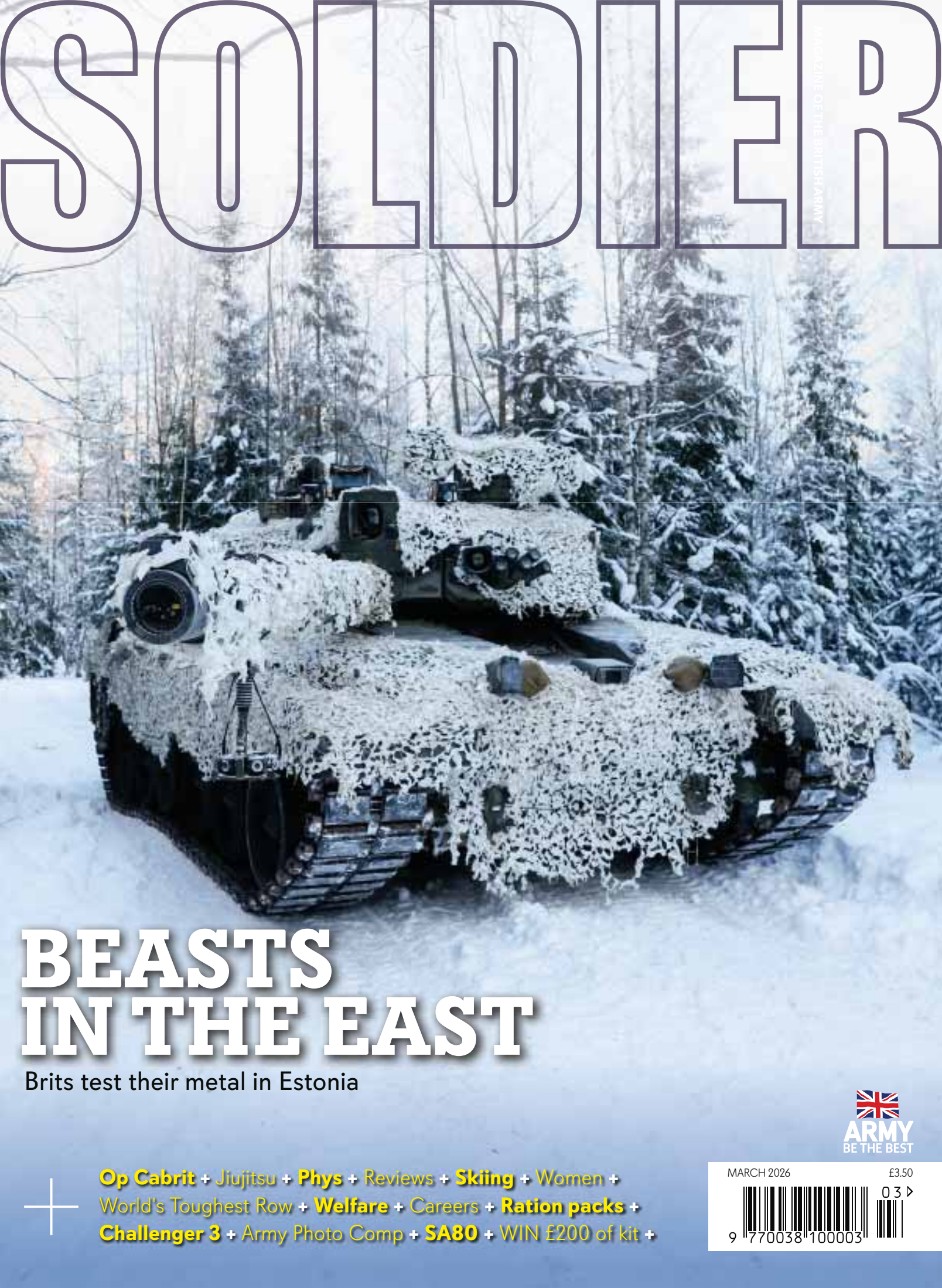


SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



BEASTS IN THE EAST

Brits test their metal in Estonia



+ **Op Cabrit** + Jiu-jitsu + **Phys** + Reviews + **Skiing** + Women +
World's Toughest Row + **Welfare** + Careers + **Ration packs** +
Challenger 3 + Army Photo Comp + **SA80** + WIN £200 of kit +

MARCH 2026

£3.50



TO EVERY WOMAN WHO WORE THE UNIFORM

We understand that your military experiences are unique.

Over half of our staff who've served are ex-service women, so you'll be met by people who understand service life, transition, and what comes next.

Our support is:

For everyone who served.

Inclusive, welcoming and confidential.

Built around your needs, not assumptions.

Your service mattered. You matter.

HELP for
HEROES

We're here to help you fight for the **peace** you deserve.

Visit: helpforheroes.org.uk/exservicewomen



OUR CONTRIBUTORS
THIS MONTH...



**PTE JESSICA KING,
RLC**

THE biggest issue for women in the army today? That we need more! That's the verdict of this soldier and others in our interviews with females of every rank. Find out what they had to say from page 42.



COL SHAMUS KELLY

ORGANISER of British Army Brazilian Jiu-jitsu's biggest seminar to date, the officer explains how the star power of world champions Ffion Davies and Roger Gracie inspired the sport's practitioners (page 69).



**SGT BRADLEY WATSON,
RE**

CREDIT to this senior NCO for his outstanding suggestion of Yorkshire pudding wraps for ration packs (page 74). Okay, the carby wonders would stand up to zero punishment... but ah the morale!

The envy of civvies – really

IT'S a phrase troops often pick up as one the most annoying cliches around – the old addage that 'civvies would pay thousands for this'.

But having now spent half a lifetime covering the army as a reporter, it is a sentiment I think stands up.

While the line – inevitably cooked up in a press office somewhere – may grate on many, there is a grain of truth in there.

It's not so much the huge amount of cash required for adventurous sports or expeds in civvy street, more the fact that gaining access to these activities in the first place can be near-impossible.

Pass that hurdle, and there's still the struggle of convincing an employer to give you weeks off to get in shape and organise your admin before you even get to the start line.

The army not only gives time and space for all this, but the starting point as a soldier of already being in decent physical condition. You won't be short of cash to live on, either, because you'll be paid throughout.

This month, Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller namechecks two groups of extreme achievers – a Royal Artillery team who completed the World's Toughest Row across the Atlantic (page 52) and ten troops from 3rd Battalion, The Ranger Regiment who successfully dealt with Sweden's hard-as-nails Jägare winter warfare course (page 11). These are no mean feats. And in a month when the service also celebrates the milestone of having a woman at every rank (page 42), it is especially fitting that the rowers were skippered by a female bombardier.

The cliché of civvies paying thousands might have had its day, but you cannot deny that many still eye military adventure with envy. As English writer Samuel Johnson once wrote: "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier".

Cliff Caswell • **Assistant Editor**

'The line may grate, but there's a grain of truth in there'



When every day feels like a battle, **Forcesline** is here to back you up.

We're not here to judge –
**we're here to listen, so you
never have to battle alone.**

Contact Forcesline.

We're open 09:00-17:00
Monday to Thursday,
and 09:00-16:00 on Friday



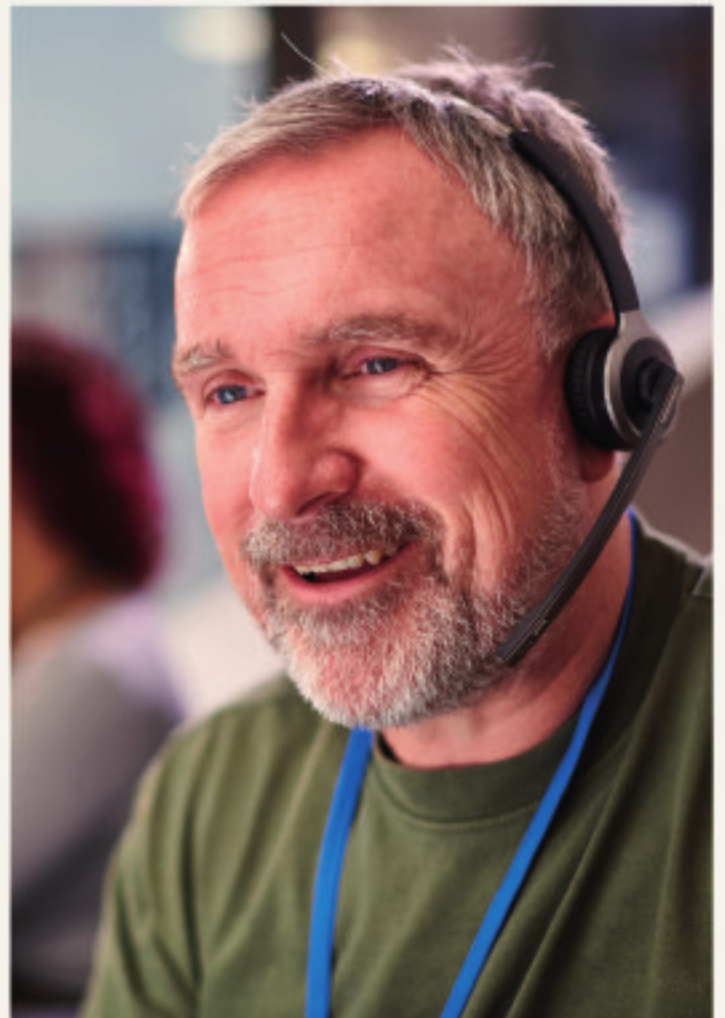
0800 260 6780



Talk to an advisor via
our **live chat** service

ssafa.org.uk

Forcesline is a free, independent helpline,
that's outside of the chain of command
for the Armed Forces and their families.



SOLDIER

CONTENTS

MARCH 2026

EDITOR

Sarah Goldthorpe

sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk
sarah.goldthorpe100@mod.gov.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR/SPORTS EDITOR

Richard Long

rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Becky Clark

rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk
rebecca.clark937@mod.gov.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Cliff Caswell

ccaswell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

ART EDITOR

Martin Gannon

mgannon@soldiermagazine.co.uk
martin.gannon102@mod.gov.uk

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Graeme Main

01252 787103
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk
graeme.main536@mod.gov.uk

Beth Prodger

bprodger@soldiermagazine.co.uk
beth.prodger100@mod.gov.uk

ADVERTISING

Heather Shekyls

07789 034748

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS/ENQUIRIES

07789 034748

subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MANAGING EDITOR

Steve Muncey

smuncey@soldiermagazine.co.uk
steven.muncey100@mod.gov.uk



ARMY
BE THE BEST

SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army
Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.



SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by Walstead (Roche) Ltd.
Print contract managed by CDS.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2026

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence. We take every care to ensure details are correct. *Soldier* magazine takes no responsibility for errors or omissions. Prices or dates quoted are correct at the time of publication and are subject to change. We do not endorse products or services appearing in the directory, classified, editorial or display advertising featured in the publication. We take no responsibility for the content or security of third party websites mentioned in this publication.



9 Update

Major milestone for women

COVER STORY

30 Winter Camp

Troops tested in Estonia

38 Op Mother

Senior NCO hunts down long-lost tank in Bovington

42 Rising ranks

Soldier quizzes females at every level of the army

48 Going to ground

Military analysts show their mettle as infanteers

57 Talkback

Your gripes put to the top

58 Reviews

Movies, games and podcasts

62 Directory

Troops' intelligence asset

64 Snowboarding

Riders dominate at Meribel

65 Skiing

RAF set the Alpine pace

67 Winter Olympics

Moore makes Games memories in monobob

70 Football

Jones fires young guns to Inter-Services glory

72 Rugby union

Dolphins dig deep to become unit champions

74 Final Word

What would engineers do if they were in charge?

THE HAMILTON GOLD COMPANY

YOUR BESPOKE JEWELLERY EXPERTS

30%



30% **DISCOUNT** for all
Military, Veterans, Bluelights & Public Sector.

Step 1 -



Scan the QR code and get in contact with Amelia, our military sales advisor.

Step 2 -



Send over your ring Inspo - Photos, styles, or ideas you love!

Step 3 -



We craft your ring for 30% less than what you would find at online retailers.

Step 4 -



Once your ring is ready, offering nationwide shipping or in-store pickup.

Save 30% on engagement, wedding & signet rings - exclusively for those who serve. Scan the QR code and get in touch!

www.hamiltongoldcompany.com



A soldier in winter camouflage gear is kneeling in a snowy forest. The soldier is wearing a white balaclava, goggles, and a patterned jacket. They are holding a rifle and looking towards the camera. The background shows snow-covered trees and a bright sky.

BIG PIC

CAPTAIN Hamish MacKellar (R Anglian) plays an enemy fighter during this year's Winter Camp in Estonia. Read more about the cold-weather combined arms exercise from page 30.

Picture: Beth Prodger

ASPIRE



United Kingdom
Special Forces
Reserves



SFTC-UKSF-RESERVE-RECRUITING@mod.gov.uk



Picture: Graeme Main

WHAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE

A proud soldier shows Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, her picture of females at every rank (below)

FOR the first time in its history, the British Army has a female serving at every rank.

It is a milestone for the UK armed forces – and likely Nato, *Soldier* understands.

Reacting to the news during a special event attended by servicewomen of every level at Army Headquarters last month (shown), Brig Melissa Emmett, head of Army Personnel Services Group, called it a “wonderful occasion”.

She added: “When I joined, we had women serving sporadically across ranks and in a few trades; this milestone proves that we can work and thrive everywhere.”

“We have normalised success, and I’m so pleased the army has committed to ensuring its servicewomen succeed.”

Maj Gen Lizzie Faithfull-Davies, Director Land Environment, is one of a handful to have made it to the most senior level.

Speaking to this magazine, she said mutual support between females – provided by groups such as the Army Servicewomen’s Network –

‘We have to keep championing women’

was vital in a male-dominated organisation.

“That sense of camaraderie and support is second-to-none in making us more successful,” she added.

The news comes as the world marks International Women’s Day this month.

Col Lyndsey Kelly, assistant head of the army’s Cultural Improvement team, said the event in Andover had left a real impression on younger personnel who attended.

“For a recruit of five weeks to be here in a conversation with such high-ranking officers, chatting to them like friends, has a really powerful impact,” she said.

“What that recruit will take away is the sense that these officers are normal women, and these things are entirely possible.”

“Infantry platoon leaders, cavalry squadron leaders... we are having all these firsts now. And

there are more to come.

“But we have to keep championing women and making sure they are enabled to achieve what they want.”

“Organisations with a diversity of background bring so much more richness of thought.”

All ranks – page 42



WHERE TO FIND SOLDIER



Printed copies

Sent to army sites at the start of the month. Pick up a copy at the cookhouse and if you aren’t seeing it tell us at subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Facebook & Instagram

We publish a link to the latest issue on [facebook.com/soldiermagazine](https://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine), and Insta via [@soldier_magazine](https://www.instagram.com/soldier_magazine)



Online

Digital versions of current and past editions – going right back to 1945 – are now available to view on soldiermagazine.co.uk



Purchase

If you’re not serving you can buy the mag from your high street retailer or directly from us at subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk (£23 for 12 issues in the UK)

Picture: Mick Latter



1 NEPAL

Attestation station

GURKHA recruits formed up in front of their loved ones as they prepared to start their military training and new lives in the UK.

The 323 new personnel – the cream of 10,000 applicants – paraded in Pokhara where they were inspected by Commander Field Army Lt Gen Mike Elviss.

The officer oversaw the attestation ceremony, with recruits taking pledges to their formation, the army and King Charles. He later met troops and families.

Having already proved their mettle in a demanding selection process, the soldiers are now at Infantry Training Centre Catterick to begin their careers in uniform.



A TASTE OF ARMY ACTIVITY ACROSS THE WORLD

GLOBAL SITREP



Picture: PO Phot Rory Arnold, RN



2 FRANCE

Lions on the prowl

PERSONNEL from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment put in an explosive performance as they joined some of their closest allies at the Cenzub urban fighting facility near Rheims.

The troops from Burma Company spent last month there on Exercise Gaulish helping their French counterparts from 152e Regiment d'Infanterie get signed off for Nato ops.

It saw the Lions tested on a range of serials too, starting off with low-level skills and drills before building up to complex actions across the training area.

Platoon commander Lt Tom Cookson said: "Honestly, it has been mega. There has been some great learning. The training area is excellent – there are even smoke machines inside the buildings, so you can actually see the effects if you call in a fire mission."

Read February's *Soldier* for more on the unit's recent training.

3 ESTONIA

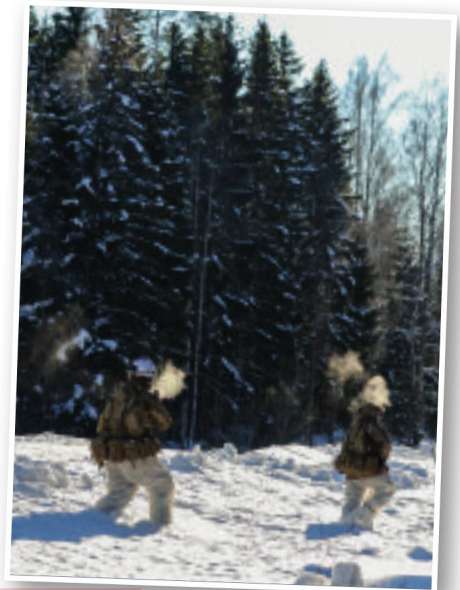
Cold realities

COOL HEADS prevailed as a British-led Nato battlegroup demonstrated their warfighting skills in one of the coldest Eastern European winters for decades.

Commanded by the Royal Tank Regiment, soldiers from across the alliance put on a combat showcase on Exercise Winter Camp.

The two-week package saw the battlegroup pitted against a live opposing force as the troops rehearsed defending territory and striking back hard – all in temperatures that plunged to minus 28 degrees Celsius.

Mercian Regiment soldiers and sappers from 26 Engineer Regiment were among those involved while infantry from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment travelled from Poland to play the mock enemy. **Read more from page 30.**



4 FALKLAND ISLANDS

Paras ready for anything

VOLUNTEERS from 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have taken over as the territory's Roulement Infantry Company.

The high readiness troops stepped in last month following the departure of 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish.

Back in 2016, the airborne soldiers became the first reserve unit to take on the commitment.

'You must have a balance between tactics and survivability'

Cold front – page 30



5 SWEDEN

Arctic punishment

THE respect of Scandinavia’s finest was won by personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Ranger Regiment after they finished the winter warfare element of the elite Jägare package.

Ten soldiers were awarded special tabs after completing the course – a punishing jaunt to test them in brutal Arctic conditions.

Following serials to hone cold-climate skills and drills, the package culminated in a 50km cross-country ski and five-day multinational exercise in north Sweden.

The Rangers had already undertaken a summer component of the course, which must be completed to be awarded the tab along with the winter section.

Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 Shaun Walsh said the outing had been a serious undertaking for the British Army’s Special Operations Brigade lead unit on Arctic warfare.

He added: “Spending 24 hours on skis across undulating terrain is really tough.

“You must be on top of your game.”

‘That first season at Meribel can be quite daunting’

Snowboarders clean up at Inter-Services – page 64

6 JORDAN

Tiger territory

TROOPS from 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment were put through their paces in the desert alongside a key Middle Eastern partner.

The Tigers honed core warfighting skills and drills during a range of serials along with members of the Jordanian military during the now familiar Exercise Olive Grove.

Crucially, the package in the south of the country also included an opportunity to get to grips with protocols on unmanned aerial systems in an austere environment.

Normally based in Cyprus, the infantrymen from C Company also took the chance to forge new friendships with personnel from the host nation.



‘We went through every weather system the sea could offer’

A force to be reckoned with – page 52

Picture: Sgt Lee Goddard, RAF



GROUND VIEW

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

ADVENTUROUS training and expeds are a huge draw for people thinking of joining up.

From parachuting and sailing to ultra-races such as the Marathon des Sables in the Sahara, these opportunities are far harder to come by in civvy life. They are exciting, exhilarating and will be remembered long after troops have left service.

But they also help us forge the critical soldiering skills and qualities needed for ops.

Whether you're in the sea or hanging over a cliff edge, you're likely to experience physical and mental pressure in these new situations. Outside your comfort zone, you'll probably be afraid too. And it is these conditions that transfer across to the battlefield.

On this front, I want to highlight a couple of notable achievements this month. The first is the team from 12th Regiment, Royal Artillery who recently completed the World's Toughest Row

(page 52). It's an amazing achievement in itself, but I am really proud to see the crew was made up entirely of soldiers and NCOs – the skipper, Katie Devine, is a bombardier.

This boat's makeup is a first for the service and it demonstrates the quality of our younger troops.

Closer to home, the special operations team from 3rd Battalion, The Ranger Regiment completed Sweden's Jägare course. This Arctic training package is very tough and the recognition the troops received from their Scandinavian counterparts is testament to their performance.

These are very different examples of taking on extremes of environments, but both show the value of pushing ourselves in order to enhance skills. I want to see more troops embracing the opportunity to stretch themselves – any activity that takes you beyond the familiar can only bolster our fighting power.

Also this month, we mark International Women's Day – and it is great to see the army now has a woman in every rank (pages 9 and 42). This is something we should all celebrate: with the world as it is, the skills and experience of everyone is going to count on ops.

Finally, thank you to 16th Regiment, Royal Artillery at Thorney Island for hosting me on last month's Op Teamwork day. This air defence unit, which operates Sky Sabre, has been busy, but it was very useful to pause and consider how we can all improve.

WO1 Miller's month...

Visits

- 16th Regiment, Royal Artillery

Impressed with

- AT, exercises and expeds; the success of Capt Emma Donnelly (RAMS) on BBC's *Gladiators*

Areas of focus

- Promoting and enhancing AT opportunities

Coming up next

- Regimental Sergeant Majors' Convention in April

GAP YEAR OVER HERE?



Picture: Beth Proddger

A SCHEME where students spend a gap year sampling life in uniform is set for roll out, defence chiefs have said.

It is envisaged there will be 150 slots across all three services in the first tranche of the so-called Armed Forces Foundation Scheme due to start this month.

Ministers say this could grow to 1,000 if there is the demand.

Announced by the MoD late last year, the initiative is poised to offer bespoke training courses to set people under 25 up for a military or civvy career.

It will expose participants to basic training and other aspects of military life while developing leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

There is no commitment to them joining up for further service.

The move follows a

recommendation in the Strategic Defence Review and is modelled on a similar scheme run by the Australian forces.

While full details of eligibility criteria and the application process had not been confirmed as this issue went to press, ministers are confident it will give people transferrable skills to use in any career they choose.

Defence Secretary John Healey added it would give those taking part a taste of the military while providing valuable life experience.

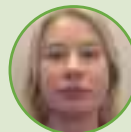
"It is part of our determination to reconnect society with our forces and drive a whole-of-society approach to our nation's defence," he said. "As young people think about their futures, I want the opportunities on offer in our armed forces to be a part of that conversation."

Soldier asks the target audience...

Would an army gap year appeal?

"Definitely! A few people I know work in pubs to raise money before uni. Some might end up finding army life a better option than a degree."

Josie Patterson, 23



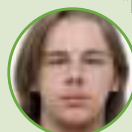
"Having completed a sports coaching apprenticeship, I'd say it's something students would look at. But it needs to be publicised properly."

Riyad Zuman, 21



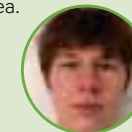
"It sounds quite a cool idea. I'm undecided on what I want to do; I'm studying science and engineering."

Riley Wayman, 17



"Not for me, but I see why some might like to try it such as those in the cadets."

Todd Wayman, 16





TEENAGE KICKS

JUNIOR soldiers of the Army Foundation College were saluted as they concluded basic training.

They will now join their units for trade training. The ceremony also marked the retirement of RSM WO1 Ben Townley (SG).

Picture: Cpl John Warburton, RLC



Pictures: PO Joel Rouse, RN; Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

BEEF WITH RATION PACKS?

THE army wants to know what you love and loathe about operational ration packs.

Logistics Branch, HQ Field Army is asking as many defence personnel as possible to take part in the short online survey, so it can ensure front-line food supplies meet the demands of modern ops.

Detail on how the packs are used – and what does and doesn't work – will also help to inform future meal choices.

Follow the QR code to take part before the end of June.



Q&A

Col Lucy Giles' first contact with army life came when females still had their own branch of service. She joined the Women's Royal Army Corps in the 1980s. Soldier caught up with the inclusion champion as she retired from the military...

Times have changed since you first joined. Did you think you'd stay this long?

No – joining up at university was a dare. When I went for selection, I passed the Regular Commissions Board on risk. And here I am.

Do you think we still recruit the right people?

Yes, we have an amazing amount of talent out there so I think the service is in good hands for the future.

Any advice for commanders?

To create the best teams, you must develop people as individuals

Have we made progress in dealing with bad behaviours?

Yes, if you look at the court martial results, people are being held to account. But it's also important to recognise the army recruits from society and reflects society. Our values have to land with our soldiers and we need officers and NCOs to create the right culture.



Picture: Graeme Main



MY TOP...

Soldier gets to know WO2 Jonny Cox, AGC (SPS)...

...COOKHOUSE

The one at Fallingbommel in the era of British Forces Germany. These days there's a good little place at Roman Camp in Colchester – they serve a really good breakfast!

...TRAINING EXERCISE

There are two that stand out – I worked with the Royal Air Force as a clerk for a while and we went out training with fast jets in Las Vegas. As it was the RAF, we got to stay in hotels, which was

great. Then there was Exercise Suman, where I was attached to the Devon and Dorsets – now The Rifles – in Australia. I don't think I can top either of those.

...ARMY SLANG

'Robogen' – a rapid way of informing others that you're telling the truth. It has its origins in the 1987 movie Robocop and means that if I'm caught lying you can shave my eyebrows and make me look like the lead character.

...FOREIGN ARMY

The Americans, purely because we have worked with them a lot over many years and know each other's way of operating.

...MUSIC

In military terms? Everything performed at the Coronation of King Charles III. I was involved that day and it was an amazing playlist. There was a boom when the bands opened up and the music hit you. The experience was a high point of my career.



...RATION PACK ITEM

I'm probably in a minority here, but Biscuits Brown were my favourite. As everyone else hated them, I had lots!

...TRAINING AREA

An older location again, but Lydd and Hythe Ranges (shown below). We used to do our training for Northern Ireland there.



...ARMY CLICHE FOR THE CHOP

'Civvies would pay thousands for this' is annoying. Equally irritating is 'you're in your own time now' – one regularly used by PTIs.

...BIT OF KIT

The AKU boots I'm currently wearing are a definite favourite. Lighter, comfortable and good for the office environment.

...ADVENTUROUS TRAINING

Skiing is great. I'm absolutely s*** at it but having the opportunity is fantastic. Anyone can have a go on the AT outings – you don't need previous experience like you do with some activities.

SIKH CAMPAIGN

SOLDIERS are being asked to help with a push to highlight the contribution of Sikhs to the British Army since the Second World War.

Members of the Sikh Military Foundation want to hear from current personnel, veterans and those with connections to someone who has served over the past eight decades.

The stories will be told in a book, *Faith and Service*, as well as online, with plans for a travelling exhibition also in the pipeline.

Chair Maj Dal Singh Virdee (RAMS) said the campaign would ensure troops' experiences are properly understood and preserved for future generations.

"Many soldiers' stories remain unheard, and if we don't capture them now, they'll be lost," he said.

To contribute visit forms.office.com/e/THiDfWLuS

DRIVER TRAINING

THE MoD has taken on a new instructor partner to help personnel behind the wheel.

Troops needing licences for car, bus, minibus and truck and trailer categories will be assisted by Hughes Driver Training after the firm signed a five-year deal with defence. The company will be in action at nine military sites including Leconfield, Colchester, Blandford, Larkhill and Minley.

INTEL ASSAULT

ANALYSTS from 1 Military Intelligence Battalion proved they are soldiers first during three days of trench clearance serials in Catterick.

Read more about the exercise on page 48.



Picture: Sgt Andy Grayson, RLC



A servicewoman tackles the all-arms physical training instructor course in Aldershot
Picture: Graeme Main



In every rank – page 42

THE STRAIN OF KEEPING UP

A BELIEF among women that they must prove themselves in the military may be causing physical health dramas in later life, research suggests.

A study led by Anglia Ruskin University found that females are being hit with wear-and-tear related issues when they leave the forces – potentially because they feel under pressure to perform above and beyond during PT.

Also of concern were revelations that they appear to be delaying treatment for gynaecological issues, running the risk of issues such as infertility.

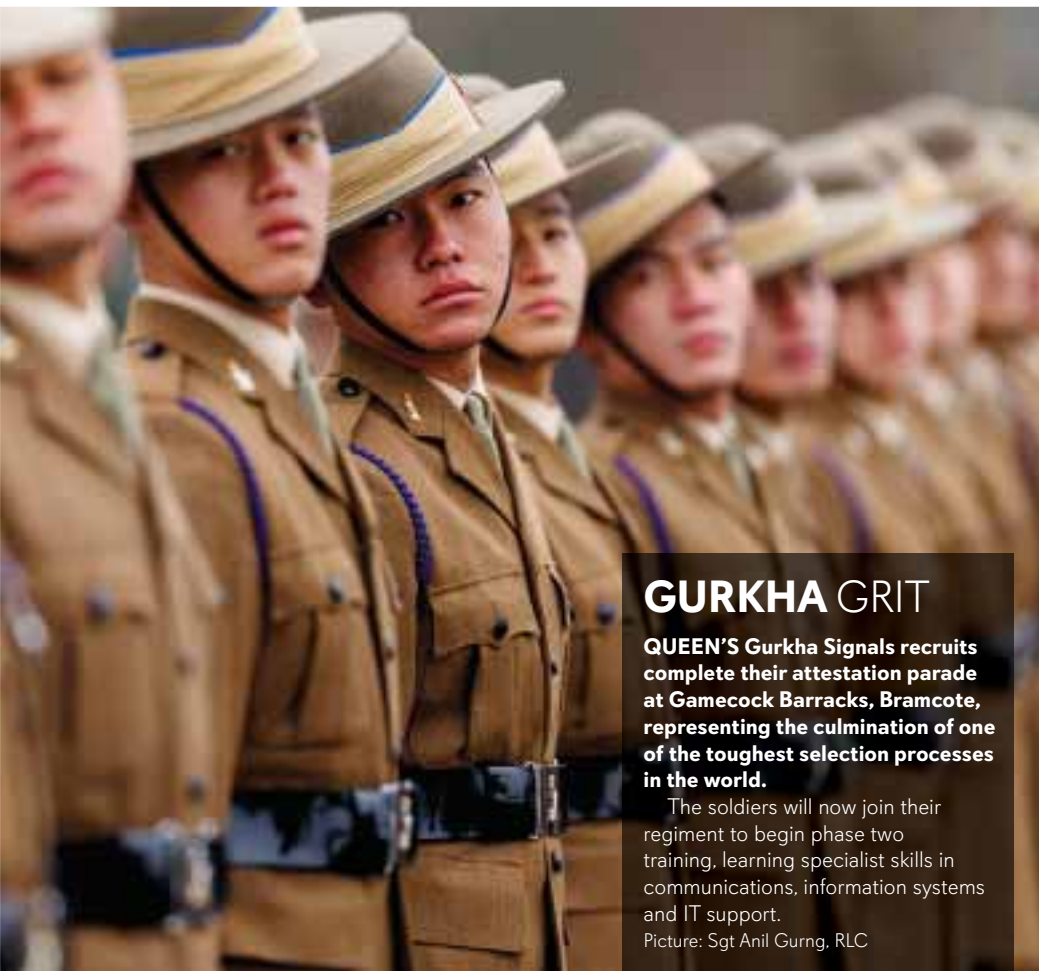
Called *The Physical Health and Healthcare Experiences of UK Ex-Servicewomen*, the report drew on expertise from The Royal British Legion and the Defence

Medical Welfare Service, as well as surveying 546 female vets and 2,722 men.

Researchers found osteoarthritis was more prevalent among females. And nearly half of ex-military women were either current or former smokers and 80 per cent more likely to develop the lung condition COPD than those who had never served.

Just under a third were obese.

Academic Lauren Godier-McBard – who led the Office for Veteran Affairs-funded research – said: “Women in the armed forces often face unique challenges as a result of the male-norm default.” She added that a lingering military mindset centred on “toughness” and “self-reliance” could also be preventing them seeking care.



GURKHA GRIT

QUEEN'S Gurkha Signals recruits complete their attestation parade at Gamecock Barracks, Bramcote, representing the culmination of one of the toughest selection processes in the world.

The soldiers will now join their regiment to begin phase two training, learning specialist skills in communications, information systems and IT support.

Picture: Sgt Anil Gurng, RLC

JACKO JOY

CHEESY beans are back on the menu at the Royal School of Military Engineering's much-loved Jackson Club after the cafe was saved from closure.

Known as Jacko's, the venue at Gibraltar Barracks, Minley shut last April amid mounting costs. But a huge rescue effort paid off as charities joined forces with cash. And with a £300,000 refit and new decor, the site is now under new management of the Church of England Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Clubs (Cessac).

The move means that cheesy beans – the snacktime favourite served to generations of sappers – will continue to help troops smash their phase two training.

WO2 Paul Ridgley said the meal was a rite of passage for soldiers, adding: “It's a special moment when you have your first cheesy beans!”





Pictures: BBC/Hungry Bear/David MacCormack

GLADIATOR READY

CAPT Ella Donnelly (RAMS) is the female favourite to win the BBC's *Gladiators* series after putting in a powerhouse performance in last month's heats.

The 21 Multirole Medical Regiment soldier saw off opponent Ciara Scullion, with bookies giving the gifted rugby league player odds of 11/8 heading into the quarter finals.

NEVER TURNING FROM CRISES

TROOPS are backing moves to change the law around helping people in danger, following a serviceman's personal tragedy.

They are among more than 16,000 to sign a petition calling for regulations to be introduced obliging bystanders to call the emergency services if they know someone is at serious risk.

Currently, there is no legal requirement for people to do so, except those in specific duty-of-care roles, which Sgt Marty Hunt (Lancs) said goes against the military ethos.

"It's surprising that such a law doesn't already exist as the idea of walking past someone in trouble feels deeply at odds with the values and standards ingrained in us," the NCO said.

"We're taught to never leave anyone behind and that extends beyond the battlefield."

The campaign was set up by Sgt Hunt's former King's Regiment colleague, Sgt Jonathan Haggerty (RAF), whose sister Danielle died in 2023 after being left alone in

distress at her partner's flat. The coroner ruled her death to have been "the unintended outcome of an act of self-harm at a time of distress, in the context of a violent and abusive relationship, and in the immediate aftermath of a violent argument".

Sgt Haggerty, who is also lobbying ministers and MPs, said he hoped a duty-to-assist law would close a legal gap and protect vulnerable people.

"Danielle was an amazing person - it took me a long time to get over her death but this has given me focus," he commented.

To lend your support to the campaign visit petition.parliament.uk/petitions/750545



Picture: Chris Morgan, ex-WG

MEDIC REMEMBERED

PRINCE William led tributes to combat medical technician and social media influencer Cpl Lucy Wilde (RAMS), who was found dead at her barracks in Warminster.

Having met the 25-year-old while she was attached to the Welsh Guards two years ago, he wrote on X: "She served with courage and distinction and always sought to help others - my heartfelt condolences to her family and friends."

Cpl Wilde, who had thousands of followers on TikTok, had recently arrived at 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment.

A unit statement read: "Lucy had an ability to lift the mood of those around her, to make demanding days feel lighter and remind us that camaraderie is a great source of strength."



Soldiers help with vaccines during the Covid-19 crisis

IN NUMBERS: CREDIT UNION MILESTONE

THE Joining Forces Credit Union has celebrated its tenth anniversary. In that time the cooperative has seen...

28,000 members assisted **£12.4m** collective savings accrued **£72m** loans approved

Visit joiningforcescu.co.uk or search 'Joining Forces' on *Discover My Benefits* for more info

TOSCA TAKEOVER LOOMS

PERSONNEL from 39 Engineer Regiment are poised to assume UN peacekeeping duties in Cyprus.

Set to deploy on Op Tosca in the coming weeks, the sappers will spend the next six months patrolling the British sector of the 112-mile buffer zone between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Speaking to *Soldier* at their blue beret parade – which saw them don the distinctive UN headdress – Spr Luca Young said he was eager to get a tour under his belt.

"It's my first deployment and I'm looking forward to getting out there and working with other nations," he added.

"It's going to be interesting seeing what an operation is like, as well as using equipment and radios in actual live situations."

Maj Euan Irvine (pictured) agreed that the experience would be "career shaping" for juniors.

"Operating in that environment, being held to high standards and spending concentrated time in their sections will help them make the most of personal development opportunities," he added. Personnel were finishing pre-deployment training as this issue went to press and will relieve colleagues from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards by the end of the month.

● **Chief for the day - page 74**



Picture: Sgt Lisa Ramage, AGC (SPS)

SOLDIERSPORT

Read how Capt Sam Griffiths (RE) missed out on Inter-Services cross country glory on **page 71** >>>



ABUSE INVESTIGATION

WILTSHIRE Police have expanded an investigation they are leading into sexual abuse at army enlistment medical examinations.

The force said it had been contacted by more than 500 people after claims were first made last year. The probe now includes all three armed services, with cases dating from the 1970s to 2016 by personnel, veterans and those who did not end up joining.

Senior investigating officer Det Supt Darren Hannant urged anyone with information to come forward.

"You don't need to be sure whether your experience falls within the scope of this investigation – our team will assess any report and ensure it is handled appropriately," he said.

Anyone with information should call 101 and ask for Wiltshire Police.

KICKED OUT

THE following personnel were dismissed from His Majesty's Armed Forces following conviction at court martial between May 2025 and January this year:

📄 **LCpl Oliver Wilcox (R Signals)**, aged 25, was found guilty of a sexual assault on a woman while deployed on Op Cabrit in Estonia. Sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment, suspended for two years – on condition that he completes 240 hours of unpaid work plus 20 rehabilitation activity days. Wilcox was also told to keep police informed of his personal circumstances for ten years.

📄 **Pte Semi Nacoko (9 Regiment, RLC)**, aged 26, pleaded guilty to possessing indecent images of children and extreme pornography. Sentenced to six months' detention at the Military Corrective Training Centre Colchester. Ordered to inform police of any change in personal circumstances for five years.

📄 **Pte Christopher Laird (3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland)**, aged 24, pleaded guilty to desertion after being absent from duty for 849 days between February 2023 until June 2025. The court was told that he had no intention of

returning. Ordered to complete a service community order of 240 hours of unpaid work in the next year.

📄 **LCpl Dylan McHardy (The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards)**, aged 30, pleaded guilty to assault occasioning actual bodily harm. A court heard that the attack, which took place after a row in a taxi, had left a fellow soldier with a broken nose and fractured eye socket. Reduced to the ranks and sentenced to ten months of service detention, with two thirds of the time to be served 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

MILESTONE MOMENT

Challenger 3 hits the mark with live firing



A KEY marker has been reached in the Challenger 3 programme after the first crewed live firing of the army's future main battle tank was conducted in Scotland.

The trial was part of a phased firing process that began with remote operation and progressed to personnel from industry partners Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land taking control to fire from the turret.

Challenger 3 is equipped with the 120mm smoothbore L55A1 cannon that is used by nine Nato nations – including on Germany's Leopard 2A7V tank – and its performance north of the border was deemed a major success.

"This is a huge step forward for the

programme," Maj Joe Murray (RRF), part of the Challenger 3 team based at Army Headquarters, told *Soldier*.

"The big difference on this tank is the gun – it is there to kill other tanks.

"The L55A1 allows us to fire the standard Nato ammunition of our partners – it is a tried and tested gun.

"In conjunction with Germany, we are also developing the next generation of tank ammunition that will give us commonality with them – everything else pales in comparison."

Maj Murray said six Challenger 3 prototypes are now in operation and that a series of trials – including on noise and vibration – were carried out last year.

That work will continue throughout 2026, with more crewed firing and mobility tests to come as the army strives to hit the mark with a platform that is expected to sustain the UK's heavy armour capability until at least 2040.

"We want to give the best kit we can," the officer added. "A lot of work has gone into getting us to this point, and there are some hard yards ahead.

"The British Army is also known for having the best armour and we are now pushing on with the next generation of that for Challenger 3, coupled with an active protection system.

"Everything is moving in the right direction."



TAKING THE STRAIN

A NEW British-made ultra heavy-lift drone has completed its first test flight, paving the way for use in potential casualty evacuations on the battlefield.

The Hydra-400 vertical take-off and landing drone is part of a new generation of uncrewed aerial vehicles that use a hybrid combination of electric rotors and micro jet turbines for lift and propulsion.

Compact and portable, it can be transported in the back of a flatbed truck and assembled ready for flight in minutes.

The device, created by Hydra Drones, can lift up to 400kg in weight and proved its ability to carry a stretcher during the tests. It can also be used for the delivery of cargo and weapons systems and be configured as fully electric or as a hybrid using two, four or six jets.

"These results give us real confidence as we move into the next phase of development and testing," said lead engineer Alfie Lockrey.

HOWITZER INBOUND

AN EARLY demonstrator of a state-of-the-art mobile artillery system capable of hitting targets 70 kilometres away is due to find its way into army hands in 2028.

The Remote Controlled Howitzer 155mm (RCH 155) is mounted on a Boxer armoured vehicle, from where it can immediately spring into action, fire eight rounds a minute and then rapidly redeploy – making it harder for enemies to target.

It can also strike in any direction without repositioning, reach speeds of up to 100kph and be operated by just two crew members.

The army will receive one platform for testing as part of a £52 million joint procurement programme with Germany, who will take two more. Both countries will share test data and facilities.

The RCH 155 (shown below) will feed into the army's mobile fires platform programme, which aims to deliver a long-term solution to the service's artillery needs.

Archer systems were acquired as an interim capability after AS90 guns were gifted to Ukraine.



Picture: Thomas Hipp/KNDS

CONFERENCE CALL

THE Future Soldier Technology conference returns to London from March 9 to 11.

Latest advancements in lethality and weaponry, dismantled tactical power, night vision, and protection and survivability will be among the topics covered at the event, which also features guest speakers from the British Army, US military and further afield.

It is also an opportunity for senior officers and programme managers to mix with experts in the defence industry.

Visit smgconferences.com to register.



Picture: POPhot Lee Blease RN



SKI SEASON LIFTS OFF

TROOPS preparing for manoeuvres on Nato's northern flank found a super-cool way of getting around – on Chinooks with skis.

The heavy lift mainstay, which is always a favourite transport option with soldiers, was fitted with the kit by Royal Air Force crews to stop it sinking into the soft snow.

In this case, personnel were working in frigid conditions ahead of Exercise Cold Response in the Arctic, honing landings, lifts and survival skills.

NEW RIFLE IN SIGHT

Efforts step up to replace SA80

A FRESH suite of weapons to replace the SA80 assault rifle must pack enough punch to smash through new enemy body armour, MoD bosses have said.

In releasing a detailed brief to contractors on the requirements to succeed the ageing personal weapon, chiefs at Defence Equipment and Support said the UK-made kit had to be capable of defeating the current and next-generation of personal protection.

Replacements would also need to be compatible with state-of-the-art day and night sighting systems while offering a reduced signature to better conceal troops.

Confirmed in a new MoD procurement briefing document, the move is part of Project Grayburn, a wider initiative to uprate the armed forces' personal weapons inventory.

Military chiefs confirmed that two versions of the assault rifle are being sought to replace the SA80 A3 for close combat along with one for 'generalist' use in lieu of the older A2 incarnation.

Another variant designed for the cadet forces will replace the L98 GP currently in use, while a 'personal defence weapon' to succeed the carbine format has also been specified.

All will need to be fit for purpose for use in extreme conditions around the world.

Personnel who have spoken to *Soldier* have broadly welcomed the announcement of a new rifle but said the SA80 – which is due to go out of service at the end of the decade – had proved to be a formidable piece of kit on global operations over the years.

While it had been in service since the late 1980s, a series of upgrades – culminating in the A3 model in 2018 – matched with an excellent suite of sighting systems had made it a versatile and potent asset, they added.

welfare



ROLE REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must have...

- Five years of service; be a corporal at least
- Completed both parts of the Army Leadership and Development Programme
- Level 2 literacy and numeracy
- Full driving licence – fit to drive military vehicles

Applications for the next intake close on April 15. See [2026DIN01-004](#)



KEY TO OUR FIGHTING POWER

Why home-front support is anything but pink and fluffy

THE role of the Army Welfare Service – as its practitioners will testify – is a world apart from the common stereotype that many people have in mind.

Far from being a “pink and fluffy” career option, this is a job that will place troops on the front line of keeping the army a credible fighting force.

With personnel assisting colleagues and dependants dealing with problems such as workplace stress or mental health issues, it is certainly not for the faint hearted.

But there is a rewarding career path for those who can demonstrate that they have the right skills and mindset.

Falling under the Staff and Personnel Support branch of the Adjutant General’s Corps, the outfit is currently recruiting a handful of transferees to bolster the 70 or so soldiers currently serving.

The successful applicants, who must have already served for at least five years, will initially embark on the eight-month defence specialist welfare worker course.

It is a demanding endeavour by any reckoning – with three months of the package residential at Worthy Down. But newcomers must rapidly learn to deal with the rawest edges of military life.

With troops and dependents either coming forward themselves or referred from elsewhere in the welfare chain, they could soon find themselves spelling out realities that people in front of them might not wish to hear.

As the lead agency on domestic violence and safeguarding, it is also possible that they will have to act to ensure individuals are protected – working with agencies such as social services.

To this end, commanders want to recruit from across the cap-badge spectrum, supplementing a pool of expertise that ranges from former clerks to infanters.

Personnel are also deployable on operations – with Op Cabrit in Eastern Europe the most recent destination – while other postings are isolated and remote.

It might not be a role that is for everyone, but those transferring will have opportunities off the beaten track and their experience is certainly going to help others.

And given the size of the army today, the job has arguably never been more important – in an unpredictable world, soldiers are a resource that the service cannot afford to lose.

TALKING SHOP

Two members of AWS staff reflect on the job’s realities...



“You only have to look around to see that the tempo of the army is crazy at the moment – this, in itself, is having a significant impact on stress levels.

“We need to recruit to the AWS from everywhere we can in the army to have the depth of experience and wider, holistic view of the service that we need.

“I’ve served for 28 years now, the first half of my career with the Royal Military Police. Lived experienced of the army is a great asset – out on operations, for example, our troops can give advice to commanders as subject matter experts.”

WO1 Bekki Sugden, Regimental Sergeant Major, AWS



“I was with 3 Para before I recently became a welfare worker; I found the eight-month course that you have to complete as challenging as P Company.

“You don’t have the same physical demands, but it is as tough in its own way – you’re continually studying and you find it becomes hard to switch off.

“In terms of what you need, humility is important – you must be willing to ask for advice.”

Sgt Stefan Urbanik, Welfare worker, Colchester

Pictures: Graeme Main; Sgt Anil Gurung, RLC; and Sgt Lee Goddard, RAF

phys



Pictures: Graeme Main

FIT FOR PURPOSE

Phys facilities get impressive facelift

A MULTI-MILLION pound cash injection into army fitness kit has proved a hit with troops – many of whom have given up private gym memberships as a result.

Led by the Regional Command Physical Development branch, the 18-month project has seen facilities in the UK and abroad significantly upgraded thanks to a total investment of £17m.

Stations as far afield as Brunei and Nepal have been refurbished, with new equipment replacing outdated kit, including some 200 top-of-the-range Wattbikes.

At Keogh Barracks in Surrey – home of 2nd Battalion, The Ranger Regiment – a sports hall was converted into a multi-purpose gym and a strength and conditioning suite fitted with new resistance machines and weight racks.

The formation's staff sergeant instructor SSgt Mike Ramsdale (RAPTC) said the facility was now much more suitable for the roughly 600 personnel based there.

"It's a massive uplift – we can now run larger sessions with big groups," he explained.

"The soldiers love it, to the point where a lot of them gave up their personal memberships to local gyms.

"On the rehab side, people are getting fitter quicker and we can also run lots of competitions

in the space.

"And as well as the usual court markings on the floor, we have all the tests for the soldier conditioning review marked out, for example the distances for the broad jump and med ball throw. It makes it much easier."

Reflecting on the Rangers' role under the Army Special Operations Brigade, the senior NCO added: "What they do is next-level compared to a normal infantry unit and they need the right training and equipment to be able to get themselves up there.

"If you think about it in terms of the best teams in the Premier League, if they didn't have proper facilities, there's no way they could remain in the top tier."

The upgrade was spearheaded by Maj Lee Davison and WO1 Josh Shackleton (both RAPTC) and aimed to better align gyms to the army physical training system.

As well as improving morale among troops, units would now be

able to deliver programmes tailored to the physical attributes required of their specific role, explained Maj Davison.

"Ensuring soldiers have state-of-the-art, reliable equipment to maintain operational readiness is key," he said.

"Funding was allocated where it would have the greatest effect and ensures resources stretch as far as possible across the Field Army.

"The opportunity to make a meaningful difference to the wellbeing and operational output of our service personnel is one we have never taken for granted."

THE VERDICT'S IN...

"Our facility has improved tenfold and has a great feel to it – people now come because they want to, not just because they have to stay fit for their jobs.

There are soldiers in there from 0600 to 2100, so the space gets used much more. It would cost a fortune to have a membership to a private gym like this."

SSgt Tristan Willis (RAPTC), SSI 4 Ranger





HELPING YOU MAKE
BETTER CHOICES



CHAMPIONING
ARMED FORCES PENSIONS
SINCE 1946

80 years on we're helping people just like you make better pension choices. Join us. Job done.

Today we're supporting more service people than ever. That's not just because our membership is growing but because there is increasing recognition of the AFPS15 pension as a highly valuable asset. For many, it's second only to the value of a home.

At today's values, a £20k pa income requires a pension pot of c£400k. And when you consider the average civilian pension pot for over 50s in this country is less than £100k, you can see why we say that AFPS15 is among the very best of the public sector pension schemes.

By making the best pension choices throughout your career (and even when you're in Resettlement), you can make a significant difference to your pension income.

Our Forces Pensions Consultants, the experts at the Forces Pension Society, are here to provide personal guidance. Access to our experts is included in your annual membership subscription and the earlier in your career you take an interest in your pension, the better.

Independent, not-for-profit

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, our membership subscriptions help to fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs, plus our vigilance in challenging governments whenever we spot unfairness or injustice in the system.

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just **£47**. You will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual newsletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.



IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF YOUR PENSION

Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL

T: 020 7820 9988 E: memsec@forpen.co.uk www.forcespensionsociety.org



career

MISSING THE CRAIC?



Picture: Cpl Vincent Price, RLC

Know a mate who is too?
Get them back in the fold, troops told

SERVING personnel are being urged to reach out to friends who have left the military and might be interested in rejoining as the army looks to address gaps in capability.

Recruiting bosses have launched a campaign to fast-track returning service leavers, with applicants potentially back in uniform in as little as 100 days, providing they meet certain criteria.

The key target group for the initiative are those under 40, who are medically fit, have left within the last ten years and wish to rejoin their old trade.

Privates and junior NCOs in the Royal Artillery, Household Cavalry, Royal Army Medical Service and Royal Logistic Corps are among the most sought-after cohorts, although openings are available across all cap badges and ranks.

Maj Katie Vannerley (RLC) from Directorate Army Recruiting said while recruitment figures

had increased, this would not immediately help plug gaps further up the chain due to the length of time needed to train personnel.

"You can't grow a corporal overnight, but you can get a rejoiner to fill a post straight away," she continued.

"We want everyone to chat to their mates in the pub, the veterans that they're still in touch with and encourage them to come back.

"Our analysis suggests that people rejoin because things maybe haven't gone the way they expected in civilian life or they genuinely miss the teamwork and camaraderie."

The officer also pointed out that those returning after several years may be attracted by positive changes such as higher basic pay, flexible working policies and the recent uplift of investment in new technologies. A target of 500 rejoinders has been set for the coming year, she added.

Cpl Paul Squires (RLC), who signed on again

in 2022 following an absence of seven years – during which time he travelled in Australia and worked on North Sea oil rigs – described rejoining as a "no-brainer".

"It was not having a purpose that hit me the most," he added.

"I missed the army, wearing the uniform, the craic with the troops, the paid time off, the free dental and medical care – all of it.

"Since being back things have been great. I spent a couple of years at my old regiment, 29 Commando Royal Artillery, again before transferring to the RLC as a photographer.

"The grass wasn't greener for me and I would tell anyone who is thinking of rejoining to do it. It'll feel like you never left."

For full details on the campaign, which is part of Op Investor – the drive to grow the size of the army – read **ABN 007/2026**. Troops who know someone interested in rejoining should direct them to jobs.army.mod.uk

Q&A

LIFE AS A SYSTEMS ANALYST

A LITTLE over two years ago, **SSgt Kieran Read (RLC)** switched from being a logistics specialist to a systems analyst. Now serving at 13th Signal Regiment in Bicester, the 30-year-old told *Soldier* how he got his foot in the door and what a typical day involves...



What does the job entail?

We're the bridge between IT and logistics. We configure hardware and provide comms and networks so that deployed log specialists can access applications and systems in austere environments.

Why did it appeal to you?

I developed a keen interest in IT and just wanted to try something different.

What qualifications do you need?

None, you'll get trained up and learn on the job. You just need to be a substantive sergeant and have at least eight years left to serve. We also take transferees from outside the RLC.

What about personal attributes?

Determination, being willing to get stuck in and good problem-solving skills all help.

Describe a typical day.

You could be in the office or deployed overseas on exercise. I did a two-week installation on a ship in Singapore, which was pretty cool. I've also been to California and people have been to Malta. We support all three services so you could go anywhere.

Does the fact that it's a small trade affect promotion prospects?

I get that question a lot and what I would say



Pictures: Sgt Cameron Eden, RLC



is that I came across in April 2024 and since then I've qualified, promoted to staff sergeant and am now in a warrant officer's role. If you apply yourself, there's no reason why you can't progress.

What's the application process like?

There are four assessments, including a written one, a verbal presentation, a problem-solving exercise and a theory test. Then there's a final interview. If you pass you'll come and do three months in-house training before starting a six-month probation period.

Which pay supplement is the trade in?

Sup two.

Do you think the trade sets you up well for civvy street too?

Yes. There are various qualifications you can do in networking and cyber security and as you go up the ranks you can work towards becoming a chartered fellow within the British Computer Society. People have subsequently gone on to some very well-paid jobs in cyber security and IT consultancy.

'You must be willing to get stuck in'

Interested?
search 'systems analyst' on
Defence Connect

APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME SHOWCASES BRIGHT SPARKS



PERSONNEL are being reminded of the wide-ranging opportunities on offer under the army apprenticeship programme following National Apprenticeship Week.

With more than 40 courses available, from GCSE-level up to degree, the service has been listed as the country's top apprenticeship employer for the past four years.

Army learners have achieved some 115,350 qualifications since 2003, with a success rate of 84 per cent, against a national average of 56 per cent.

Nominations for this year's army apprenticeship awards close on

March 4, with the winners set to be honoured at a ceremony at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in June.

Sig Isaac Queenan, an information service engineer in the Royal Signals who came top in the level four category in the 2025 competition, said his studies had given him "a great sense of achievement and technical knowledge".

"I love the opportunities my apprenticeship has given me, the soldier added.

"Work pushes you to think outside of the box – there is always a different problem to fix or a new exercise to prepare for."

IN NUMBERS:

95%
new recruits who start an apprenticeship

13,100
troops on army apprenticeships at any one time

6,000
courses started each year

Picture: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

skills

THE ARMY 2026 PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

‘THE CONTEST PUTS YOU WITH PROFESSIONALS’

Many soldiers don't realise photography is an army trade. When this one found out, there was no stopping him...

THIS spring, 36-year-old Cpl Ross Gourlay will begin his first posting as an official army photographer. And it all started when he entered last year's Army Photographic Competition.

After being highly commended in the 'amateur portfolio' and 'image of the year' categories, the serviceman was able to get the attention of the trade's professionals.

And having promoted to corporal shortly afterwards, he began the selection process that would see him join the six-month defence visual communicators' course and the ranks of the Royal Logistic Corps.

Due to finish his training next month, the former Royal Engineer explained more about how the career change came about.

"I am actually a rejoiner, having served previously in the Royal Signals," he said. "When I was on Op Herrick 12, I saw an army phot in Afghanistan and that was the moment I realised this was a job in the army; I hadn't known.

"Then I got out and was going to do photography in civvy street, but things never quite panned out.

"I was looking for another service to join – I had a job as a prison officer for a while and



Above **Cpl Ross Gourlay** Left **Two** of his favourite images from his portfolio to date

explored a career with the police – but nothing could deliver what the army did."

Once back in the ranks, the serviceman said that entering his images into the Army Photographic Competition – **WHICH IS OPEN FOR 2026 ENTRIES NOW** – helped him build a profile for his work, with the head-turning snap above right having been used by the army

in various documents and publications.

It is called Fields of Elysian – a reference to an ancient Greek belief in a heroes' paradise bathed in golden light.

Cpl Gourlay added: "The contest puts you into the same sphere as the professionals and helps you align yourself with their standards and the sort of quality required.

"I wasn't expecting to be shortlisted; I know there's a lot of amateur talent out there."

If you want to get your own images noticed by the powers that be, it's not too late.

The deadline for the 2026 contest is April 17.

QUICKFIRE FROM THE CORPORAL

What's the best thing about being a phot?

Telling stories, because it's so powerful and they last forever. Just look at the Bible! Everything the army photographers do goes into our national archives.

What traits do you need?

All the usual soldiering skills, but a lot can be taught. I think the only

thing you really need is to be a people person and happy talking to others.

Advice for anyone interested?

If you've got a camera, bring it to work and use it. You could provide your unit with a great bit of community engagement by creating pics for Insta, and it gives you some great practice too.

HOW TO ENTER

Images taken between February 1, 2025 and April 1, 2026 should be sent to pics@soldiermagazine.co.uk

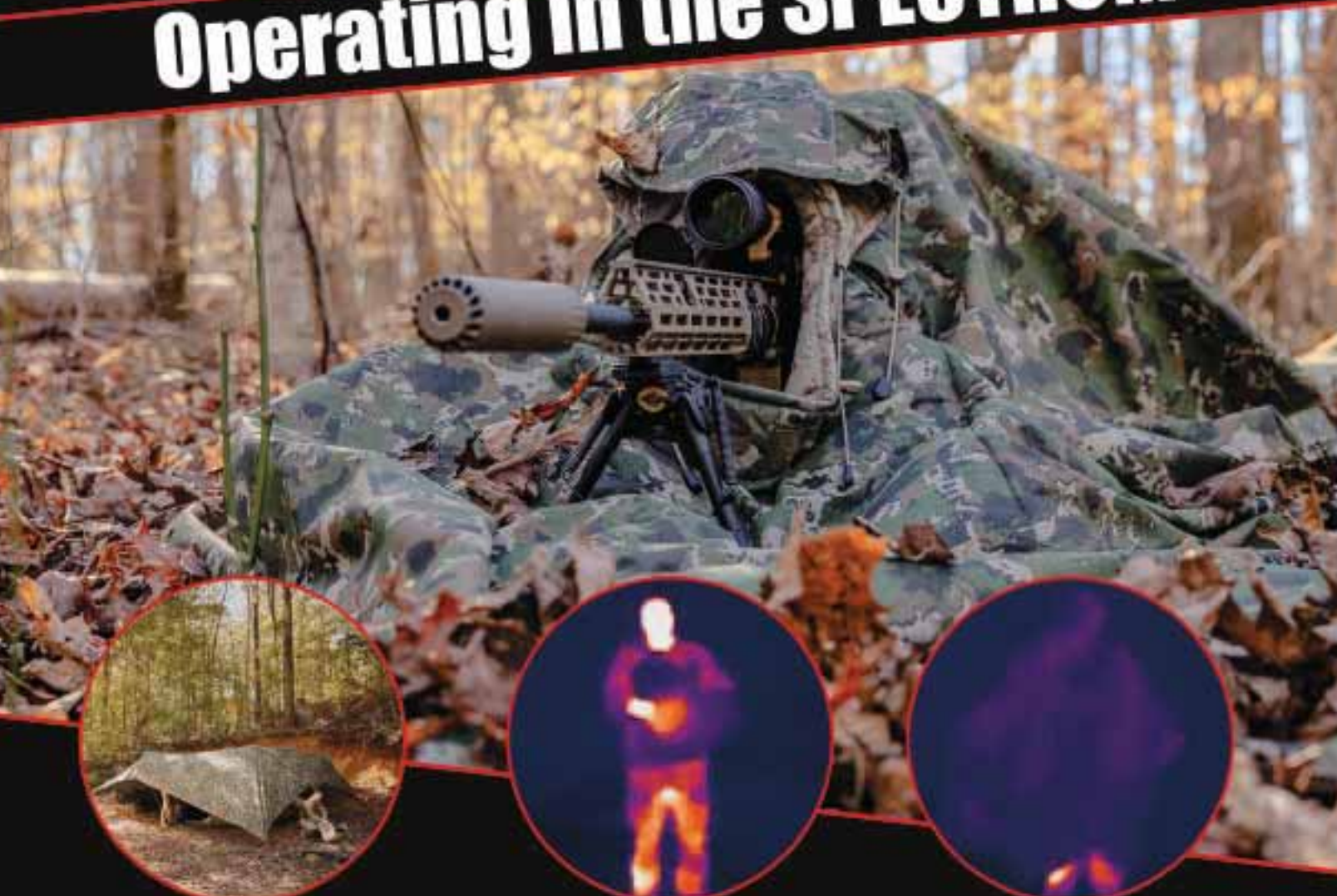
Categories open to non-professionals are **Amateur Photographer of the Year** (four pics), **People/Portrait** (one pic) and **Capability** (one equipment pic).

Judging is in May and by entering you give the MoD permission to use/distribute the image under Crown Copyright.

LEVEL PEAKS



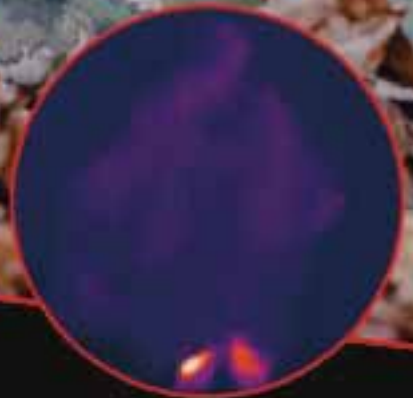
Operating in the SPECTRUM



MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS



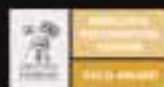
BEFORE



AFTER

STEALTH

PRODUCTS GROUP



Always Delivering the Advantage



diary dates

3

French high

COMMANDERS from 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team will be reflecting on lessons learnt at the end of a high-intensity fortnight in France. Exercise Orion is thought to be the host country's largest series of manoeuvres since the Cold War. The package saw thousands of soldiers from 24 nations mobilised, including members of the 2 Para Battlegroup (pictured) and a troop from the Pathfinders. New tech, including drones, was also in action. Read more in our April issue.



Picture: Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC



4

Netball mission

AN eighth successive title will be the focus for the army as they return to action at the Inter-Services Netball Championships. The soldiers made short work of their rivals last time out as they downed the Royal Air Force 51-17 and Royal Navy 54-29 to seal the silverware. Such form means they start the 2026 campaign as heavy favourites.

Picture: Mark Deller



8

Female focus

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day will take on extra significance this year as the British Army celebrates having a woman serving in every rank for the first time (page 9). What are the biggest issues facing female soldiers in 2026? Read our feature from page 42, where we interview servicewomen at every rank to find out.

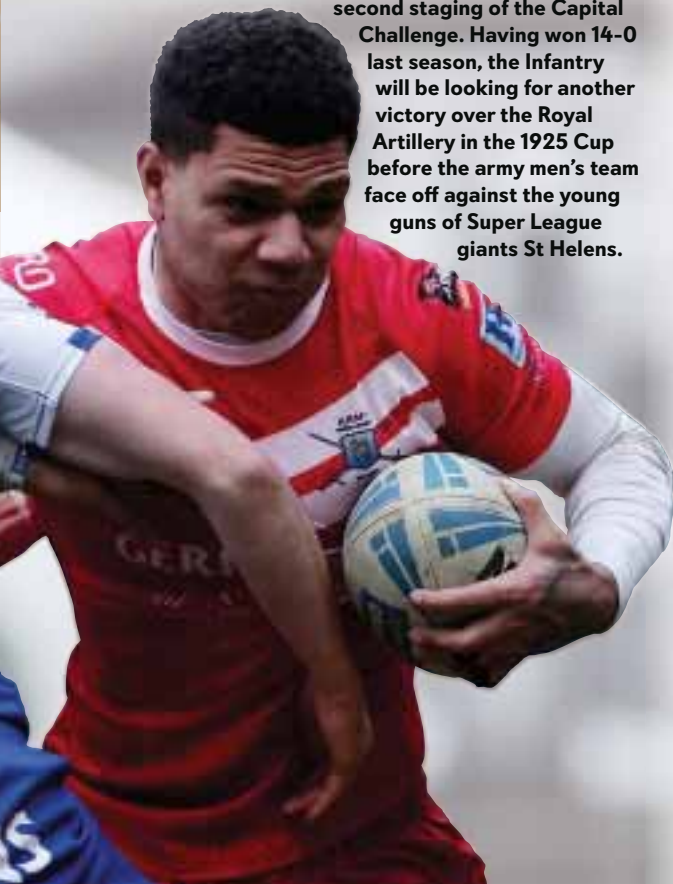


Picture: Cpl Vincent Price, RLC

11

London calling

THE Army Rugby League set-up returns to the home of The Honourable Artillery Company for the second staging of the Capital Challenge. Having won 14-0 last season, the Infantry will be looking for another victory over the Royal Artillery in the 1925 Cup before the army men's team face off against the young guns of Super League giants St Helens.



Picture: Graeme Main

18

Newcomers face strength test

THE first UK Armed Forces Strongest Female Novice Championships will be staged at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, near York. Around 30 beginners will compete in various weight categories across five events, with an all-female delivery team running the day. The winners will be invited to the full UKAF Strongest Woman contest in April.



23

Leavers listen up

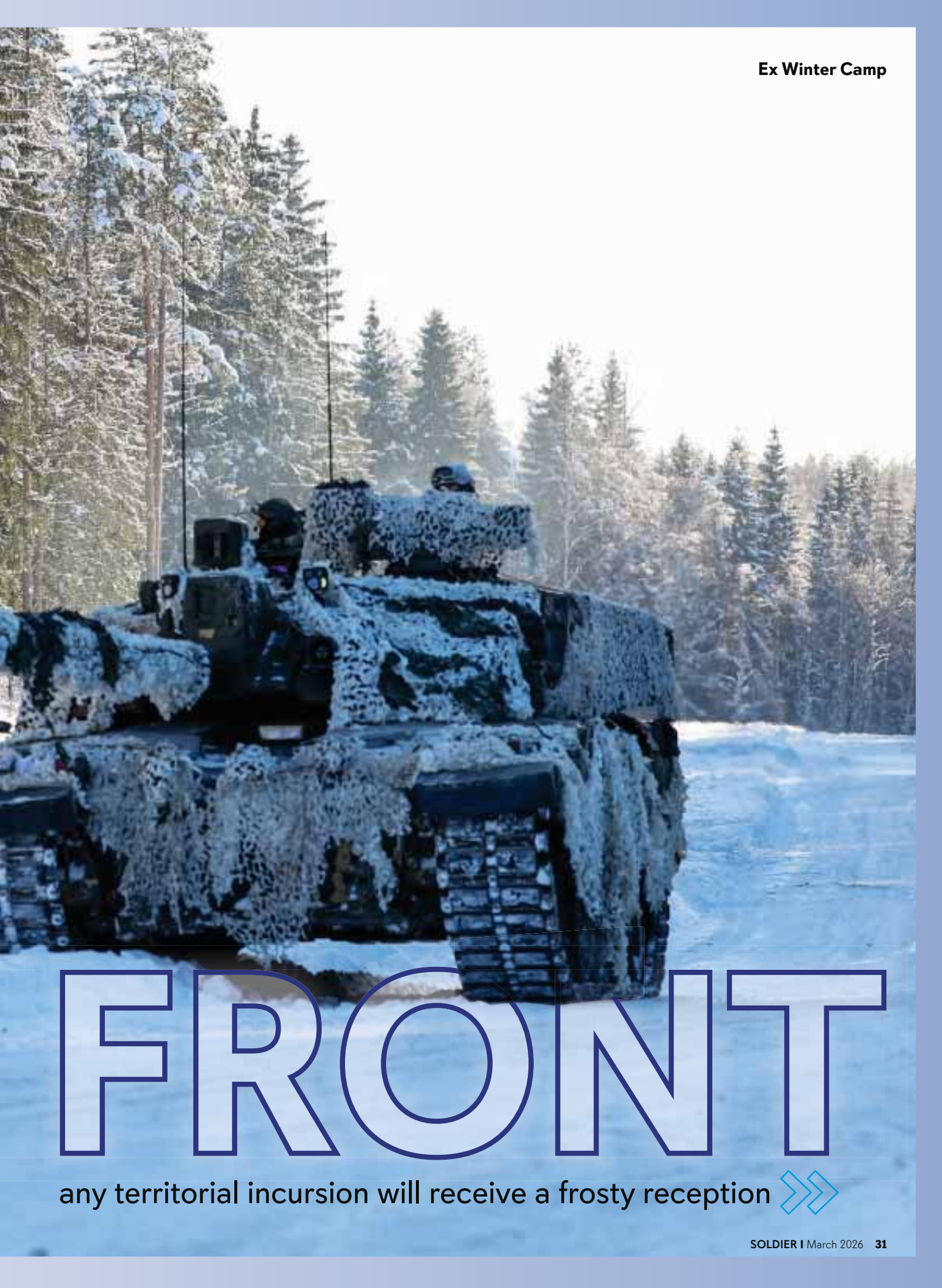
OUTGOING troops plotting their next career move are invited to a free event showcasing the leadership roles available at UK boarding schools. It's being staged by the Boarding School Association in Mercers' Hall, London from 0930 to 1130 and anyone wishing to attend is asked to email bsa@boarding.org.uk by March 19.



Report: Cliff Caswell and Richard Long Pictures: Beth Proddger

COLD

Tankie-led Estonia mission ensures that



FRONT

any territorial incursion will receive a frosty reception







THE COST of underestimating Eastern Europe’s killer cold has been starkly shown on past military campaigns.

In 1812, Napoleon Bonaparte’s invasion of Russia ended in catastrophe when – amid overstretched resupply routes – his troops were left without adequate kit to deal with the onset of winter.

With snow hindering the fighting power of artillery and cavalry, the final retreat saw hypothermia and climate-related injuries kill thousands of his ill-equipped personnel.

More than a century later – in the Second World War – Nazi leader Adolf Hitler failed to learn from these errors, pushing his logistic chain to breaking point.

Spurred by delusions of a quick victory against the Soviet Union on Op Barbarossa, a modern military force was savaged by nature.

And while the weather was not the decisive factor in either defeat, it nonetheless played a significant and – literally – killer role.

With any future European war inevitably meaning combat in the same extreme cold conditions, commanders with the Royal Tank Regiment-led Nato battlegroup on Op Cabrit in Estonia very much had the lessons of history at the forefront of their minds.

And the two-week Exercise Winter Camp was yet another opportunity to ensure the multinational force was fit to fight in this environment.

“The reports are that this is the coldest winter in Estonia for 25 years,” said Lt Col Mark Luson, RTR commanding officer and boss of the forward land forces formation, as personnel took to the frigid training area in Tapa.

“The temperature out here has been around minus 25 degrees and below.”

With Cabrit’s six-monthly tour rotations in place for a decade now, these manoeuvres have become a regular

feature of the schedule there.

Ramping up with the cold weather operator’s course, the training cycle begins with the issuing of specialist kit, including freeze-dried based ration packs, warm clothing, boots and tents.

Classroom sessions on the realities of below-zero conditions follow in short order.

Soldiers then move outdoors to perfect skills that include building shelters and butchering chicken as they progress through survival disciplines.

The phase culminates in a notorious plunge into an icy pool, after which they go through job-specific serials before tackling the combined arms Winter Camp showdown against a live opposing force.

And the full-on training package this year provided a terrifyingly steep learning curve.

Facing a mock enemy that included Estonian forces, infanters from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment (see page 37) and US tank crews with the fearsome M1 Abrams, the Nato forces needed to dig deep to match the enemy.

But Lt Col Luson (pictured right) said opportunities opened up as a result of the freezing weather.

While tanks can throw up operational issues – not least with diesel turning to jelly while refuelling at low temperatures – he said the crews functioned well.

He also pointed out that the boggy terrain of the Estonian countryside became firmer and much more armour-friendly in the winter months.

“The reality is that the ground hardens and enables greater >>





» movement,” he told *Soldier*.

“We’ve seen that from the Russians in Ukraine, so we need to continue to practise this on our side as well – understanding that we can continue to fight through regardless of whether the temperature is 25 degrees above or 25 below.”

Having allies around with experience of the extreme climate conditions was also invaluable, the commanding officer stressed, adding that there was a particularly valuable exchange of knowledge with cold-

weather experts from the host nation.

“From the Estonians, we have learned everything from the very simplest things – such as how to rewarm yourself and dress appropriately with layers through to how we equip our tanks and make sure that fuel doesn’t freeze,” he added.

Lt Fred Crawshaw (RTR), who acted as a liaison officer with a French company during the deployment, shared the sentiment.

The force from across the Channel had Alpine

specialists in the line-up, so working in extremes was more embedded in their corporate knowledge.

"We took a lot away from them - even being up-close with their equipment and vehicles," he explained.

"They were operating armour in Estonia, including the AMX-10 light tank, although their workhorse was the Griffin, similar to Boxer."

Lt Crawshaw added that unmanned aerial systems played a critical role in Estonia - with troops operating one-way attack first person view platforms and recce kit.

In particular, a drone centre - which was set up early on in the tour - had proved a game changer.

Equipped with PC simulators, it attracted troops who willingly spent their downtime piling up digital flying hours and increasing proficiency.

A 3D printer meant crews were also able to create new parts.

"It has been wonderful to see troops train in their own time," said Lt Crawshaw.

"The fact we have been applying learning from >>



Overseas assignment?

Say connected and save on roaming costs with a travel eSIM

10% off with code **SOL10**



wifinitymobile.co.uk

Wifinity customer? Log into 'My Account' to get your 20% off code

» the ongoing conflict in Ukraine provided an added incentive and a definite spur to the deployment.”

While the cold proved tough, the junior officer said soldiers had been encouraged to speak up if they had any issues.

Removing the stigma of struggling had ensured any health problems could be addressed early on and casualties kept to a minimum.

“A key theme that has come from this training is that you must have a balance between tactics and survivability in tough conditions,” he concluded.

“It has been hard, but we have learnt a lot and have a good knowledge to pass on to those coming out; soldiers have put in a great deal and gained a lot in return – the conditions of this tour have been both a high and a low.”

This was certainly the case for Lt Jack Austin (Mercian), who added: “I have never seen so much thick snow in my life – but in terms of developing, this is going to set us up well, not just here but when we return to the UK.”

Winter Camp was certainly physically and mentally draining – operating in these extremes dulls the senses and impacts on all-round performance.

A Royal Welsh-led battlegroup is arriving shortly and face the prospect of a more comfortable summer. But there is no escaping the fact that any protracted conflict in Eastern Europe will mean extremes of cold.

Like Adolf Hitler before him, Russian leader Vladimir Putin is already dealing with another winter of an illegal four-year war that he expected to be over in weeks.

Clearly, it pays to learn the right lessons. <<

Poachers enter the fray

FORMING the opposition to the Royal Tank Regiment battlegroup were personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

Currently deployed in Poland on Op Cabrit – where they are operating alongside US, Romanian, Croatia and Polish allies as part of Nato’s forward land forces – the Poachers’ intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance group travelled north to test their British counterparts in the shivering depths of the Estonian winter.

Featuring anti-tank and patrols platoons, along with fire support teams and mobile surveillance capabilities from 4th and 5th Regiments, Royal Artillery, the 100-strong formation excelled – despite temperatures dipping below -20 degrees Celsius.

“Being opfor gave us massive freedom,” Capt Hamish MacKellar, OC of the anti-tank platoon, told *Soldier*.

“Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland are what the army classes as complex terrain.

That is the home of the Infantry and where we have a big advantage.

“There was no exercise script to stick to; we were given an objective, and the idea was to make it happen as we saw fit.

“We ran a series of complex ambushes that were led at the lowest levels by detachment and section commanders, who were encouraged to seize opportunities on the ground.

“Every time the blue forces came to advance, they were up against an enemy they could not see or identify, and we were able to make really good use of our artillery via the fire support teams.

“There is a great sense of professional pride in doing our job to such a high standard.

“The more difficult we are to counter as an opfor, the better the training we are providing for those who could be on our right or left flank in the future.”

Cpl Elliot Elmer, a detachment commander in the anti-tank platoon, was among those

who rose to the challenge.

“We managed to delay the battlegroup for hours,” he explained. “A company of blokes holding up a whole battlegroup.

“When they didn’t dismount and the Warriors came along, they were easy to engage. We were in a woodblock and were able to move and attack from different areas.

“We did the cold weather operators’ course before we deployed and found that beneficial in terms of surviving and doing our jobs properly. It showed that our admin and discipline had to be on point.

“It was my first experience in an environment like this and that package was a real help.”

The Poachers’ Jackal and Coyote vehicles also stood up to the test of performing in austere conditions, as did the personnel in the face of a considerable drone threat.

“We’ve been refining our counter-UAS measures for the past year or so,” Capt MacKellar continued. “We went on Wessex Storm before coming here and that was the most drone concentrated exercise ever staged on Salisbury Plain.

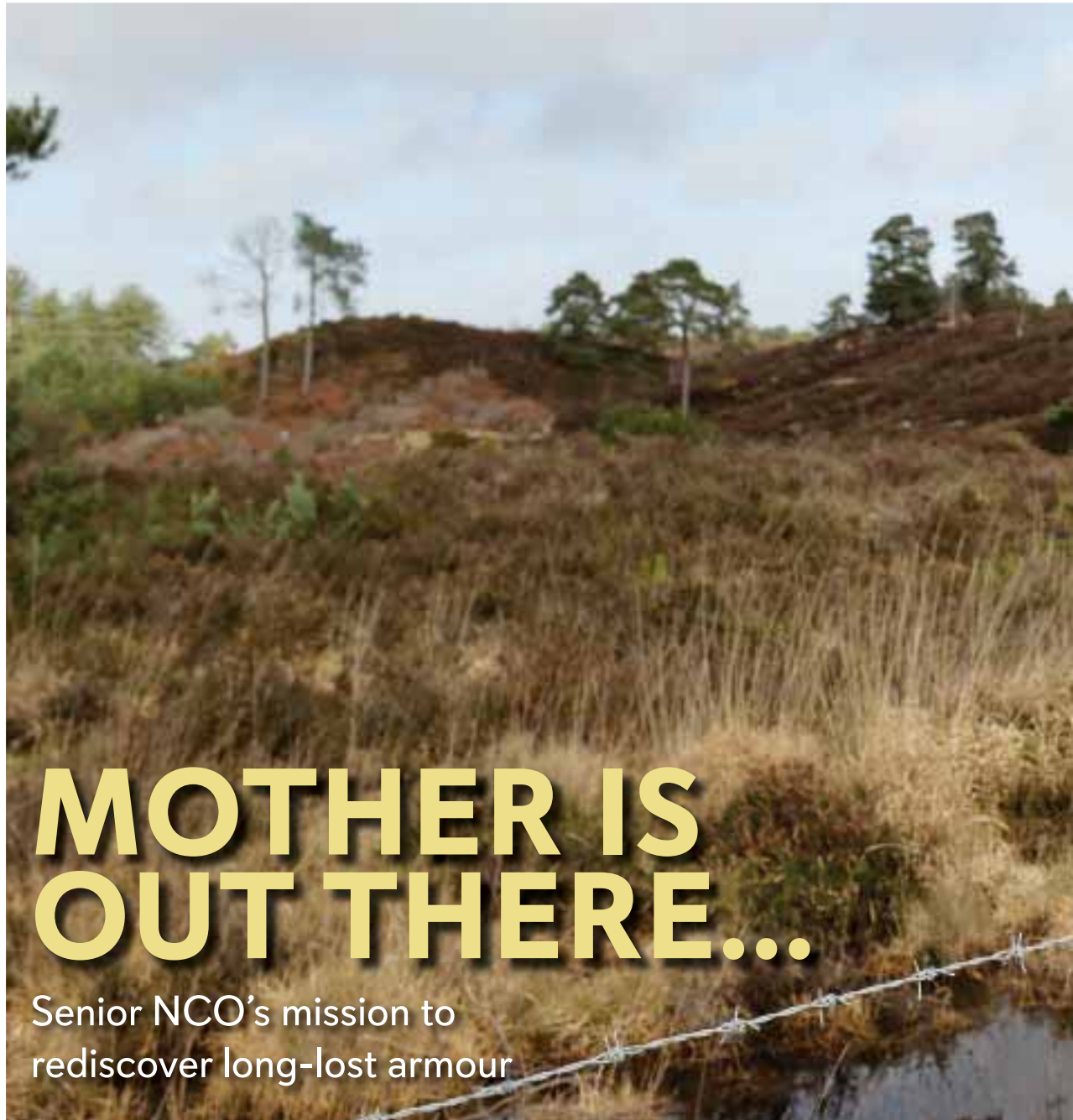
“It is about using thermal sheets, camo nets and deception and being comfortable when detached from your vehicle – that is kilometres away – and operating at distance.

“They performed very well.”

And while acknowledging the efforts of his troops, the officer was also impressed with the standards shown by the RTR battlegroup.

“As opfor it is easy to win when your objective is to simply stop them achieving theirs,” he concluded. “But they were very well practised and put in an absolute shift. The exercise proved that as Nato land forces we can inter-operate at every level.”





MOTHER IS OUT THERE...

Senior NCO's mission to rediscover long-lost armour

BACK in 1915, with British and German troops locked in a gruesome stalemate along the Western Front, boffins were racing to develop a weapon that could break the deadlock – a machine capable of crossing the trench-riddled landscape while withstanding intense small-arms fire.

Their hastily conceived solution – the tank – would lumber into battle for the first time by September the following year and eventually, with ongoing refinements, not only help turn the tide of the conflict but usher in a new age of mechanised warfare.

Little could those early tank crews have imagined that more than a century later, the basic technology would still be in service, or that one of their descendants would have set out to solve a tantalising historical mystery linked to their pioneering work.

SSgt Anthony 'Chez' Cherrett (KRH) has spent the last five years trying to establish

Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main





the whereabouts of the long-lost prototype known as Mother - the first rhomboid shaped fighting tank that became the basis for the subsequent Mark I model.

The senior NCO's interest was piqued in 2020 during a Tank Museum livestream discussing the vehicle's fate. Brought to Bovington after the war, she was parked up alongside other historically significant platforms but disappeared without trace in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

Taking up the story, the 40-year-old explains: "The general consensus is that she was scrapped in the salvage metal drive of the Second World War but there are anecdotal stories that she was saved by being buried somewhere on Bovington Camp.

"I was about to start work at the Armoured Trials and Development Unit, so I thought I could use my free time to investigate whether there was any truth to it and began digging around.

"She's so historically important. It would be >>



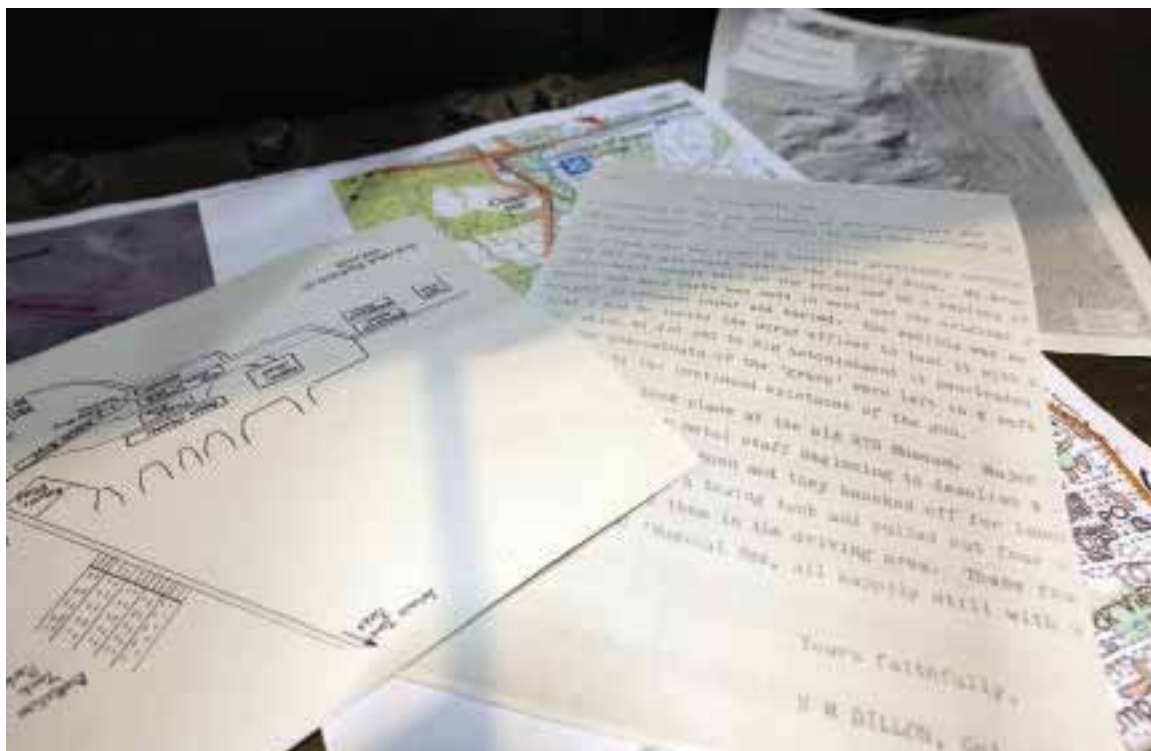
Right, below **The Mother** prototype heralded a battle-winning weapon still at the core of modern armies



WANTED: HAVE YOU SEEN THIS TANK?

THIS is what is being hunted by SSgt Cherrett. Made in 1915, Mother was the first rhomboid shaped tank with tracks running all the way round the vehicle – the template for the platforms that later saw combat during the First World War.

A previous rectangular prototype was the first working tank in the world but its design was obsolete almost as soon as it was built. Dubbed 'Little Willie', it is on display at Bovington's Tank Museum.



Left **Letters and other documents discovered by SSgt Cherrett suggest Mother was saved from scrap by burial at Bovington**
 Below left **A scene showing First World War armour recreated at the Tank Museum**



objects so they're confident if she's there, we'll find her."

A crowdfunding campaign has so far raised £8,500 towards the effort, but a total of £20,000 is needed to complete the work. All findings will be shared publicly and anyone interested in Operation Mother, as the project is known, can also follow the team's progress on social media (see below).

SSgt Cherrett says the ultimate goal, should they be successful, is not just to recover Mother physically, but to preserve the story of her creation and legacy for future generations.

"This journey is not just about a vehicle, it's about honouring the ingenuity of those who brought her to life and the courage of the troops who fought and continue to fight in armoured fighting vehicles," he concludes.

"She's the most important tank in the history of the Royal Armoured Corps - there was no RAC before she was made and it would blow people's minds if we find her." <<

>> a shame if she is sat on my doorstep for me not to spend some time trying to find her."

Through initial enquiries, SSgt Cherrett was able to trace the origin of the rumour to a previous Tank Museum workshop foreman whose father had allegedly been involved in hiding Mother in 1940.

But lacking tangible evidence, he and co-researcher Craig Joynes began scouring archives around the country for letters, photographs and documents, as well as tapping up military historians, authors, archaeologists and fellow tank enthusiasts.

A breakthrough came in the form of correspondence in the *Tank Journal* referencing the burial of four old tanks, including Mother.

Believing the author - a Lt Col Dillon - to be a credible source, the pair launched the next phase of the quest: a physical search of the camp.

"The letter was the closest piece of

evidence other than a map with 'X marks the spot' written on it", continues SSgt Cherrett.

"But the next question was where to start looking. Bovington is a big place.

"We've narrowed it down to the driver training area - luckily I found some aerial photography from 1941, which is close to the date we believe she went in the ground.

"But the area has been used by the military for more than a hundred years - there's a lot of metal out there so it's not just a question of getting your metal detectors out.

"And as enthusiastic and as committed as I am, I'm not qualified to carry out the investigation myself.

"I've employed a professional archaeology team to conduct the search using advanced drone-mounted technologies such as ground-penetrating radar and magnetometer survey kits, along with other non-intrusive techniques.

"They usually look for much smaller

Search 'Operation Mother' on Facebook to follow the project and on [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com) to donate

ALL

RANKS

It's official, the British Army has – for the first time ever – got females serving at every level (page 9). To mark this impressive milestone, we took a journey up the ranks to find out what life is like for the ladies in 2026...

Pte

Name: Jessica King, RLC

Bio: Driver and member of East Midlands Recruiting Outreach Team

Years in: 5

What's great about serving? Getting to do fitness as part of my job and going away on courses to improve myself.

What isn't? In my trade you're constantly competing against lots of other people for promotion. It's frustrating if you don't come off the board because progressing up the ranks is what it's all about at the end of the day.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

We need more, so they can support each other. A good example is there not being many female PTIs. A male instructor isn't going to be able to advise me on the best sports bra, for example.

LCpl

Name: LBdr Annie Robertson, RA

Bio: Artillery command system lance bombardier and women's health advocate

Years in: 11

What's great about serving? The friendships and family you form – I met my husband in the army.

What isn't? Sometimes I feel looked down on. Now that I'm a mum, I also find the family separation difficult.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

Health. We need to be taken more seriously – both by medical professionals and also those dealing with inappropriate behaviour. The latter hasn't affected me, but it's clear more still needs to change. Women's voices need to be heard more.

Cpl

Name: Lisha Limbu, RAMS

Bio: Combat medical technician with 13 Air Assault Support Regiment

Years in: 8

What's great about serving? Working with different trades, and the opportunity to deploy to many countries and experience multiple cultures.

What isn't? Not being present for loved ones. There are many birthdays, Christmas celebrations, graduations and other special days when we just can't make it.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: We all have very different experiences depending on job, seniors and the working environment. But there are failures in the complaints system; females sometimes fear a negative impact on their careers.



'There is a strong sense of community'

Sgt

Name: Rhiannon Maxwell, RAMS

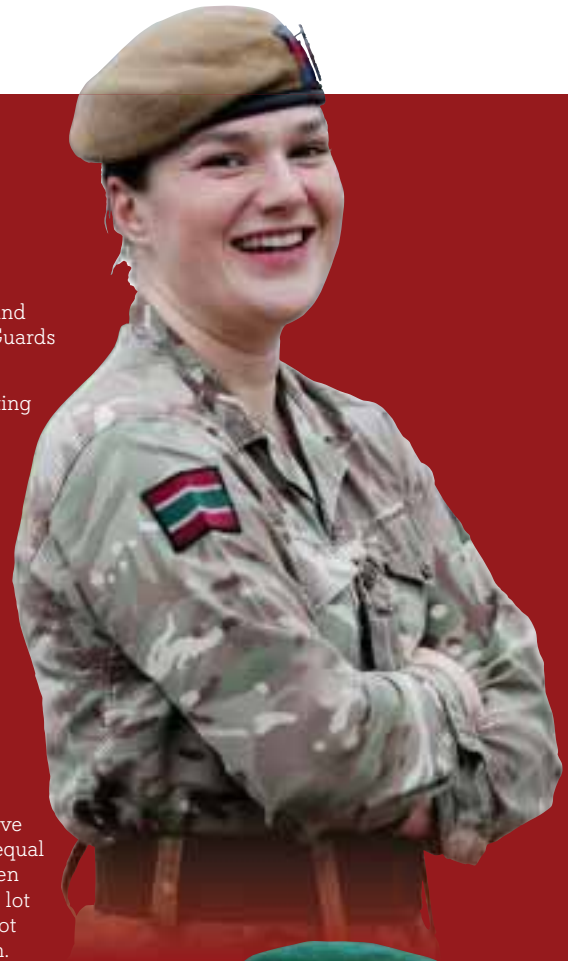
Bio: Regimental aid post sergeant and women's network rep for the Irish Guards

Years in: 9

What's great about serving? Meeting so many different kinds of people and all the opportunities that provides. There is a strong sense of community in the army which feels unique.

What isn't? The workload can be constant. The army has shrunk and a lot of job roles cross over now. And obviously the more senior you get, this affects your social life. The military is so busy at the moment.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: Fighting misconceptions. Men who may not think you're as capable, for example, or who don't realise we have to overcome more just to be on an equal platform with them. Perceptions often shift when they find a partner, but a lot of soldiers are very young and do not yet know some things about women.



SSgt

Name: Jodi Stickland, AGC (SPS)

Bio: Has served with Nato and units including the RHA. Currently attached to the RDG and a promoter of menopause awareness

Years in: 16

What's great about serving? Structured career progression with opportunities for leadership. You gain transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and resilience that are valuable in civilian life.

What isn't? Frequent relocations. Extended time away from home places additional strain on relationships.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: While progress has been made, we must push for stronger awareness and action on women's health and wellbeing - especially in critical areas like menstrual health, pregnancy, and menopause. These topics deserve open dialogue, proper resources, and policies that truly support females throughout their careers.





WO1

Name: Hayley Cornforth, AGC (SPS)

Bio: Regimental Sergeant Major, AFC Harrogate and co-chair of the Army Servicewomen's Network

Years in: 25

What's great about serving?

How much it has changed over the 25 years I have been in - for example, with the introduction of women into the Infantry. I would have chosen this role 25 years ago.

What isn't? We're more inclusive and diverse than we were, but we can always do better. People sometimes fear repercussions when challenging females, but we should be able to challenge without fear of complaints.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

Personnel not embracing the changes that are happening or misunderstanding policy direction designed to help females.



2LT

Name: Megan Meager, RE

Bio: On the six-month Royal Engineers troop commanders' course

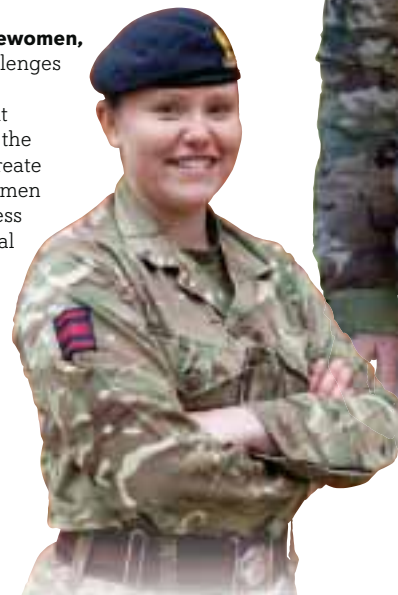
Years in: 1

What's great about serving? No two days are ever the same and the variety means you're constantly learning and adapting. It also offers the chance to live in different locations. Despite my short time serving, I can see how working alongside people with the same drive and values creates a strong sense of camaraderie.

What isn't? Although moving jobs every two years is exciting, it's hard to plan for the future as you don't always know where you'll be.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

There are still challenges around assumptions and gender bias. For example, much of the kit and equipment is designed with the male body in mind, which can create practical disadvantages. And women are sometimes presumed to be less physically capable. The additional effort many women invest to meet the same standards is not always fully recognised or understood.



'There has been huge progress'

WO2

Name: Charlotte Spence, RAPTC

Bio: Exercise rehab instructor and World Crossfit Games competitor

Years in: 20

What's great about serving? Job security, education and travel. But the best thing for me has been the opportunity to develop physical and mental resilience and be around likeminded individuals.

What isn't? A military career can be difficult and not conducive to family life, especially if both partners are serving.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

Men not knowing how to treat women in or under their command. In the past, I have received a pat on the head and an arm around me from the chain of command. And while these were meant kindly, they can be undermining in a way that isn't even realised. Another issue is the challenges women face exercising authority. It can be received differently than it might be from men. When communicating directives, it can be perceived as being 'bossy' rather than simply doing the job, and may be met with barriers.



LT

Name: Victoria Carr, Int Corps

Bio: Reservist and senior research fellow at the Centre for Army Leadership

Years in: 6

What's great about serving? That it still means something - and values are not just spoken about but lived daily. The army is also one of the most powerful vehicles for social mobility and personal development in the country.

What isn't? The friction of change inside a hierarchical system where culture inevitably lags behind policy. This requires resilience and determination - luckily, I have both.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

While women can now serve in every role, the harder question is whether they are allowed to lead authentically once they get there. We must also be prepared to challenge poor behaviour wherever it sits, including within our own ranks. That requires confidence, honesty and leadership maturity - not just policy and slogans.

Capt

Name: Hebe Grout, Rifles

Bio: ZiC of B Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles

Years in: 4

What's great about serving? Working with the riflemen will always be the best part of serving, alongside the unique opportunities for personal and professional development.

What isn't? It's not always comfortable - the unrelenting tempo, uncertainty and high standards can be demanding. But with this comes resilience, challenge and a constant sense of momentum and fulfilment.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

There aren't enough of us yet, particularly in the junior ranks. There has been huge progress in opening roles up and creating opportunity, but we need to ensure the drive to recruit and retain talented servicewomen is consistent.



Maj

Name: Stephanie Shallow, QDG

Bio: Squadron leader and first female to command a regular Royal Armoured Corps sabre squadron

Years in: 13

What's great about serving? Working with soldiers and people from different backgrounds; and the variety of roles and opportunities available - there aren't many jobs that pay you to do adventurous training!

What isn't? The quantity of work. A smaller but more committed army consumes all available capacity, which does not leave much space for creativity.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: There is still a lot of reluctance to accept that we bring something different to the party. We think and act differently and are biologically different so have different needs - not better, not worse, just different. In the struggle to belong and be accepted, many women will not admit this, which in turn prevents men from doing so and hinders progress. We (women) need to be better at celebrating being women.





Lt Col

Name: Samantha Dodge, RLC

Bio: SO1 Lessons Fusions Cell, Army Personnel Services Group and co-chair of the Army Servicewomen's Network

Years in: 26

What's great about serving? The excitement, opportunity, travel, sport and friendships.

What isn't? It can take a long time to implement change.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: Behaviours. Low-level misogynist behaviours like wolf-whistling if unchallenged can create a permissive environment that allows bad stuff like sexual assault to happen. Through education, training and having difficult conversations we can all create a happy and safe working environment where everyone can thrive.

'Things have changed so much over 25 years'

Col

Name: Lyndsey Kelly

Bio: Assistant Head Cultural Improvement, Army Personnel Services Group

Years in: 25

What's great about serving? The adventure, excitement, and knowing that every day is going to be different.

What isn't? It can be challenging being out of your comfort zone sometimes.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: We need more of us - there are not enough. Until you have lots of women joining the army, we cannot have lots of us moving up the ranks!



Brig

Name: Melissa Emmett

Bio: Head Army Personnel Services Group

Years in: 28

What's great about serving? Always the people. Our very particular brand of good humour and commitment to one another has continually made me want to come to work.

What isn't? The challenge of mobility - changing jobs every few years is essential to building skills and experience for more senior appointments, but as much as it brings opportunity it can mean we have to work hard to keep friendships and relationships going.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: As Hd APSG, many would expect me to comment on cultural factors, but that sits within a bigger picture of our ability to prepare ourselves for ops and war. All servicewomen must be involved in the preparation of themselves and those they lead by being properly trained, equipped for them - not just to a standard size - and included in decisions.



Maj Gen

Name: Lizzie Faithfull-Davies

Bio: Director Land Equipment, Defence Equipment and Support

Years in: 27

What's great about serving? The variety of opportunities and the amazing people I have had the privilege to work with.

What isn't? Sitting behind a computer screen. At a more senior rank it becomes harder to spend quality time with your soldiers and on all the other important activities you need to do. For example, I am president of army netball but it can be hard to schedule the time to support.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

I have seen so much change in the time I have been serving. I think the opportunities are there, but sometimes it is challenging to see visible and accessible role models. These individuals don't have to be female, but someone who realises there are different routes to greatness and allows their servicewomen to flourish.



Lt Gen

Name: Anna-Lee Reilly

Bio: Director General Core Delivery, Defence Equipment and Support

Years in: 29

What's great about serving? For me it's the sense of purpose - what we do genuinely matters because it directly affects those on the front line. The people are the other constant; talented, committed soldiers and civilians. I have also benefited from the army's development opportunities: leadership, study, sport, industry experience and overseas deployments. Service gives perspective, reminding you that leadership is about people not rank, and that progress comes from teamwork in support of something bigger.

What isn't? Military life asks a lot of you and those around you, but it also strengthens the bonds that matter the most.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it: Our army system wasn't originally designed with women in mind, but it is improving. For years, a default male model shaped data, equipment, and assumptions about how soldiers lived and worked. Women do not want special treatment, just well designed basics. When kit fits properly, standards are based on evidence and policies anticipate problems rather than react to them, we all benefit. If everyone can bring their best selves to work, everyone gains.

Gen

Name: Dame Sharon Nesmith

Bio: Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

Years in: 33

What's great about serving?

The strong sense of purpose it gives me - knowing that what I do genuinely matters. Being part of a close-knit team - where everyone relies on each other and works towards a shared goal - is incredibly motivating and rewarding.

What isn't? There is a broad spectrum of uniforms across services, cap badges and units which can lead to many change parades and understanding what the 'female equivalent' is.

Biggest issue facing our servicewomen, as you see it:

Ensuring we create the environment for our women to feel fabulous about the contribution they make. Part of this is about being a strong and talented woman in a male-dominated environment.



WHAT NEXT?

THE Army Servicewomen's Network will stage their annual conference on **June 23** at Cheltenham Racecourse. Look out for an army briefing note or join the network via samantha.dodge733@mod.gov.uk

GOING TO GROUND



Military analysts show their mettle as infantrymen – and learn some valuable lessons for their own role

THERE is a saying – which has echoed around the ranks of the British Army for generations – that everybody is a soldier first, whatever their role or trade.

While repeated to the point of cliché, the statement has been well proven over the years. In Iraq, clerks from the Staff and Personnel Support branch of the Adjutant General's Corps often acted as search operatives at vehicle checkpoints, while loggie crews fought to get resupply convoys through Taliban ambushes in Afghanistan.

When the chips are down and boots on the ground are needed, troops of all cap badges must step up and do the basics well.

Now – with the service squarely refocusing on conventional warfighting – analysts from Catterick-based 1 Military Intelligence Battalion have become the latest to take the soldier first ethos a step further, hitting

trenches at Marne Barracks to get a feel for the battlespace, up-close and personal.

“These troops play an important role in the army, but the nature of the job means they spend a lot of time behind their desks – many of them will never have done close combat work of this type,” Sgt Aaron Wood (R Yorks), an experienced infantry instructor attached to the outfit, tells *Soldier*.

“The idea behind Exercise Aetos Trench was to provide the personnel with a greater awareness of how things actually look out on the ground – and apply this knowledge to their own work in terms of generating intelligence products.”

The trench serials certainly gave the analysts a first-person investment in the hectic situations faced by their infantry counterparts in a close-quarters battle. Sgt Wood adds.

They took part in target recce scenarios and later on, as darkness fell, had the



Report: Cliff Caswell | Pictures: SSgt Robert Weideman, RLC







‘You need to be good at green skills’



» chance to get hands on experience with the army’s night vision equipment.

“As a rule, analysts would only do infantry stuff on a general level as part of their individual training requirements - but these trench serials gave them more of an insight,” the NCO continues.

“The booking process for the training area was straightforward so it was an easy win - we had a good three days on exercise as we gave the soldiers an opportunity to try out fighting as individuals, in fire teams and as a full section.”

In all, around 40 military intelligence personnel from Catterick and regimental hubs in Cottesmore and Colchester took part in the training, Sgt Wood says, adding that his team are now considering how they can develop the exercise in future.

“Everyone was incredibly positive - they were enthusiastic about the different serials and performed well,” he concludes.

The second-in-command of 1 MI Battalion was equally pleased with the outcome of the training and confident it would help with day-to-day business.

The major, who cannot be named for

operational reasons, adds: “You need to be good at the green skills so these types of activities are very useful.

“While the trench exercises are not part of the normal syllabus, they will develop our soldiers’ understanding of the tactics, training and procedures used by the infantry - allowing them to better support formations with intelligence.

“I’ve heard from those coming back from training that they learned a great deal.”

The phrase “doing the basics well” has never had more of a resonance than now, at a time when the world is volatile, in a state of flux and the prospect of armed confrontation is more real than at any other point in the recent past.

It is a mantra of Army Sergeant Major WO1 John Miller, who stresses that every soldier must be on top of their game if the service is to double its fighting power over the course of 2026 and treble it by the end of the decade.

As Exercise Aetos Trench shows, mastering the basics not only improves combat effectiveness, it promotes a wider understanding of the battlespace too. <<



IN NUMBERS
Ex Aetos Trench

40

Military analysts involved

3

Days in the field
at Marne Barracks

FORCE

TO BE RECKONED WITH

Ocean rowers reflect on their Atlantic achievements



Interviews: Richard Long Pictures: World's Toughest Row

AFTER a mammoth slog across the Atlantic Ocean, the soldiers comprising the army's official entry in the World's Toughest Row have been enjoying some well-deserved downtime on home shores.

The Force Atlantic crew – Bombardiers Katie Devine, Vicki Wratten-Wood and Olie Cutting, plus Gunner Emma McKenzie, all of 12th Regiment, Royal Artillery – completed their 3,000-mile voyage from the Canary Islands to Antigua in just over 46 days, becoming the service's first junior ranks team to master the gruelling race.

Here, Bdr Cutting and skipper Bdr Devine share their experiences from a journey of a lifetime...

THE PHYSICAL TEST

Cutting: The rowing was the easiest part; the crossing was more of a mental test. With a year of training our bodies were so conditioned that it was almost like sitting down and having a rest. As a PTI I oversaw the training, but I had never heard of ocean rowing before this, let alone trained for it. We started with functional fitness followed by resilience training and then did a lot of specific rowing work on ergometers, while looking at technique. Once we got on the water the PT tailed off and as soon as the boat was shipped the focus was on injury prevention before the start. The army gave us a

year to train, so we knew our strengths and weaknesses.

Devine: We would have struggled had we not trained the way we did. Sometimes you would wake up, and it felt like you had a broken arm. Then you'd go to sleep again, and it would go, but then there was a pain somewhere else. Because we were constantly overdoing it everyone got aches, but it was never anything too serious. Being part of a team, you cannot think of yourself; you get in the cabin, do your stretches and look after your body – if not, you put others at risk.

MENTAL BARRIER

Cutting: The first week was tough. I've been away with the army many times but had never felt homesick until now. You saw the other boats for the first 12 hours or so and after that we were isolated. But instead of letting it eat me up, I accepted it and stayed present in what I was doing. Eventually that feeling went away. You know there will be dark moments and being able to talk it through with other members of the team helped.

Devine: Having a good support system at home worked wonders for me. I could speak to my partner about everything, and it was good to have someone on the outside who could think about things with a clear head. We had a satellite phone and Starlink so you could talk to whoever you wanted. >>



Bdr Katie Devine
Skipper



Bdr Olie Cutting





Gnr Emma McKenzie

» I'm one of ten brothers and sisters so to not talk to them would be very strange.

CLOCK WATCHING

Cutting: Boredom sets in and it was a case of keeping yourself motivated and positive even though you're not really seeing progress. Water always looks like water and sky like sky, and you have a target of 3,000 miles which was only reducing by 60 on some days. Acceptance of the situation and mindfulness was key, as was breaking it down into micro chunks and setting small goals.

Devine: You must understand you are there for a reason, which is to keep the boat moving. That's how I looked at it. I also had a quote, 'do not look at the hours, make the time count', and that helped to focus.

BATTLING THE WEATHER

Cutting: We headed out in big conditions that we had never seen before in terms of waves and wind. Experiencing that straight away really helped and when we got other bad weather, we knew what to expect. We later faced huge waves with the wind blowing in the wrong direction, turning the boat sideways. We battened down the hatches for six hours and waited for it to ease. I loved it in a way and in that moment, everyone knew exactly what to do. That reflected how good our training had been and how well we were working as a team.

Devine: We went through every single weather system the sea could offer. There were days when it was flat with no wind and rowing was like cutting glass. You want the wind behind you, with the



waves pushing you along, and when the conditions were perfect, we were hitting more than three knots. When there was thunder and lightning, the whole sky was lit up and there were shooting stars that we had never seen before. But when there were 40-foot waves I remember thinking 'this is the end'.

SHIFT PATTERNS

Cutting: It was two hours on, two hours off. It sounds brutal but you get accustomed to it and it becomes normal. In those two hours off you must do your personal admin, eat and perform jobs on the boat - the most sleep anyone got was probably 1hr 20min. In the



first week it was quite hard to get into a routine, after that it was fine. But it became difficult again in the last couple of weeks – everyone was struggling to get up and row at that point.

TENSE MOMENTS

Cutting: There was some tension and friction at points and cross words were said. Little things become massive and someone being two minutes late for a shift seems like the end of the world. However, we did a lot of work with a psychologist beforehand, looking at team cohesion and recognising how to get the best out of each other, and we managed any conflict well.

Devine: When you're in the boat it feels like a long time, but it is only 46 days of your life. Nothing was worth holding a grudge over and people have different opinions, but everything was resolved.

FREEZE-DRIED FUEL

Cutting: We were supposed to consume three full meals a day at 1,000 calories each, as well as snack packs of sweets, biscuits and nuts. We would cook the rations up and store them in a Thermos, while eating snacks here and there. It was hard to stomach the food we required; I needed 5,200 calories a day and even though I ate that much I still lost 8kg. It all came down to discipline and making sure you ate, even if you didn't feel like it. There was also a lot of snack trading.

Devine: It was difficult as there was so much food to consume and at times you didn't feel like eating. Emma suffered with seasickness at the start – she was ill every time she ate – so we had to watch her to make sure she was okay. That could be life threatening in a challenge like this and thankfully she pulled through. When we finally got off the boat we all felt healthy and compared to some of the other teams we were in a good way.

FINALLY FINISHED

Cutting: It was really weird. The media boat turned up; we had not seen anyone for 46 days and there were lights everywhere. I felt everything at that moment, there was massive relief and an overwhelming sense of pride in myself and the team. There was also some apprehension at going back on land as I was so used to being on the boat with just three others – there were so many people there.

Devine: There was a huge sigh of relief. The whole campaign had been so stressful, and all that responsibility had suddenly gone. As the first junior ranks team we put pressure on ourselves to perform as we want to inspire other juniors to do things like this.

SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Cutting: The whole thing was led by us. Many people will see this as 46 days at sea, but that was just two per cent of it. This was a three-year campaign, with so much work involved. When I went to the initial brief it was about pushing myself physically and mentally, I also



wanted to be a good role model to my kids and show the rewards of hard work and going out of your comfort zone. But as it went on my motivation changed and the focus was on junior leadership. I've always been interested in leadership models, and this was a chance to show the next generation what can be achieved. The army talks a lot about empowerment and for me that is junior leaders coming up with ideas and being supported by the officer cohort.

Devine: I have never experienced anything like this before and have learnt so much in the past couple of years. Whether that's balancing workloads or simple things like sending emails properly. I feel I have a better understanding of the army and what other ranks do to get you where you need to be. There has been a lot of work behind closed doors, and the hardest part was getting to the start line. Hopefully we have shown that no matter what your rank, age or sex, if you want to do something you can do it. <<



Bdr Vicki Wratten-Wood



COMMISSIONING
GIFT

SOLID GOLD SIGNET RINGS
REGIMENTAL INSIGNIA ENGRAVING
TIMELESS. TRADITION. LEGACY.

APPOINTMENTS



ALANBICK.CO.UK
020 7242 5831

CRAFTED IN HONOUR
WOULD WITH PRIDE



EST. 1968

ALAN BICK
SILVERSMITHS - LONDON - JEWELLERS

ROYAL
ALEXANDRA
& ALBERT
SCHOOL



“
**Difference
is truly
celebrated**
”

- Outstanding Boarding Ofsted

Co-educational state boarding
school for children aged 7-18.

www.raa-school.co.uk



TALKBACK

mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk WhatsApp +447789 034748

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.



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

'Winter sport visits feel like a jolly'

THE winter sports season has been in full flow with large numbers of soldiers deployed on challenging and enjoyable training at significant cost.

What is less justifiable is the number of senior staff, commanding officers and regimental sergeant majors who

have been going out to visit.

Why is this still acceptable? We don't feel the need for visits to other adventurous training.

This feels like a jolly, and in a time of limited budgets this money would be better spent on lethality and war fighting.

- Name and address supplied

Lt Col (Retd) Steve Davis, Army Winter Sports Association, replies:

Thanks for your letter.

Firstly, it is important to note that winter sports are not classed as adventurous training but individual military training (IMT) or Category 2 sport.

While financial pressures are real and acknowledged, visits are a necessary component of safe, accountable, command-led training governance.

They are not undertaken for leisure, and their purpose is codified in **2025DIN10-018**.

Where appropriate, they also enable participation in training or support events, including competitions and prize-giving.

At unit level, COs and RSMs are encouraged to visit because they are responsible for soldiers on the activity.

This is a necessary part of their oversight of IMT, supporting exercise safety, assurance, welfare, career management and morale.

Army-level Category 2 sport cannot be visited at public expense, and any authorised visits are strictly limited to a

maximum of 48 hours within the exercise area, therefore ensuring cost control.

For senior officers, visit authority and controls are already in place in accordance with Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS) and Director Resources guidance, with the Army Winter Sports Association acting as the empowered approval authority.

In some cases visiting officers are personally approved by DCGS, reflecting the level of scrutiny applied.

The army supports around 3,000 soldiers and officers across 38 overseas winter sports exercises each year.

These build courage and character, forge trust and cohesion, and develop the resilience required in demanding operational environments.

Importantly, they also rely heavily on non-public funding and sponsorship to remain viable and accessible.

You may wish to look up the Army Winter Sports Association 2025 Impact Report for more about fighting power.

'IT IS A NECESSARY PART OF COMMAND OVERSIGHT'

Perplexed over programme reform

I UNDERSTAND the field exercise element is to be removed from the JNCOs' Army Leadership and Development Programme (ALDP). A recent army command order claims this phase was considered duplicative of other training. Presumably, we can infer that phase one is therefore now considered sufficient for one's entire soldier career.

If not, it makes the assumption units are implementing progressive green skills training measuring competence at all levels.

But unless there is additional policy to mandate sub-units, particularly in combat support and combat service support, to do this on a regular and progressive basis, this is simply serving to remove green skills from an army career. It also conflicts with the message from senior leaders around readiness for war.

As a member of a cap badge where I can say confidently this field phase is *not* duplicative of other training, I am now concerned individuals are not equipped as

functioning fighting soldiers - Name and address supplied

Maj Caitlin Champion, SO2a Soldier Policy, Professional Development, replies:

This magazine will be publishing more detail on ALDP changes within the next few months, which will explore the points you highlight. In the meantime, the Land Training System directive (available on the AKX) and ACSO 3262 may reassure you there is an unequivocal system in place to deliver the battlecraft syllabus in support of training as we operate.

REVIEWS

★ MOVIES ★ PODCASTS ★ GAMES ★



Putting pedal to the mettle...

New film charts how a group of former troops – led by a vet with a rare health condition – embarked on the ride of their lives

Tell us about the health condition that sparked the film.

Multifocal motor neuropathy, or MMN, is a neurological condition that affects around one in 170,000 people. It is treatable with injections of plasma product immunoglobulin but it hits motor function. For me, looking back, I now recognise that I was having trouble holding cutlery from about 2013. But it was years later, when I couldn't give a work colleague the thumbs-up sign, that it hit home.

You called the ride the Tour de MMN. How did it come about?

I'd done a ride in New Zealand to raise awareness of the condition after diagnosis, but this project transpired after I saw an obituary to Brian Robinson – the man who led the British team in the 1955 Tour de France. It was a significant race as it was the first time a UK team had taken part. The 70th anniversary was coming up, I was turning 50 and the ideas started coming together. I spoke to a local filmmaker, Matt Jenke, and he came on board.

Did you immediately think of involving military friends?

Yes – it was the natural step. You might not have seen people for ten years or more but you immediately pick up where you left off. Our team was made up of veterans Dave Walker and Steve Shirley, who I both met in the RLC along with Frank Culverwell, still a serving lieutenant colonel. The other team member, Jon Ager, was with the RAF and I met him later in a civvy job. I served for eight years in Iraq, Northern Ireland and other places before leaving in 2010; the military way of life is very hard to replicate when you leave.

How was the training?

The team came together quickly and easily after all initially working individually. We all met up in October 2024 for a training camp around Bristol and Cheddar Gorge, later followed by a few days in the Oxford area.



DOCUMENTARY

WHEN ex-loggie major Clive Phillips was diagnosed with an unusual condition striking at his nervous system, the soldier in him instinctively mounted a full-on counter-attack.

Faced with the probability that the paralysing symptoms of multifocal motor neuropathy meant he would not remain as active in the years ahead, the die-hard cyclist hatched a plan to push himself to the limits. He would create a team to ride the route of the 1955 Tour de France on the 70th anniversary of the race – and invite a documentary crew to film it all.

It was not long before Phillips had assembled a quartet of military pals to this cause, which also aimed to raise awareness of the condition and cash to help treat it. The impressive documentary about the adventure by Matt Jenke, *No One Rides Alone*, is being shown in selected UK cinemas this month.

Soldier caught up with Phillips, who lives in New Zealand with his Kiwi wife Ann and runs a social enterprise to assist those with rare diseases, to hear the story...



Top **The team on the road in France** Middle **Phillips talks frankly about his condition** Above **Matt Jenke filming *No One Rides Alone***



Was it as tough as expected?
Yes – it was bloody hard. The 1955 race was a classic ride of a different era. It was 4,500km in total but we decided to cut some of the longer of the 22 stages down. In all, we rode 3,200km, so it was more like the length of today's races. The route took in places including the Alps, Pyrenees and Mont Ventoux and there was more than 30,000 metres of ascent. We were joined by two Paralympian cyclists along the way, which was really inspiring.

It must also have been a fascinating jaunt into history...
Yes, in the film you'll see an interview with the last surviving member of the British 1955 team, 94-year-old Bernard Pusey, which is interesting. The route also took us close to First World War battlefields and the Ardennes, the site of the 1944 Battle of the Bulge, so there was a connection to military history.

What do you take away from the experience?
That you should never be afraid to ask for help; and that you should be prepared to accept it graciously when it is offered.

For details of documentary screening times visit makingthemostofnow.nz

Interview: **Cliff Caswell, Soldier**

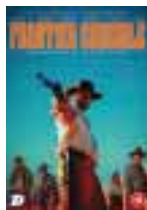


Phillips receives medical treatment prior to the race

MOVIE

Frontier Crucible

Out now



BOASTING a bafflingly obtuse story, atrociously monotone acting and a misunderstanding of pacing so blatant that nothing happens for the first hour, this offering was snuck out quietly onto DVD and streaming services, and understandably so.

It doesn't bode well when the

screenwriter S Craig Zahler (*Bone Tomahawk*) has his name removed from the credit roll – and after being lulled to sleep by the kind of dialogue that one would normally use to parody a Western, I can understand why.

The film has its moments; the Monument Valley location is breathtaking and **Thomas Jane** (remember him?) is almost unrecognizable as the gruff outlaw Mule. But this isn't enough to save it.

★★★★★

Tpr Luke Maxwell-Libby, HAC



GAME

Grid Legends

Out now on Switch 2



IT WOULD be fair to say that hardcore petrolheads didn't have the best deal on the first generation of Nintendo's hybrid console where standout racing titles were a little thin on the track.

While there were a few great action-oriented outings, among them *Hot Wheels Unleashed* and *Burnout Paradise*, games with depth were sorely lacking. The demolition derby extravaganza *Wreckfest* was one exception as was *Grid Autosport*, the sequel of which is the first to line up on the circuit on Switch 2.

Dubbed *Legends*, the new game does not disappoint at all, riding the world between arcade action and behind-the-wheel realism well. A port of a title released on older platforms back in 2022, this version includes all the downloadable extras plus a decent single player career campaign and one-off race

opportunities aplenty.

Essentially a compendium that allows virtual drivers to try their hand at competing in different vehicles, from off-road buggies to supercars and all in between, there is a bucketload on offer here to challenge even the most dextrous behind the wheel.

Graphics are top-notch too, with much of the action taking place in beautifully rendered cities from London to Moscow and races accompanied by appropriate thumping tunes. Features of note include the story mode, which is staged in the style of a TV racing documentary and boasts well-acted cut scenes to add to the immersive feel. At £25, *Legends* is good value, too.

★★★★★

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



PODCAST

One to catch...



CITIZEN soldiers come under the spotlight this month in a debut offering from the West Midlands Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association – and a special episode marking International Women's Day.

Female personnel from across the region sat down with host Tom Kwei (below) to discuss the sacrifices they have made in the name of service, as well as the personal growth and opportunities they have benefitted from in return.

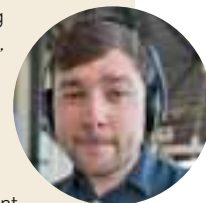
Subsequent instalments will follow on a monthly basis, with topics including annual cadet camps, the Armed Forces Covenant, the history of the RFCA branch and a look behind the scenes of Stafford's new Joint Cadet Centre.

Kwei said each half-hour episode would provide a snapshot of the organisation's work supporting the cadet experience, promoting employer and community engagement and managing the reserve estate.

"I hope listeners will gain a clearer understanding of the value of reservists, cadets and veterans bring to their communities and workplaces," he told *Soldier*.

"The podcast is crammed with real voices and real experiences, painting a strong, personal picture of what's happening across the region."

Episode one will be released on March 3. Search *The West Midland RFCA Podcast* wherever you listen.



JOIN THE TEAM

If you fancy giving new games, movies, music and podcasts the *Soldier* treatment, email reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

UK Armed Forces Chess Championships 2026

Shrivenham Defence Academy
17th-20th April 2026



**For more information,
contact Flt Lt Ben Woolf
ben.woolf222@mod.gov.uk
Or see 2026DIN10-005**

CLUBMATTERS



Bespoke Regimental Table Mats

Handmade in the United Kingdom

At Club Matters we're passionate about creating stylish tableware that's handmade in England. Perfect for your Officers' or Sergeants' Mess, our exceptional quality table mats are heat and stain resistant and made to last. Supply us with your regimental crest or badge and we will create a selection of designs for you to choose from.

01962 771 275

www.clubmatters.co.uk – enquiries@clubmatters.co.uk

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE!

Subscription Rates

United Kingdom
12 Issues£23
24 Issues£40
Overseas
12 Issues£47



email your details to subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk
or return form to **SOLDIER**, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU

I would like to subscribe for One year Two years

Start my subscription with the issue
Your details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:



WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

Specialists in the manufacture and supply of full and miniature size medals, medal mounting and framing.

Visit Our Website:
www.worcmedals.com
 +44(0)1527 835375
sales@worcmedals.com

124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ

THE BESPOKE TIE COMPANY

Specialists in Regimental Accessories

0845 257 5710
sales@bespoketies.com

MILITARY MARKETING INTERNATIONAL

Designing & Manufacturing Custom Wall Plaques since 1984 minimum orders apply

Challenge Coins & Custom Wall Plaques

www.militarymarketing.co.uk
mmlsales@militarymarketing.co.uk
 0121-454-6393

Suppliers of high quality embroidered and printed sports and leisurewear to the Armed Forces

motif8 Ltd

TOUR T-SHIRTS
 SPORTSWEAR
 SWEATSHIRTS
 POLOSHIRTS
 HOODIES
 JACKETS
 AND MUCH MORE

tel:01642 601501
sales@motif8.co.uk
www.motif8.co.uk

Motif8 Will Beat Any Price - Guaranteed

GAZEBOS GALORE
Military Discounts

Gazebos, Shelters, Flags & Banners, all with printing options

01621 928187
www.gazebos-galore.co.uk

GOT A HOLIDAY LET?

Advertise it to the military community for as little as £13 + VAT per issue.

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

CONTACT US NOW

Notice to readers The publishers of *Soldier* cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of any advertisement or for any losses suffered as a result. Readers are strongly recommended to make their own enquiries and seek appropriate commercial, legal and financial advice before sending any money or entering into any legally-binding agreement.

Michael Jay Tailoring
 Uniforms & Accessories
 Civilian Suits
 Tailored in Our UK Workshop

From 14 Working Day Standard Service or Dated Service Option
 Interest Free Terms

Visit Our Workshop
 Go To SuitUK.com
 Or We Can Visit You

01449 614602
info@suituk.com
SuitUK.com

Michael Jay Tailoring
 5, Tomo Business Park
 Stowmarket
 IP14 5EP

The Regimental Shop
www.militaryregimentalshop.com

Ties
 Belts
 Goggles
 Wristbands
 Socks
 Belts
 Braces
 Bow Ties
 and more

DIRECTORY

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

WELFARE

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

Army HIVE

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

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for regulars, reserves, ex-forces and their families.
0800 731 4880
ssafa.org.uk/get-help

Army Welfare Service

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

Forces Connect

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline
0300 123 1110

NHS support

Various information can be found at nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

Defence BHD Helpline

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

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

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

StepChange Debt Charity

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

GAMBLING

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support
0808 808 1677
cruse.org.uk

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

RESETTLEMENT

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

Bristol – March 19

Maidstone – April 23

Edinburgh – April 29

Plymouth – May 21

Ipswich – July 1

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-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

Samaritans

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

The Royal British Legion

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

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

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

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393 mind.org

NHS

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

COMPETITIONS

January 2026 winner

HOAY 1004 (Highland Forces kit bundle): SSgt Harkaraj Rai, HQ Colchester Garrison

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.

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. 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-wvcugroup@mod.gov. 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** **it Out Hub** or via the **Speak Out Helpline** on 0306 770 4656 or army-speakout@mod.gov

STAFF NETWORKS

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

LGBTQ+ Network
elizabeth.corbett117@mod.gov

Multicultural Network
priscilla.quansah100@mod.gov

Parents Network
armypers-parents-network@mod.gov

Servicewomen's Network
samantha.dodge733@mod.gov

NCO ACADEMY

Development Days 2026

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 for the NCO Academy on Defence Connect for more information.

SEARCH

Paul Borres is trying to trace a member of the **Royal Army Medical Corps** who was based in Soest, Germany in 1971 named Shirley. Email paul21_b@hotmail.com

UKSF BRIEFING COURSE

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

Course name	Date
2/26	Mar 8-13
3/26	Apr 12-17
4/26	May 10-15
5/26	Jun 7-12
6/26	Sep 6-11
7/26	Oct 18-23
8/26	Nov 15-20

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 1006

Your chance to **WIN**

... A Highlander Forces jacket and daypack worth £190



TEN details have been changed in this image of soldiers competing at the Inter-Services Cross Country Championships in Tidworth.

Circle all the differences on image **B** and send the panel to HOAY 1006. Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU, along with contact details, including email address, by March 31.

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

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

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win this dependable Cyclone Pro waterproof jacket and Forces Elite 33L pack, both in ranger green and worth an impressive £190.

These items are a highly practical combination for everyday use when reliability matters. The jacket provides solid weather protection, whether on training or for general use, with clean-cut and practical ventilation to keep it comfortable.

The pack offers a sturdy carry option for your daily loads on short deployments, with organised compartments, reinforced construction and a stable fit.

Buy these items at highlanderforces.com where *Soldier* readers can also save 15 per cent using discount code SMI5 (T&Cs apply).



SOLDIERSPORT

Lt Tom Holmes leads the soldiers' charge



ARMY DOMINATES BOARD MEETING

SNOWBOARDING

STRENGTH in depth was key to the army's success on the slopes of Meribel as they claimed a clean sweep of snowboarding's team titles at the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships.

A new-look squad exceeded expectations last season, and they built on that promise in the competition's latest staging as the men and women triumphed in the boardercross, parallel giant slalom and slopestyle.

Those results saw the soldiers secure the overall honours in both fields, while a number of individuals posted impressive performances to underpin the victory charge.

LBdr Jordan Buckley (RA) topped the podium in the women's boardercross and then took silver in the parallel giant slalom and bronze in the slopestyle on her way to finishing second in the

combined standings.

Cpl Kazim Jones (RLC) - who was named best newcomer in the 2025 championships - claimed bronze in the men's boardercross and there were silver and bronze medals respectively for Capt Sven Benavides (Rifles) and Sgt Jason Cole (RLC) in a keenly contested parallel giant slalom.

Benavides was also third in the race for the collective title.

"It was a massive haul," team manager WO1 Dale Gallagher (REME) told *SoldierSport* as he reflected on the success.

"We have many riders who have grown following their experiences last year.

"That first season at Meribel can be quite daunting and it is a big step up, particularly when it comes to the night race in the parallel giant slalom.

"I am delighted they came back and performed the way they did.

"A lot of the women's



LCpl Maddison Middleton in parallel giant slalom action

team were missing this year, and we went into the army championships, Ex Snow Jack, not knowing who would turn up.

"Luckily for us there were a couple of newcomers in LCpl Maddison Middleton (Int Corps) and Rfn Jules Masso (Rifles) who did really well.

"We were able to introduce them for the last week of our training camp and then went to the Inter-Services with confidence that the team was looking strong."

That position was further strengthened by the form of Buckley, who produced medal-winning performances in her less favoured disciplines while continuing to excel in boardercross.

"It was a bit of a shock," she admitted. "I have been on the podium for boardercross every year I have competed but had never done so in the others.

"It was a case of doing my best and hoping it works; I never expected to do so well.

"I wanted to improve, particularly in the slalom. I've always made it to the night races but had never got past the first round, so the aim was to qualify better and avoid the number one seed early on.

"But the team as a whole did really well. Jules was named best women's newcomer, as well as best overall rookie, and scored points in the parallel giant slalom and slopestyle.

"Maddie also scored in the boardercross, and it was great for them to achieve that in their first years."

The men's squad was boosted by the emergence of fresh talent of their own in the shape of Lt Tom Holmes (RA) and Capt

Tristan Price (REME), with the former crowned best newcomer in the male ranks.

"It shows the effort we have put in over the years is working," men's captain WO2 David Grant (REME) said.

"We dominate the upper midfield positions. Some of our superstars were missing but having that depth was crucial to the outcome.

"It was Tom's first time at Snow Jack this year and although he did not win there he was selected for the Inter-Services and performed well.

"Kazim did a brilliant job to finish on the podium in the boardercross, while Jason put it all on the line in the parallel giant slalom after qualifying quite low down the field. Taking bronze was a fantastic achievement.

"The corps structure really helps us and we have more strength than the other services.

"If we can get all our top people away next season there is no reason why can't run away with it again."

Gallagher said Ex Snow Jack, which is staged in the build-up to the Inter-Services, again flourished this year, with snowboarding still proving a popular draw for personnel.

"Feedback shows this is a positive in terms of keeping people in the army," he added.

"The sport is continually growing and we are heading in a really good direction.

"We have changed a few races to get more females involved and want to put on the best training and event we can to give everyone a competitive environment. That seems to be paying off."

RIVALS TOO QUICK IN RACE FOR HONOURS

SKIING

THE Royal Air Force proved to be the dominant force in the Alpine skiing races at this season's Inter-Services Snowsports Championships.

Boasting athletes who had previously been part of the British youth set-up, the women's team were particularly formidable as they secured a clean sweep of the podium positions in four of the five events on their way to a commanding victory.

The army finished second in the giant slalom, slalom, super G and downhill team standings and there was also a bronze medal for Lt Abigail Binnington in the parallel giant slalom – the soldiers' only individual accolade of the week.

"I have been on the team for the past two years and we have won the overall title," Capt Imogen Bird (RE), captain of the women's squad, told *SoldierSport*. "But we knew it

would be tough this season.

"We had four skiers returning from last year, along with three newbies, but the RAF had some superstars.

"We've all learnt to race through the army. We have great depth but lack the experience to get those really quick times.

"We'd get four places in the top ten, however, they were not at the top of the scoreboard.

"That said, we skied well. Anything can happen in these races. We told the girls not to be daunted by how good the RAF were and to put their best runs down – it only takes a crash or disqualification to be right up there.

"They did a great job and kept that mindset throughout."

A new-look men's outfit also struggled against their rivals, although they managed to secure the team honours in the giant slalom.

WO2 Dan Orton (REME), who was making his first Inter-Services appearance at Meribel in a decade, took silver in the giant slalom and newcomer LCpl Ally Poll (Para) sealed bronze in the downhill. He then went on to finish third in the men's combined standings.

'WE KNEW IT WOULD BE TOUGH'



SNOWBOARD BY NUMBERS

4 New riders selected for the army team at this year's championships

3 Podiums for LBdr Jordan Buckley (RA) – including boardercross gold

8 Riders representing UKAF at this month's British Championships

75 Years of the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships





NAVY SET NEW STANDARDS WITH DOMINANT DISPLAY

TELEMARK

THE army Telemark team was powerless to stop the dominance of the Royal Navy at the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships as their rivals swept the board in Meribel.

The senior service signalled their intent on the opening day as they claimed all three podium places in both the men's and women's giant slalom.

The men's squad repeated that achievement in the Telemark classic, sprint and parallel sprint – meaning the soldiers and Royal Air Force returned home without a single individual medal.

A further navy clean sweep came in the women's parallel sprint, although the RAF claimed silver in the sprint and bronze in the classic to put a slight dent in an otherwise impressive medal haul.

"They had a particularly strong team with all their top racers available," army captain Maj Adam Smith (WG) told *SoldierSport*.

"In the past few years, the navy has invested a lot in the same people and they are now reaping the rewards.

"We have seen this coming and they have put a marker down. We know the standard we must chase and are growing in terms of financial investment in Telemark to develop pathways

that are more than just a couple of weeks at the start of the year.

"It is about bringing this to the summer and getting people on the snow at the beginning of the winter season."

One bright note for the army came from Capt Ben Heaton (RTR), who was named best newcomer, while Capt Ellie Thorn (R Signals) performed well alongside her efforts in the Alpine disciplines.

The team has also recruited ex-GB racer Maj Nobby Clarke (RA) as coach in a move that Smith believes will pay dividends down the line.

"He is one of the founding fathers of British Telemark," the officer added. "Bringing him on board will help drive the team forward.

"Telemark is a hard sell. Skiing is not necessarily a sport a lot of people have done before joining the army and when they get involved it is predominantly in Alpine.

"But if they are good at that they can be good at Telemark as well. We are always looking for people and if they are not placing as high as they would like in Alpine they can come here and perhaps do better.

"The Army Championships, Ex Telemark Titan, are growing year on year and if skiers want to come and try something different, that is a great opportunity."

To get involved follow **@britisharmy telemark** on Instagram.

MOORE MAKES GAMES GRADE



WINTER OLYMPICS

RESERVIST Pte Mica Moore (RLC) became Jamaica's best-ever finisher in the monobob at the Winter Olympics as she went head-to-head with the world's best at Milano Cortina.

The 33-year-old clocked a combined time of 4min 1.31sec over four runs to finish in 14th place - five spots better than Jazmine Fenlator-Victorian at the Beijing Games in 2022.

Moore saved her best for last as she completed her final attempt in 59.92sec, reaching 123.95kmh in the process - her fastest time and speed in the competition.

Her final position also equalled Jamaica's best bobsleigh placing at the Winter-Olympics, with the county's four-man team also finishing 14th at Lillehammer in 1994.

"It is absolutely incredible and more than I ever dreamed of," the soldier said while reflecting on her achievement.

"I am so happy and proud. It was an amazing competition to be part of, such a fun race with so many different things happening on each run and something I will remember forever."

Moore, who previously represented Team GB in the two-woman bobsleigh at the 2018 Games, qualified for Jamaica through her family heritage and had the added honour of carrying her nation's flag at the opening ceremony.

"This moment means everything," she said at the time. "To me, the flag isn't just fabric, it's a symbol of not giving up."

"Every step of this journey has been about taking whatever life throws at you and smiling right back in its face."

"The highs, the setbacks, the graft, the belief - it all led here."

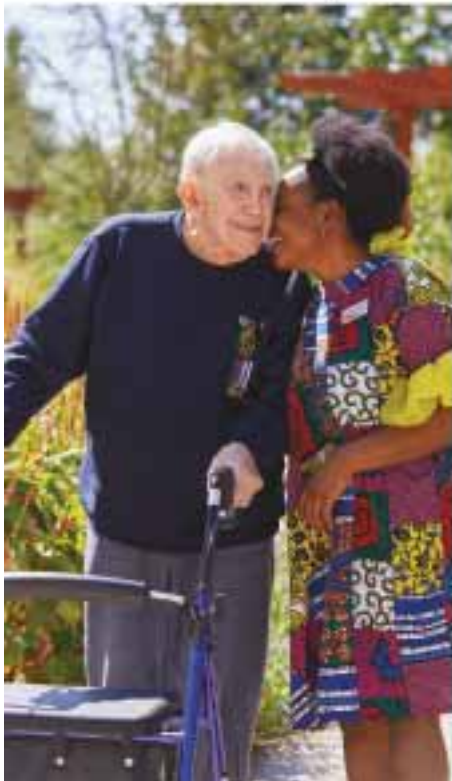
Moore, who serves with 157 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, will return to action with the army at the Inter-Services Ice Sports Championships in Lillehammer this month.



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

Write your Will for FREE



Our charity was founded in 1916 to care for the severely injured young men returning from the battlegrounds of the First World War. Today we provide specialist nursing and dementia care for veterans and their partners. We also provide Day Care and Lunch Clubs, while our Telephone Friendship Service reaches out to people in their own homes who need our support.

To celebrate our 110th anniversary, we are pleased to offer *Soldier's* readers a complimentary Will-writing guide and the opportunity to write or update your Will for FREE.

There is no obligation to leave us a gift, but by supporting our charity in this way, you will support veterans and their partners to access the very best of care. **Every legacy gift, no matter the size, plays a vital role in the care we provide.**

Scan the QR code to learn more



Visit us online: www.starandgarter.org

Email us: legacies@starandgarter.org

Telephone us: 020 8481 7676



Royal Star & Garter Registered Charity No. 210119. Correspondence address: 42 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3LL

goliath.co.uk/ydstactical @ydstactical_uk

CONFIDENCE AT YOUR FEET

YDS - Strength in Every Step Forward



Win one of 100 YDS branded goodie bags - sign up now



TACTICAL SERIES

JOSEPH LINDSAY'S

PRIVATE

A PANSY RESTING ON ITS LAURELS



EVERY MAN THINKS MEANLY OF HIMSELF FOR NOT HAVING BEEN A SOLDIER. SAMUEL JOHNSON

Joseph Lindsay is the author of *NO 2 and MIA* and *THE LAST OF THE BRITISH*.

Joe Lindsay's had a career in the intelligence world, but he's not the kind of spy you'd expect. He's a former SAS soldier and now he's back in the intelligence world, but he's not the kind of spy you'd expect. He's a former SAS soldier and now he's back in the intelligence world, but he's not the kind of spy you'd expect.

Most people fancy themselves as an international spy, but in truth, the Intelligence Corps is a hard-hitting force that takes you to the shadows and putting you to work against an unseen foe.

DR. ANTHONY J. COLE

You figured that the only way to find out what life in Military Intelligence was actually like was to join them.

So that's what he did. This is his story.

Order from Crowthorne Military Publishers
www.crowthornemilitary.com/products/private/

Some 200 athletes were turned away in the clamour to train with world champions



STAR POWER ON THE MAT



Roger Gracie shares some tips of the jiu-jitsu trade

BRAZILIAN JIUJITSU

THE draw of world champions Roger Gracie and Ffion Davies proved too hard to resist for the army's Brazilian jiu-jitsu fraternity, who descended on Aldershot to form the biggest seminar in the set-up's history.

Also open to veterans, MoD civil servants and emergency services personnel, the event welcomed 130 athletes to the mat for a day of expert tuition from two of the biggest names in the sport.

Further knowledge was imparted by Gracie's father Mauricio Gomes, who is one of the highest ranked practitioners in the UK.

The sessions formed the perfect stepping stone to the Army Brazilian Jiu-jitsu Championships that are being staged later this month and organiser Col Shamus Kelly told *SoldierSport* numbers could easily have doubled.

"We limited it to 130 and

it sold out straight away," the officer, who is also chairman of the Army Martial Arts Association, added.

"That all comes down to the names involved. Ffion is a star; she has a phenomenal record and is one of the biggest figures in female grappling.

"Roger is a ten-time world champion who has been a great friend to army jiu-jitsu.

"People want to train with the best. If just one of them had come down we would still get 130 through the door, but we would not turn away another 200 like we did to get this right.

"Ffion (pictured above) focused on how to defend and attack when underneath a stronger opponent, while Roger looked at a lot of the fundamentals and spent time on how to escape certain submissions and choke holds.

"Everyone was buzzing. They were doing jiu-jitsu for three hours and there were some who did not want to leave at the end."

Rfn Kobe Jones evades the Royal Navy defence

INTER-SERVICES U23 FOOTBALL

ARMY 3 V NAVY 2



Pictures: Graeme Main

JONES THE STAR IN REDS' TITLE DEFENCE

FOOTBALL

A SUBLIME display from Rfn Kobe Jones (Rifles) helped fire the army to glory in the concluding fixture of this season's Inter-Services Under-23 Championships.

The winger scored twice before creating the third goal in a 3-2 win over the Royal Navy at the home of Winchester City FC – a result that saw the soldiers successfully defend their title from last season.

Jones gave his side the perfect start in their must-win clash as he won the ball on the halfway line, drove forward and fired home from 25 yards in just the second minute.

However, the Reds' joy was short lived as the senior

service equalised moments later courtesy of a free kick from PLET Louis Quinn.

The army dominated the remainder of the half and saw Jones and skipper LCpl Alfie Rogers (REME) spurn good opportunities before retaking the lead as the interval loomed.

Substitute Sig Rashane Maxwell (R Signals) was the provider; the powerful forward picking up possession in midfield and slotting a perfect pass for Jones to round keeper AB Josh Grant and roll the ball into the net.

The intensity then increased after the break as the defending champions sought to assert further control.

Sig Thomas Nesbitt (R Signals) saw a deflected strike

fly agonisingly past the far post before Air Tpr Jenson Baynes (AAC) flashed wide from a tight angle with Grant beaten.

Another chance was missed as Spr Angus Heritage (RE) blazed over from Maxwell's low cross and the army were made to pay for their wastefulness on the hour mark as ET George Rogers nodded in from another Quinn free kick.

Not to be deterred, the Reds edged ahead for a third time in the 71st minute as Nesbitt (pictured right) latched on to a through ball from Jones and coolly converted with a shot across goal that crept in off the woodwork. The navy offered little in the way of threat late on, leaving their rivals to celebrate a deserved victory.



FOOTBALL

A GOALLESS draw with the Royal Air Force in their opening match left the army needing to beat the Royal Navy in their quest to be crowned Inter-Services under-23 champions.

With the airmen defeating the senior service 1-0 earlier in the competition, the soldiers' 3-2 success saw them claim the trophy on goals scored, much to the delight of skipper LCpl Alfie Rogers (REME, above).

"We showed quality against the RAF but couldn't get the goals," he said. "We had a lot of debuts, and there were a lot of nerves, but tonight we proved how good our players are."

"They did everything the coaching staff asked and I'm really proud. Facing the navy is no easy task; we knew they were going to be up for it to try and spoil our party, and we couldn't let that happen."

"We scored some quality goals – they weren't scrappy – and we thoroughly deserved them."

"I won this last year, not as captain and that was a really good feeling, but leading the boys and lifting that trophy is the best thing I've done in the army."



DREAM DEBUT TURNS TO NIGHTMARE

ATHLETICS

IT APPEARED to be a fairytale debut for Capt Sam Griffiths (RE) at the Inter-Services Cross Country Championships as the officer crossed the finish line with his arms raised as winner of the men's race.

Three years earlier, the athlete was tipping the scales at 125kg and turned to running as a way of shifting the fat and getting in shape (read the full story in the August 2025 issue of *Soldier*).

His efforts yielded impressive results and ultimately led to selection for the forces clash in Tidworth, where he led from the front to top the podium.

However, in the aftermath he was disqualified for wearing headphones on the course, an outcome that also saw the men's squad miss out on the senior team title.

The issue was reported by the Royal Navy and led to

'WE ARE ALL DISAPPOINTED'

lengthy deliberations post-race and, with the chair of UK Armed Forces Athletics in attendance, the decision to exclude Griffiths was taken.

UK Athletics rules state that no earphones or similar devices are allowed in cross country races.

As a result, the Royal Air Force took the men's senior prize, with Lt Callum O'Neill (RN) upgraded to the individual champion.

"It was heartbreaking to see what should have been a proud and hard-fought army victory decided in a protest room rather than on the course," said team manager WO2 William Ewens (RA).

"While rules must be upheld, the way it unfolded took away from the spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship that military sport stands for, and it left athletes from all services deeply disappointed."

Griffiths will look to put that disappointment behind him when he represents the army in the Inter-Services Marathon Championships, which will be staged as part of the London Marathon, in April.



Capt Sam Griffiths' victory celebrations were cut short



Picture: Graeme Main

DEPTH OF TALENT SEES WOMEN HOME

ATHLETICS

THE women's race at the Inter-Services Cross Country Championships passed without the controversy seen in the men's event, with army athletes dominating proceedings to claim eight positions in the top ten.

The Royal Navy's Lt Chelsea Baker surged clear to take the individual title in style - finishing more than a minute ahead of Capt Kate Olding (Int Corps) in second.

Sgt Roanna Vickers (RAMS) claimed third spot and the soldiers' efforts in the wider standings saw them crowned women's senior and masters' team champions.

For Olding, the Tidworth outing represented her first race in army colours since suffering two stress fracture injuries, and she was delighted with her performance.

"Two years ago, I would have bitten your arm off just to race again," she said. "It has taken quite a while to build my strength, then my fitness and get back to racing."

"I was a little daunted coming in. Everyone knows everyone and there is a pecking order, so there was some pressure, but I'm really happy with how well the army team has done."

Team manager Vickers was delighted to welcome Olding back into the fold but said the soldiers' strength in depth was key to the victory.

"We have got strong runners in all age categories," the NCO told *SoldierSport*.

"We had some pull out injured last week and others had last-minute deployments, so we had to make some changes, but we got people in and they finished the race."

"Chelsea and Kate are so fast so it is a case of letting them go at the front and then using our depth of talent."

The cross country season was continuing at the Inter-Corps Championships as this issue went to press.

IS CROSS COUNTRY

MEN'S CHAMPION

LT CALLUM O'NEILL, RN

WOMEN'S CHAMPION

LT CHELSEA BAKER, RN

SENIOR CHAMPIONS

MEN: RAF WOMEN: ARMY

MASTERS CHAMPIONS

MEN: RAF WOMEN: ARMY

UNDER-23 CHAMPIONS

MEN: ARMY WOMEN: RAF

Picture: Graeme Main

PREMIERSHIP
CUP FINAL

17 P&M **V** PWRR
15 **8**



Pictures: Graeme Main

DOLPHINS' DELIGHT

RUGBY UNION

A DECADE-long wait for success in the Army Rugby Union Premiership Cup came to an end for 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps as they triumphed in the tournament final on a filthy night in Aldershot.

Driving rain and heavy conditions under foot – together with the might of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – formed a considerable challenge for the Marchwood-based outfit but a try in each half saw them run out 15-8 winners.

However, it was the Tigers who struck first in a cagey

opening period as Pte Veriti Naitaka pounced in the corner after the Loggies failed to gather under the high ball.

Some individual brilliance from 2Lt Noah Cannon then drew the sides level; the wing receiving the ball in his own half, chipping forward and touching down against a bamboozled PWRR defence.

Fly half Sgt Michael Wright slotted the extras to edge the Dolphins 7-5 ahead and the score remained the same until the interval.

In a second half of few opportunities, a sweetly struck penalty from distance saw the infanteers retake the lead only for their rivals to hit back five minutes later.

Cannon sparked another attack with a jinking run on the left that was ended with the try line in sight.

The champions-elect swiftly recycled the ball before an expertly judged cross-field kick from LCpl Ethan Riley left wing Pte Tom Prosser with the simple

task of going over in the corner.

Wright missed with the conversion but found his range in the 65th minute as his penalty kick sailed between the sticks.

Another chance followed soon after but with the ball sliding just past the near post the Tigers remained in the contest.

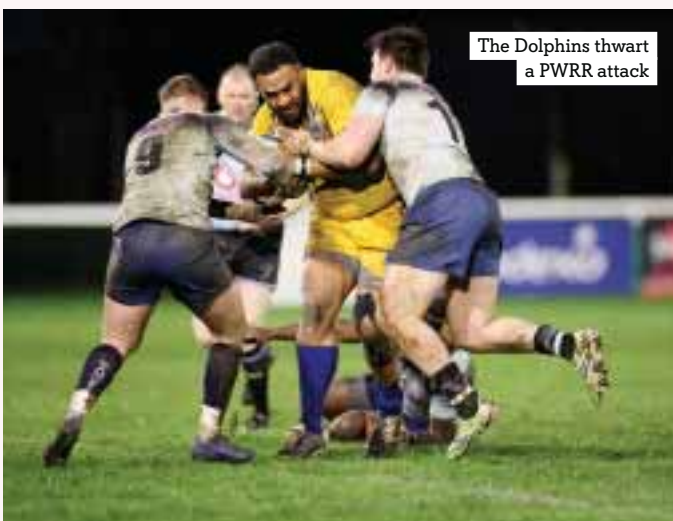
Despite applying pressure at the death they failed to find the breakthrough, and it was the Dolphins who were left to celebrate after missing out in last season's final.

"The weather conditions made it tough," said winning skipper SSgt Joe Brown.

"We're not just a team, we're not just a regiment, we are a rugby club, a brotherhood and a family.

"Sometimes you have to dig deep; they were a great side who pushed us to our limits and made us work hard for our victory. I commend them for their spirit and our lads for the way they came forward.

"To lead them fills me with ultimate pride."



The Dolphins thwart a PWRR attack

RUGBY UNION

PLAYERS from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment secured the bragging rights in a war of the roses clash in the Premiership Challenge final.

The soldiers defeated their rivals from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment 39-27 to secure the silverware on what was a busy day of action at the Army Rugby Union community finals.

The Stormers – a joint team from 12 and 16 Regiments, Royal Artillery – defeated The Queen's Royal Hussars 19-15 to win the Premiership Shield, while the Lyneham Knights beat the Blandford Bulldogs 15-13 in the Knockout Quaid.



Picture: Cat Goryn/Alligin Photography

ELITE SPORT

A TOTAL of 47 personnel from 19 disciplines have been included on the talented athlete scholarship scheme following the latest Army Sport selection board.

Among those to feature are international WTF taekwondo ace Gdsm Thando Dlamini (SG) and Inter-Services triathlon champion Cpl Jasmine Holmes (Int Corps, pictured), while six ice hockey players were named.

The programme offers support in areas such as sports science, nutrition and coaching as soldiers balance top-level sport with their military careers.



Picture: Graeme Main

HEADS OF THE TABLE



Picture: Graeme Main

TABLE TENNIS

THE Army Table Tennis Championships were a happy hunting ground for Capt Matt Hutson (REME) as he claimed a hat-trick of titles at the annual showdown.

The officer (pictured), who is also chairman of the Army Table Tennis Association, defeated Cpl Andy Benjamin (AGC (RMP)) 3-2 in the men's singles final and then teamed with Cpl Toby

Usher (Int Corps) to secure the doubles honours.

His third success came in the mixed doubles alongside Lt Col Nicola Frail (RACHD).

Elsewhere, Pte Beth Brewer (RLC) sealed the women's singles crown and Frail paired with SSgt Hilary Greig (RAMS) to win the doubles.

WO1 Ish Gurung (R Signals) came out on top in the inaugural over-40s competition and 16 Signal Regiment were the inter-

unit champions.

"We had 90 players in attendance, which shows we are going in the right direction," Hutson told *SoldierSport*.

"People had the opportunity to play a lot of good table tennis – from complete novices to those who come back every year."

The next key dates for the army are the Inter-Services on March 18 and 19.

Visit armytabletennis.org for details on how to get involved.

TENNIS

FAMILIAR faces rose to the top at the Army Indoor Tennis Championships in Aldershot.

The men's final was an all Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers affair as LCpl Warok Rai defeated LCpl Luke Fisher.

OCdt Milly Wood (East Midlands UOTC) triumphed over Sig Faye Worrall (R Signals) in the women's final.

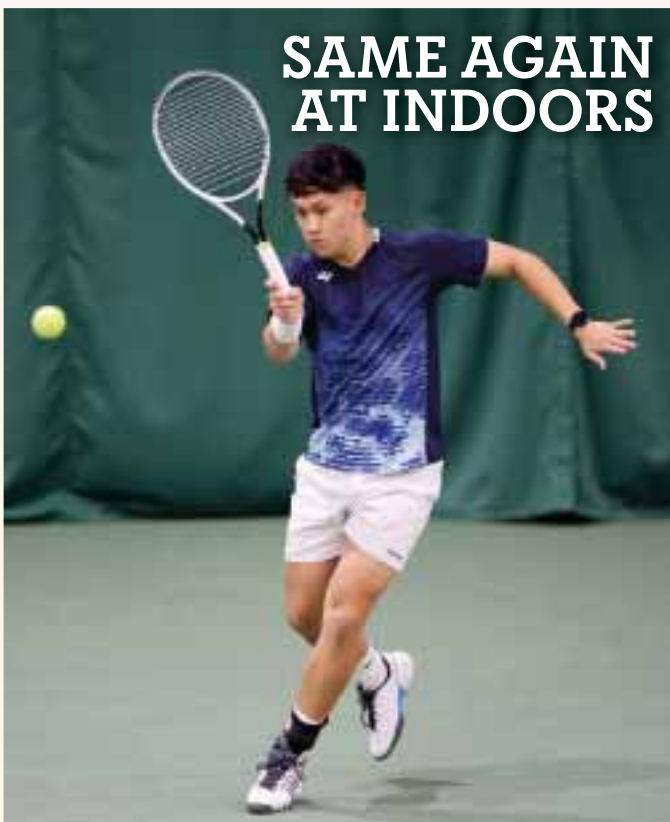
Rai (pictured) and Wood were also victorious at the full Army Tennis Championships last year and helped the soldiers to an Inter-Services double at Wimbledon later that summer.

The duo collected the respective players' player of the year accolades at the Army Tennis Association awards evening that followed the indoor competition.

The next key fixture is the Inter-Services Development Championships in Portsmouth on April 28 and 29.

Follow [@britisharmytennis](https://www.instagram.com/britisharmytennis) on Instagram for more updates.

SAME AGAIN AT INDOORS




Picture: Graeme Main

Chief for the day


Troops from 39 Engineer Regiment tell us what they would do if they headed up the army...

Interviews and pictures: Becky Clark




I would sort rations. The old ones were a lot nicer – there are too many curries and chickpeas now. If I could add anything it would be a Yorkshire wrap, which is a Yorkshire pudding with beef, veg and gravy inside.

Sgt Bradley Watson, RE




My focus would be on valuing people's time better – it's one of the most precious commodities. Being based in the north of Scotland, we spend entire days travelling by road to exercises. If we reduced time in transit, for example by using the RAF or training closer to home, it would improve morale and help increase fighting power.

WO2 Mike Baillie, RE




I'd push for a bigger increase to the defence budget and make more vehicles available to units, so that everyone has enough. I would also improve the ration packs.

Spr Luca Young, RE




I'd incentivise readiness by increasing the X Factor or giving soldiers extra leave days. If someone is green across all their individual training requirements, scoring high in their fitness or marksmanship and has their dental and hearing tests sorted, they should be rewarded – and it would improve deployability.

Maj Euan Irvine, RE




I'd introduce a rank swap day – like Teamwork but where juniors and officers can understand each other's perspective and workload. An 'Undercover Troopy' scheme would also be quite funny, where they'd come in under the radar prior to taking up post and pretend to be a private soldier before revealing themselves.

LCpl Oliver Glynn, RE



Introduce more opportunities for reservists to do combined arms exercises with multiple different units working together.

Spr Fiona Reynolds, RE



The first thing that comes to mind is bringing in a four-day working week. At the moment we are training for Op Tosca so we're busy with that, but often there is a lot of spare time and that's what snaps people.

LCpl Jacob Koczan, RE

New Fujinon SX400

Complimenting its partners
SX800 and SX1600



Fujinon SX400

- Compact form factor with 32x Optical Zoom in compact 3.9kg body and only 300mm in length
- Fast f2.8 lens
- High Performance Image Stabilisation for advanced vibration control
- Fast and accurate autofocus
- Heat haze and fog reduction function for added clarity

Wex Photo Video is a trading name of Warehouse Express Limited. Registered Office: 15 Frensham Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 2BT.
Registered company number: 03366976.

Contact us to place an order or to find out more:
0207 380 4509 | mod@wex.co.uk | Unite 

Tail Spend is an e-procurement platform providing the MOD with a tail spend solution

Buying for yourself?
Visit us at:
wex.co.uk

Army
Benevolent
Fund

CATERAN YOMP

54 MILES. 24 HOURS. 6-7 JUNE 2026

THE YOMP RELAY



Hand over the baton at key points along the route, conquer 54 miles as a team.



GET YOUR
YOMP
ON! 2026



£250 / 4 person team registration
SIGN UP YOUR TEAM TODAY

Scan the QR code or
search for 'Cateran Yomp'



Army Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146420) and Scotland (SC039199) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (07974609).