with LCpl Michael Large-Taylor (RLC) third.

Morgan also won the No Limits Racing Newcomer 600 title, while Large-Taylor was presented with the Billy Redmayne Trophy for his commitment to the team in 2025.



Picture: Graeme Main

Rough with the smooth

We asked reservists training in Germany what's good about army life – and what could be better

Interviews: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main



That feeling of belonging to something – the camaraderie. But it would be good if the regulars rescheduled more of the courses currently off-limits to us because of their longer timelines.

Sjt Matt Winn, Rifles



For me it's mates and having a good time. I like all the people in my squadron and enjoy adding new strings to my bow with courses. But it would be good to see more kit. Even when things do get improved in the army, we are way down the list. I'd like more opportunities for travel, too. It seems with everything going on in the world, there are some big conversations happening about how reserves should be doing more.

LCpl Jack Dawson, SNIY



The life skills it has given me, like confidence, have really helped in civvy street. I used to be that kid who wouldn't talk to anyone, but the sense of purpose this gives me means I can now deal with situations others might shy away from.

Rfn Elliott O'Brien, Rifles

One hundred per cent, it's the people who make this job. It's like a big family. My kingsmen, section commanders and platoon sergeants are massively influential over how I carry myself in civilian life. But our equipment could be invested in more. The same could be said for the regulars, too. Some of the gear they use is really good, but there could be more of it.

Lt William Jones, Lancs



Money! The cost of living is going up, and moving from a full screw's wage in the regulars to civvy street last year, this was a nice way to top it up. I am about £5-6k up already in 2025.

LCpl James Stevens, Lancs



I've grown up in the army ever since AFC Harrogate – it's all I've known – so being in the reserve has helped me adjust to normal life. More overseas exercises and opportunities for different cap badges to work together would make it even better.

Bdr Matthew Bagshaw, RA

Opportunities are what keep me in – I'm hoping to go to Kenya next year. You see a different world in the reserve and meet all sorts of characters.

Kgn Leah Pickett, Lancs



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