

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



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MARCH 2019



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QUICK TO REACT

Personnel on standby in Cyprus



UNDERSLUNG HEROES

The troops keeping
helicopters flying

10

pages of
SoldierSport

BAVARIAN SNOW

tests Arctic team

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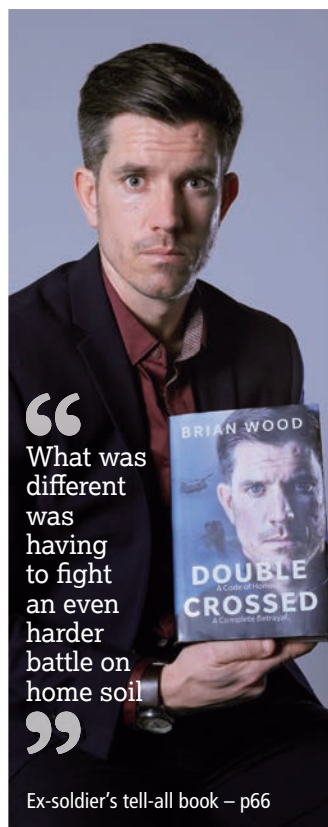
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“Green stuff like this exercise is enjoyable, but it's the variety that's the best thing about being based in Cyprus”

”

Feeling the heat – p30



“What was different was having to fight an even harder battle on home soil”

Ex-soldier's tell-all book – p66

Hot and cold



THIS month we are delighted to welcome Army Sergeant Major WO1 Gav Paton to our pages to give readers a

regular take on the biggest issues facing serving soldiers (page 15).

Whether you are a newly qualified private or an NCO who feels they have “seen it all”, this Serviceman offers a brilliant way for you to get your concerns fast-tracked to the man at the very top, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith.

And he wants to hear from you. So why not drop him a line on Twitter or through *Talkback* (page 53), where we are looking forward to seeing him respond to more of your comments and questions in future.

Also in this edition, we put Cyprus under the spotlight (page 30) and find out what life is like beyond the sun-kissed beaches and lively nightlife that springs to mind for many troops when they learn they are to deploy there.

Finally – and at the opposite end of the thermometer – don’t miss our rundown of a brilliant new expedit set to take British troops to a part of the world they have never conquered (page 38). Enjoy the issue.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

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> Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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> Online

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The Army's National Charity



Pictures: Graeme Main

Time to work on the pull-ups...

THE exercises to replace the Army's personal fitness assessment (PFA) have been revealed.

From next month, troops will be put through six activities – deadlifts, pull-ups, jumps, weighted throws, sprints and a two-kilometre run.

Senior PTIs say the soldier conditioning review, a diagnostic tool to check overall fitness levels, differs from the PFA because it does not take into account age or gender.

Lt Col Mark Lewis (RAPTC), who heads up Individual Training at Army HQ, said: "This will give soldiers an idea of their strengths and weaknesses.

"Until now the Army has focused too much on aerobic fitness, but if we want to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries (MSKI) troops have to be holistically fit."

Servicemen and women will receive a score of between one and 15 for each movement. Lt Col Lewis added: "One of people's key concerns has been the heaves, which we have

brought in because upper body fitness has been lacking.

"But we recognise that it will take time for individuals to adapt physically, so that's why the pull-ups won't be marked at first."

By measuring elements like muscular strength and endurance, the check will ensure soldiers are training properly to meet the Army's new role-based physical employment standards for different branches of service.

As with the last assessment, Regulars will be put through their paces twice a year and Reservists once.

Data will be gathered over the next 18 months to allow adjustments to be made to the scoring system and policy.

"The statistics will give us an accurate picture of how fit the Army is now, and enable us to decide how fit we want it to be in the future," continued Lt Col Lewis.

"By introducing the review in this fashion we are truly modernising the way we look at fitness."



Q&A



Lt Col Mark Lewis, SO1 Individual Training at Army HQ, explains the new fitness reviews...

Why has it changed? The PFA is more than 20 years old and is outdated. Soldiers' roles have changed and our fitness requirements must reflect this.

What if someone struggles?

If their score is low it may indicate a higher risk of MSKI and they may be directed to attend reconditioning training.

Does a soldier's score matter?

Yes – it highlights strengths and weaknesses, which will allow fitness programmes to be adjusted.

Should pull-ups worry us?

No – at first this exercise won't have any set standards and troops will get time and help to focus their training. Scientific studies have shown that soldiers need to improve upper body strength.

Is there still a 300 Club? We're looking at it. Troops can expect an elite benchmark with a new name.

SOLDIER

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

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GLOBAL SITREP

1. FALKLAND ISLANDS

SCOTS HEAD SOUTH

TROOPS from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland have started their tenure in one of the Army's furthest flung outposts.

The Fire Support Company soldiers have been settling into their new role as the roulement infantry company in the South Atlantic islands,

relieving colleagues from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

They will be carrying out patrols and training serials among other activities during their three-month tour, which CO Lt Col Campbell Close said would provide them with unique opportunities.

He added: "Troops will work together while junior commanders will be issuing orders on a daily basis."



2. NORTHERN IRELAND

LOGGIES HOST AMERICAN ALLIES

ARMY fuel experts rehearsed the skills and drills for keeping military vehicles in the fight during a two-week package of manoeuvres with US colleagues.

The 120 Reservists from Belfast-based 152 (North Irish) Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, were put through serials including setting up a forward bunker as well as moving the liquid around in their tanker fleet.

Exercise Green Shadow also gave the troops the chance to rehearse operating with American allies from 61 Quartermaster Battalion based at Fort Hood in Texas.

Maj Nicholle Dunlop (RLC) – executive officer with 152 Regiment – said the training had been productive, explaining that it had been important to work with another army.

She added: "Soldiers had the opportunity to chat to each other about how they conduct operations – we are now all set for a return visit to the USA during the summer."



END OF AN ERA

THE familiar swept back wings of the Royal Air Force Tornado will no longer be seen over combat zones.

Eight jets based in Cyprus have now returned to RAF Marham, marking the end of three decades of continuous deployment on operations in countries including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and the Balkans.

Typhoon aircraft will now take on missions that would have been carried out by Tornados.



3. GIBRALTAR

TEST OF METTLE

UK TROOPS based in Gibraltar took part in a series of challenges to test their physical and mental strength.

The Resilience Games, as the event was dubbed, saw 14 personnel compete in various individual and team events including weightlifting, runs, rowing, squats and burpees.

At the end of play the outstanding

effort award went to Pte Jimmy Bowman, of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment, for showing true grit and determination throughout.



“It's dangerous and exciting”

Troops gear up for Arctic adventure – page 38

“Being part of Op Shader means a lot”

Soldiers relish Cyprus role – page 30



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Picture: Borneo Bulletin

6. BRUNEI RED CAPS REACH OUT

ROYAL Military Police personnel invited their civilian counterparts and local authorities to their barracks in Seria to inform them of their role and capabilities. Around 40 delegates visited Medicina Lines, where they were shown kit and given demonstrations about tasks such as interviewing, photography and crime scene investigation.

"It was an opportunity for the various Bruneian departments that we liaise with to understand exactly what we do and why we are here, as well as to discuss best practice," explained detachment commander WO2 Donna Longhurst.

2. NORTHERN IRELAND

4. ESTONIA

5. ENGLAND

3. GIBRALTAR

6. BRUNEI

IN NUMBERS 35

Reservists from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment will deploy to Adelaide and Melbourne this month to work with their Australian counterparts on Exercise Morlancourt

4. ESTONIA

DOUBLE-ACT MAKES DEBUT

THE formidable pairing of the Apache and Wildcat helicopters will be making its debut in Estonia this year – with the aircraft supporting Nato's deployment in the country.

Both platforms will take part in the annual Exercise Spring Storm – providing training opportunities while underpinning the alliance's enhanced forward presence.

The two helicopters have been forging a reputation for working effectively together

on recent manoeuvres, with Wildcat designating targets for large packs of its stablemate to engage and destroy.

Meanwhile, around 1,000 personnel from the 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment Battlegroup were starting to return home after eight months heading up the Nato mission as this issue went to press.

The King's Royal Hussars Battlegroup will take up the reins this month.



5. ENGLAND

MISSION REHEARSAL

RESERVISTS from 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment have got their sights set firmly on a deployment to Denmark later this year.

A company group will take part in Exercise Viking Star in September and troops kicked off their preparations for the mission by honing low-level skills and drills on Catterick Training Area (pictured).



Picture: Csgt Stu Coles, Yorks

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Picture: Graeme Main

Smart choice: The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is fully subscribed while higher numbers are enlisting

Snowflake chat strikes a chord

THE latest Your Army advertising campaign – aimed at attracting those who might not think about a military career – is proving a great success, according to senior officers.

Recruitment chiefs say around 9,700 would-be soldiers applied in the month after the initiative was launched in January – nearly double the number of the previous month.

Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is fully subscribed.

Top brass accept the latest TV and poster ads (shown right) – which highlight the skills that the so-called snowflake generation could bring – break from the usual approach.

But they maintain that fresh thinking is needed.

Lt Gen Tyrone Urch, commander Home Command, said numbers of people coming forward to join the Army were already at a five-year high but the latest figures showed the

campaign is hitting the mark with a “substantial upturn” in applications.

The first five days saw a spike in interest, with 170,000 unique hits on the Army jobs website and 2,700 potential recruits submitting paperwork.

“You may feel the Service is dumbing down in terms of who it seeks to recruit as these ads are a change to the norm, but the current employment market is different,” explained Lt Gen Urch.

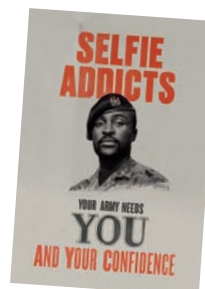
Speaking later at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Commandant Maj Gen Paul Nanson told *Soldier* he was pleased the Army was proving an attractive choice for future leaders.

He believes the University Officers' Training Corps and programmes to bring potential candidates up to standard for selection are also helping to attract a wealth of talent.

“I think our popularity proves we have a very good offer,” Maj Gen Nanson added.



“It proves we have a good offer”



Gurkha guard

■ **SOLDIERS** of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers have taken over guard duties at the royal palaces.

It is the first time the unit has carried out the function across London and Windsor since 2015.

“It's a real honour and something quite different from our normal role of providing force support engineering to the Field Army,” said Maj Ian Pilbeam (RE), OC 70 Gurkha Field Squadron.



‘MUM’ ON TOUR

■ **WHEN** 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment deployed on Op Toral it offered a new opportunity for their Services welfare officer.

Having been posted to the unit two-and-a-half years ago, Jane Melia has played a key role in supporting personnel and CO Lt Col Phill Moxey wanted this to continue in theatre.

Melia, who describes herself as the “battalion mum”, accepted the invitation and in the process became the first member of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) to deploy since 2004.

She spent two weeks visiting personnel at various sites across Kabul and said the experience was invaluable.

“It gave me a deeper understanding of what troops do,” the former nurse explained. “I wasn't expecting to go and cover a range of welfare issues as they are well supported by the padre, but being part of what was going on was really useful.”

“Hopefully this will start the ball rolling for the WRVS and when COs look at their welfare provision they will now realise we are deployable.”

IN NUMBERS:

£47,000

Amount spent supporting Staffordshire veterans and their families by ABF The Soldiers' Charity last year. Its main fundraiser for the county, Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo, will take place on May 11.



TRAVEL ALERT

■ **JOINT** patrols by the Royal Military Police and British Transport Police are to be expanded across London travel hubs following a successful trial.

The scheme is designed to share expertise between the two organisations while keeping passengers – including members of the Service community – safe.

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Battle of the ranks

FOOTBALLERS from the officers' and sergeants' mess will face the junior ranks of 4 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps in a 24-hour charity match this month. Staged at Dalton Barracks in Abingdon, the game will kick off at 1000 on March 13 and will raise money for Combat Stress. Visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/paul-douglass6 to sponsor the event, which has been organised by former Army player WO2 Paul Douglass (RLC, shown).

Fundraising target:
£5,000
For: Combat Stress



Saddling up

TROOPS from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers based at 22nd Signal Regiment are taking on a 100-mile ride from Beacon Barracks in Stafford to Snowdon before launching an ascent on the mountain. The event in July will conclude with a return trip on the bikes – all in 24-hours – and up to 100 participants are expected. Visit eventbrite.co.uk and search Eligius Endurance for more info.

Fundraising target:
£20,000
For: REME charity



Apache stands up to

TEMPERATURES as low as -27 degrees Celsius greeted members of the Army Air Corps when they made their flying debut inside the Arctic circle with the Apache attack helicopter.

The troops from 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment faced deep snow and "white-out" flying conditions during Exercise Clockwork in Bardufoss, Norway.

"It's been a challenge and a privilege to bring the Apache into the Arctic for the first time. We've been working at the limits of both human and the aircraft's performance," said OC Maj Huw Raikes (AAC).

His squadron is on standby to provide an aviation strike capability to the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade, the UK's extreme cold weather warfare specialists.

"The climate has had a significant impact," the officer continued.

"First, we had to learn how to

survive, then aircrew, groundcrew and engineers learnt new methods on how to operate.

"We're now developing techniques to fight in this environment.

"The boys and girls have done an amazing job that exceeded our expectations, and we're proving that Apache can work alongside the Royal Marines anywhere."

The airframes also flew alongside Wildcat reconnaissance helicopters during the package with troops learning how to operate together in the harsh environment.

The six-week training stint culminated in a live-firing package, which saw members of the groundcrew live out in the field overnight to establish a forward arming and refuelling point – the military equivalent of a Formula 1 pit stop.

"To set it up we had to dig spaces

LEAPING AHEAD



New-look Reds record
back-to-back wins
– page 74





Methodical:
Groundcrew kept going through bitter conditions during Ex Clockwork

Pictures: Cpl Jamie Hart, RLC

Arctic test in Norway

to pitch tents in four foot of snow, with trenches between them," explained aviation groundcrew specialist Cpl Scott Cullen (AAC).

"It was incredibly cold as well as really challenging to keep warm through the night and take on the extra calories the body needs.

"Everything we do has been slower and more methodical because you've got to think about the additional kit needed to keep you warm.

"But we've all worked together and there's been a massive sense of achievement among everyone."

Cpl Liz Gordon (REME), an aircraft technician maintaining the engines and flying systems, agreed.

"There's a balance between getting the job done and keeping people safe, but it's been rewarding to be out here pushing the boundaries of what the Apache can do," she added.

The squadron's relationship with 3 Commando Brigade will be tested again next year during Nato's Exercise Cold Response in Norway.



“It's been rewarding to push boundaries”

3 TOP TIPS for Arctic aircrews

WORK AS A TEAM

"Total trust is needed – for example, if only one of you can see a landing marker."

HAVE GOOD ADMIN

"Here, something as minor as leaving your gloves behind could threaten survival."

UNDERSTAND THE WEATHER

"And always be thinking about an option to get to safer, easier flying conditions."

by Maj Tim Pittaway, Attack Helicopter Force senior flying instructor



THE DATA DAY

■ HUNDREDS of troops have been asked to come up with ideas for a new formation that will use data and connectivity to win battles.

The Divisional Information Manoeuvre Group, part of Force Troops Command, will bring together five different functions – communications information systems, intelligence, cyber, influence activities and security.

Around 400 soldiers and 200 officers from across the signals and intelligence community travelled to Upavon to see the platforms and sensors that will play a key part in the new group's operations, and propose new concepts – no matter how off-the-wall.

Maj Gen Tom Copinger-Symes, general officer commanding Force Troops Command, said: "When I grew up generals often had the answers but in the 21st century it's not quite as simple as that.

"We've got to be prepared to reach down to find solutions.

"This is where the digital natives are, so we're sharing our thinking and seeing where it takes us."

The Divisional Information

Manoeuvre Group is due to have its first full-scale run out during Exercise Griffin Storm on Salisbury Plain in the autumn.



RIDER RETURNS

■ A SERVICEWOMAN who suffered a broken neck while stopping a gun carriage and its team of runaway horses has returned to the saddle.

LBdr Grace Gostelow (RHA) took part in a gun salute in Green Park, London to mark the 67th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne.

It was the first time she had been on a horse in a parade since the incident, which occurred during a rehearsal in London's Charlton Park in 2016.

Read February's issue ("I could have been paralysed") for the full story.

CHAPLAINCY MILESTONE

■ THE Queen headed the list of dignitaries who converged on a special service commemorating the 100th anniversary since the then Army Chaplaincy Department received its Royal prefix.

The event was held at the Guards' Chapel, Wellington Barracks.

FAMILIES HAVE A SAY

■ SERVING personnel and their loved ones are being urged to have their say on the issues affecting military families for a new report to be presented to government.

Produced by MP Andrew Selous, who previously served in the Honourable Artillery Company and The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the document will be used to highlight how more support can be offered.

The team is appealing for first-hand experiences in a number of areas including accommodation, deployment lengths and frequencies, children's education, health services, employment of non-serving family members and transition to civilian life.

All families and their data will remain anonymous, and researchers want to hear about what works well and what doesn't.

Send your views by email to andrew.selous.mp@parliament.uk by March 15 with *Independent Report on Service Families* as the subject.



■ GRENADIER Guards stood in line for their second uniform fitting ahead of the Queen's birthday parade in London on June 8.

Under the watchful eye of master tailor CSgt Darren Fry (Gren Gds), the regiment's personnel were closely checked at Lille Barracks in Aldershot.

Anything below perfection is not accepted for the annual event, which attracts 7,500 spectators, and each uniform is tailored to the individual.

"Everything needs to be exactly right for the day," said LSgt Shane Galvin (Gren Gds).

SHADER MEDAL

■ ARMY logisticians and comms experts serving in the battle against Daesh but away from the area of operations will be among those eligible for the Op Shader medal.

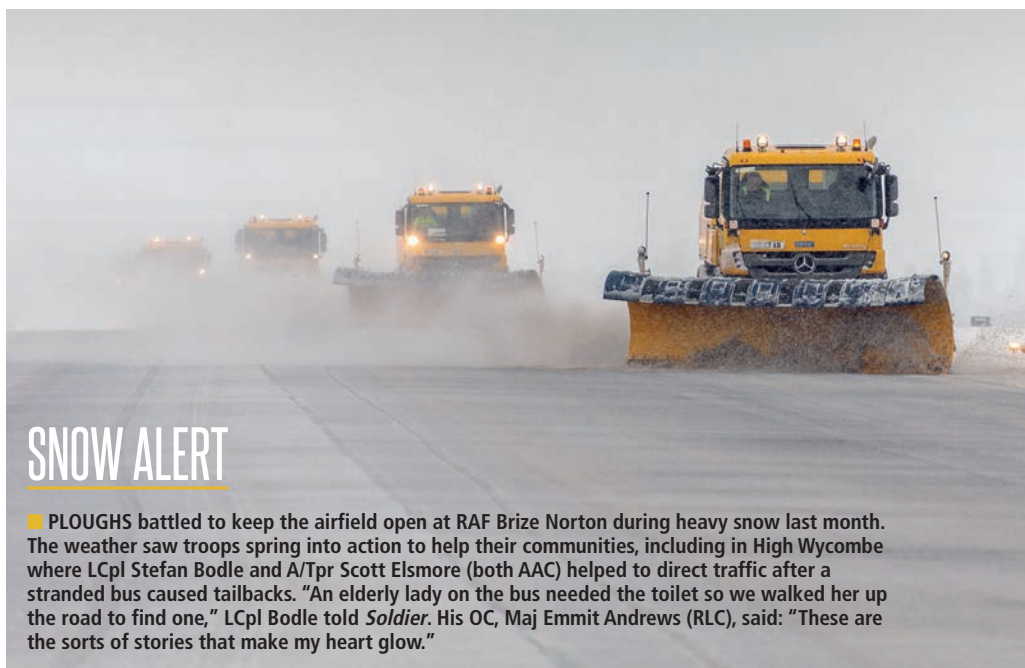
Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said troops outside Iraq and Syria would be in line for a version of the decoration without the clasp that is awarded to those in theatre.

Eligibility for the medal was extended to individuals in supporting roles by the Queen last year.

Other recipients will include Royal Air Force crews operating Reaper UAVs from the UK and America, and some Cyprus-based personnel.

Watch this

■ A HIGHLY sought-after Omega "Dirty Dozen" military issued stainless steel watch sold for £1,430 when it went under the hammer at Chiswick Auctions last month. The piece is from a group of 12 watches that were issued to British soldiers in the Second World War. A total of 25,000 were handed out but many were destroyed or buried with the fallen. It is believed that only 20 people in the world now own one, making them exceptionally rare items.



SNOW ALERT

■ PLOUGHS battled to keep the airfield open at RAF Brize Norton during heavy snow last month. The weather saw troops spring into action to help their communities, including in High Wycombe where LCpl Stefan Bodle and A/Tpr Scott Elsmore (both AAC) helped to direct traffic after a stranded bus caused tailbacks. "An elderly lady on the bus needed the toilet so we walked her up the road to find one," LCpl Bodle told *Soldier*. His OC, Maj Emmet Andrews (RLC), said: "These are the sorts of stories that make my heart glow."

Picture: Paul Crouch

“They clearly seemed very happy”

Bringing out the best in Reserves

NORTHERN Ireland's reputation for delivering a healthy contribution to the Reserves has been given a further boost after a team bringing recruits up to the mark received top-level praise.

The Ballykinler-based Army Training Unit was given an outstanding rating in its first Ofsted inspection, impressing the watchdog with its high standard of care and welfare to new troops.

Staffed by a 30-strong cohort, the unit puts Reservists through two elements of their phase one training before they join a phase two course focused on their military role.

Commanding Officer Lt Col Simon Cassells (R Irish) was delighted with the report, adding that his team worked hard to look after personnel and bring out the best in them.

He said the centre – which is part of

the Initial Training Group – continued to bring recruits from a variety of cap badges up to the required standard for military service.

He added: "I'm pleased with the efforts of my team, who continue to ensure that the best training is delivered. The inspectors clearly seemed very happy with all that we have been doing."

On a tab: The Army Training Unit in action





Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

Tweet Gav @ArmySgtMajor

MY BOOTS have barely touched the ground in the first couple of months of this job – I have never been so busy or had to get up to speed with such a range of stuff so quickly.

I've been out a lot, travelling to units all over the country and meeting quite a few of you.

Having never used Twitter in my life before, I now have more than 4,000 followers – it's been worth the pain of getting to grips with social media and has proved a great way of keeping in touch (see page 56).

And I have become a trustee of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, a good cause close to my heart.

I served as a rifleman for many years and, like you, I am a soldier 100 per cent.

My job is not about strategy – it's about taking our voice as soldiers and making sure

the head of the Army hears it.

On the positive side, we've had a lot to celebrate recently, including amazing successes in winter sports.

But I am not naive enough to think everything is perfect – you've been letting me know your concerns on everything from wellbeing and accommodation to pay.

I have been taking these forward and I guarantee I don't sugar-coat them when I put them to the chief of the general staff.

We are making progress in key areas – including with mental fitness and solutions to address some worries about career progression.

But I would also ask you to be patient.

I know you might think of senior commanders as people who turn up on special occasions before being whisked away. But having worked closely with them I promise you they care and are committed to making life an awful lot better.

I can make sure your thoughts are plugged straight into their thinking. But only if you help me.

Please get in touch through social media or Defence Connect and invite me to join you for work, whether that's doing phys, helping with a cadre or digging a shell scrape.

Soldiers are our Army and I know life is not easy sometimes – but if it was then everyone would be living it. If we work together, we can move things forward.

Picture: Shutterstock



Defined by video games?

YOUNG people today have often been branded as the PlayStation generation, addicted to their consoles, but I've never felt that label is either accurate or deserved.

I speak from experience because I have seen absolutely nothing to detract from soldiers' professionalism on the battlefield.

Away from the likes of *Call of Duty* they show real life courage – and I know this because there have been

times when they have saved my life.

Sure, our current generation is different. But life has changed too.

They are more tech savvy, a useful thing these days, and they might not want to stay in the military forever, leaving for new career paths.

But you could view this as a good recruitment tool; there is no better advert than people who leave the Army and tell the world what a great time they had in their years of service.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

SEVEN

operational tours completed by WO1 Gav Paton in his **22 years** in uniform.

Q What are your **BEST** and **WORST** ration pack items?

A I like a chocolate sandwich made with biscuits brown while corned beef heartburn is my least favourite.



“
I've
been
out a
lot
”

CHEWING THE FAT



■ **FEEL** free to drop me a line if you fancy joining me for a bite to eat.

I've just started a series of breakfast meetings for soldiers of different ranks to air their views.

This is a valuable opportunity to get together at a new place once a month, to chat informally about the highs and lows of our service as well as what we can do to make things better.

I'm proud to serve, and with the job I now have comes the opportunity to do more for our people.

I'm committed to listening and so is the chief of the general staff – so drop me a line to suggest a venue and we'll try to make it happen.



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'I was at the bottom. I didn't know how far I was going down'

When ex-RAF mechanic Ken felt most isolated, Blind Veterans UK got him back on his feet with training to cope with his sight loss, equipment to help him reconnect and company through our volunteer scheme.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

We believe every blind veteran should be able to lead the life they choose. Together we can help rebuild lives.

Find out more at **blindveterans.org.uk**



Troops take cats on prowl

■ SOLDIERS with mental and physical injuries found themselves in the hot seat of the Army's most agile vehicles during a special event in Devon. Assisted by experts from manufacturer Supacat, some 60 soldiers and their partners as well as veterans put the specially adapted Jackal and Coyotes through their paces during the outing at a test track in the Blackdown Hills. The day was organised by the Motorsport Endeavour Club, which provides opportunities for disabled drivers, and Forces charity Help for Heroes.



One officer's answer to Army slang...

BEING able to speak English – an official language of Nato – is vital for the international troops serving with HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps in Innsworth.

But when German officer Maj Florian Raebel (pictured right) was told to use the "dog and bone" he was left scratching his head – he had no idea that it meant phone.

Now his brush with cockney rhyming slang has prompted him to start his own phrasebook – a growing and often-fruity collection of British sayings that are enriching his vocab.

"There are some things you

don't learn on official training courses," the media ops officer at the Gloucestershire-based headquarters told *Soldier*.

"The cockney slang was really interesting – we have nothing like that in our language at all.

"I've been picking up some different phrases that are unique to the USA and Scotland too."

Pal Maj Laurence Roche (AGC (ETS)) said the German officer had been keeping the office entertained with his new grasp of leftfield lingo, adding: "He's taken his skills to the next level."



A WAY WITH WORDS... ARMY ACRONYMS: 3 OF THE BEST

AN improved guide to help troops get to grips with military lingo is seeing top hits on the Defence Intranet. The invaluable glossary and abbreviation finder service spells out the meaning behind a host of acronyms and other military language commonly used in MoD business. Hints and tips for use are available on the site – personnel have been asked to refer to this central dictionary rather than creating their own glossaries.

CoC
("cock")

Chain of Command

Sounds pretty disrespectful, but in military speak it simply refers to the world of different ranks

JSTFA
("jasatfar")

Joint Services Training Form Alpha

It might have the ring of a citrus fruit, but this is the form that needs to be filled in before any adventurous training activity

PES
("pez")

Physical Employment Standards

Those old enough to remember the 1990s will probably remember the retro fizzy sweets. But in this case the acronym refers to the new fitness tests for soldiers.



ANOTHER FEMALE FIRST

■ THE Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has appointed its first ever female company sergeant major.

WO2 Kelly Caswell-Treen, who is currently a combat medic with 4 Armoured Medical Regiment in Aldershot, will take up her post in the summer.

A veteran of operational tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, she has been in the Army for 16 years and applied for the role when the post was made available to women last year.

RESERVIST ACCOLADE

■ RESERVIST Bdr Sarah Grayston (RA) has been honoured for her commitment to supporting ex-Service personnel and fellow volunteers.

The assistant chief engineer at Wood Nuclear established an Armed Forces network within the company as a way of bringing those with a military background together, as well as their families.

The 33-year-old, who serves with 103rd Regiment, Royal Artillery, was presented with the inspirational individual accolade at the firm's annual President's Awards.



GUNNER BOOST FOR BOB

■ FORMER Gunner Bob Whent was given a 100th birthday party to remember thanks to the endeavours of the Lancashire Artillery Volunteer Band.

The musicians, part of 103rd Regiment, Royal Artillery, made a belated visit to the veteran in his Manchester care home after it was discovered he didn't have any surviving family members.

Whent (shown above), who served in the Royal Artillery Survey Regiment in the Second World War and was part of the Normandy landings, was treated to a special concert from the band and its pipes and drums.





THE career of *Soldier* photographer Graeme Main peaked last month when his name featured in our roll call of spine lines clues.

Did you guess the link between the words? (Alastair Cook, (Graeme) Main, (Chris) Packham and (Capt Hannah) Winterbourne were all recognised in the 2019 New Year Honours list.

This month we have teamed up with fly-fishing kit and clothing manufacturer Snowbee (www.snowbee.co.uk) to offer one reader a Nivalis down jacket.

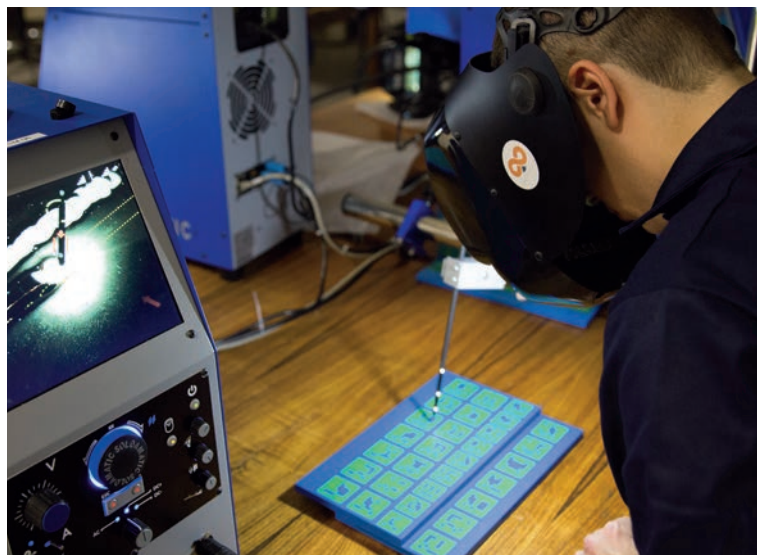
Designed for angling, but suitable for outdoor pursuits of all kinds, its feather down lining is encased in separate waterproof pockets with internal stitching for added protection.

To be in with a chance of winning one (hooded, collared or female version) tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers – including a daytime telephone number – to the usual postal address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by March 29.



WIN
a £230 Snowbee
Nivalis jacket

“We expect the savings to be significant”



New reality for Army welders

STATE-OF-THE-ART kit is allowing the next generation of Army welders to train for their role using augmented reality.

Trainees at the Defence School of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering are being given special helmets where computer images are mixed with their real-world environment (shown above).

It means they can practise tasks with different types of welding before getting their hands on the kit for real.

Pete Donovan, a lead trainer with defence contractor Babcock, said the eight headsets will give metal smith trainees in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

He told *Soldier*: “It allows us to ensure somebody understands the basics of welding – and we can also set the parameters to allow troops to try different techniques.

“The three-dimensional world that students can see through the helmet is very realistic.

“It means that if somebody is

struggling you can also set up a situation and help them get back on track – but the kit is not only proving valuable as a training tool, we are using less material too.

“We don’t have a figure yet, but we expect the savings we will make with it to be significant.”

Ex-Royal Air Force Serviceman Donovan pointed out that a new camera – which fixes to welding torches to give the operator perspective – was also proving useful.

It allows teams of students a close-up view of lessons and the chance to watch video later, he added.



Picture: Graeme Main

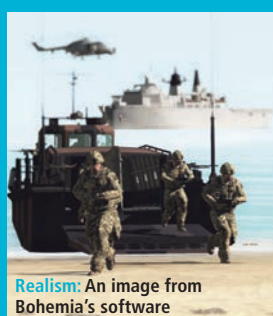
SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME...

INCREASING use of virtual reality continues apace with Army chiefs exploring how it could be permanently integrated into training.

A pilot with industry is under way, which immerses soldiers in digital worlds via special headsets.

Software developer Bohemia Interactive Simulations has been awarded the £1 million contract to take on the tests, which form part of a wider overhaul to collective training.

Top brass believe the tech, which has already been rolled out elsewhere in the military, could have huge potential, allowing troops to tackle situations such as full-on urban contacts, building clearances and public disorder.



Realism: An image from Bohemia's software



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[†]Selected vehicles only. Eligibility criteria applies. See ford.co.uk/militarysales for more information.

Model shown is a Fiesta ST-3 3-Door 1.5 200PS Manual Petrol with optional Full LED Headlamps.
Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 40.4 (7.0). *CO₂ emissions 136g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

*There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO₂ figures. The CO₂ figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.

THE BIG PICTURE

Bardufoss, Norway

ARCTIC OPENER

A BRITISH Apache looms above a Norwegian Leopard tank during Exercise Clockwork last month. The attack helicopter was making its flying debut inside the Arctic circle courtesy of 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps. While there, the personnel faced plummeting temperatures and challenging flying conditions. Turn to page 12 for the full story.

Picture: PO(Phot) Des Wade, RN





WIND DOWN

FITNESS / CASH / MENTAL HEALTH / NUTRITION / SKILLS & DRILLS

PEAK performance

From next month the personal fitness assessment is being ditched for a new system. Here's what to expect from the soldier conditioning review...



Broad jump

What? This horizontal jump from a standing position will assess lower limb explosive power.

How?

- ✦ Stand knees bent, arms out to the front
- ✦ Using your arms and legs, jump forward as far as possible
- ✦ Land with bent legs and under control

Shuttle sprints (100m)

What? This consists of five 20-metre sprints and will evaluate lower body explosive power and anaerobic capacity.

How?

- ✦ Start face down on the floor
- ✦ Jump up and sprint between the two defined lines
- ✦ Complete five sprints, totalling 100 metres, as fast as possible

Hex bar deadlift

What? A basic deadlift to test your lower limb strength.

How?

- ✦ Stand in the centre of a weighted hex bar with bent knees ready to lift
- ✦ Maintaining the correct lifting technique (back straight, pushing from your legs) lift the bar fully until you are standing upright and your arms are fully extended by your sides
- ✦ The PTI will select which weight you should use. The load will be heavy enough to tire you within ten repetitions. A conversion table will then be used to predict the maximum weight you could lift in one go

Run (2km)

What? A best-effort activity to assess aerobic capacity.

How?

- ✦ This test starts with a timed 800-metre group warm-up coordinated by a PTI
- ✦ You will then run two kilometres as fast as possible

Seated medicine ball throw

What? A weighted throw from a sitting position designed to measure explosive upper body strength.

How?

- ✦ Sit with your back and shoulders against a firm object or wall, maintaining contact with the surface throughout and keeping your legs straight in front of you and together
- ✦ Holding a four-kilogram medicine ball to your chest, throw it as far away as possible using an angle of approximately 45 degrees



Heaves

What? Also known as pull-ups, these measure upper body strength. Your score is the total number of heaves completed.

How?

- ✦ Adopt the hang position, with an over-grasp grip and hands slightly wider than shoulder width
- ✦ Lift your body vertically so that your chin is above the bar or beam, then lower yourself so that your arms are fully extended
- ✦ Repeat as many as you can in the time allotted by the PTI

In numbers:

2

times a year that Regular soldiers will complete the review. Reservists must do it once

1-15

the scoring range of the new tests

1hr 30min

approximate time it will take a group of 50 personnel to run through the exercises

Scores on the board

You will receive a mark between one and 15 for each activity and depending on your score will be graded green, amber or red. The scales for each level have been set broadly to allow personnel enough time to get used to the new regime and adjust their fitness programmes. PTIs will also be able to devise plans for those returning from injury or maternity leave, while soldiers at higher risk of musculoskeletal injuries could be directed to attend reconditioning training.

How can I prepare?

You don't need to train specifically for the review – it's there to give an idea of where you stand and areas to work on. What's key is conducting regular phys sessions – at least three times a week – as part of your unit's overhauled PT programme (*Soldier*, May 2018).

► IT COSTS nothing to dial numbers beginning 0800 and 0808, whether you're on a mobile or landline.

But did you know that other prefixes such as 0844, 0845, 0870 and 0871 can leave you seriously out of pocket? And that numbers starting 09 can cost pounds – rather than pence – per minute? If not, read on to find out how to avoid these costly calls in future...

Dial the number that companies advertise for overseas customers

This will usually begin +44 1 or +44 2 and is charged like a normal landline. If this doesn't work the first time around, try dialling 141 first to hide your own location and see if you can get through

For full details check out Matt 2, which is being updated in time for April

Tough call

Search for alternative numbers

on websites like
www.saynoto0870.com

Use the 03 number that many organisations offer

instead of pricey 08 numbers. These will be included in your mobile or landline minutes package too

Avoid eye-watering surprises on your phone bill



ALERT!

Mobile providers have a maximum level of service charge they can throw at you each month, but this figure is still high. The limit for one call is £48 and the highest combined access and service charge to 08 numbers in a month is £288 – ouch!

The cost

The bill for calling numbers such as 0844, 0845, 0870 and 0871 can vary depending on:

- The access charge of your phone company (read the fine print in your T&Cs for this)
- The service charge of the company you're calling (get an idea of this here www.gov.uk/call-charges)

When overseas...

Ways troops can make free calls while abroad

WITH WI-FI

Skype web calls – these allow you to have free voice or video conversations with other Skype users, but be careful about dialling landline or mobile numbers directly as these are chargeable

FaceTime/WhatsApp video calls – the latter works on all devices while FaceTime works only on Apple products. Those with iOS 7 or later can also make audio-only calls

WITHOUT WI-FI

Using your **Welfare Communications Everywhere (or WelComeE) card**, which provides deployed Service personnel with free calls, voicemail and internet access. If you haven't received one or have any questions about whether you qualify email customer.support@mywelcome.co.uk

WelComeE

Skype will see you now

Could tele-therapy help deal with battle trauma?

► IN an age where sex, socialising and shopping can all happen online, it's probably no surprise that some soldiers are turning to the web to get help with their mental health.

And with websites such as the Big White Wall already being endorsed by the military, could this style of therapy

be the way forward? It's a possibility that experts at Combat Stress are already considering – the charity has been testing out help sessions over Skype to see if they could benefit sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder. And the results were promising...

How the trial worked

► One-hour sessions of tele-therapy, as it is known, were delivered to 27 veterans via Skype over three months

► Two of those individuals were sent tablet devices because they didn't have the right equipment at home

► Measurements of mental health scores before and after the trial found an overall improvement because of the sessions

► Different veterans found different pros and cons to this treatment, but Combat Stress said that, overall, tele-therapy was an acceptable method of treating PTSD and that it will now run more widely

IN 3

Benefits of tele-therapy

1 Better use of time and money – trauma therapists can meet several veterans a day instead of travelling to meet one

2 Convenience – those in remote locations such as the Scottish islands or people with jobs and childcare commitments can avoid the hassle of travel

3 More relaxing – sufferers who feel anxious about leaving their house can be at ease in their own environment

The future's bright

Could the NHS and even the Armed Forces take tele-therapy on?

Experts from this study are hoping so. Ray Lock, chief executive of the Forces in Mind Trust which funded the research, said online therapy sessions offered a new opportunity.

But to those feeling sceptical, don't worry – residential and face-to-face treatments aren't likely to go anywhere. Some of those on the trial said that talking on Skype felt more impersonal; tele-therapy isn't for everyone.

Don't be dense



Mixed fruit, low-fat yoghurt and oats

Whipped cream and a small amount of fruit

Pictures: Peter Davies, FreePik

The healthy eating approach that could help you shed the pounds

► LOSING weight can be a crappy prospect – particularly in the winter months when feeling hungry and passing up on your favourite grub is the last way you want to spend time.

So could focusing on energy density be the way forward? Maybe. Because not only does it involve bulking up your meals rather than slimming them down, it also revolves around getting plenty of winter favourites on your plate, including pasta, stews and soup.

Read on to learn more...

What's the big idea?

Energy density is the amount of energy (or calories) you find in each lump of food. It is calculated by:

$$\text{calories in a dish} \div \text{its weight in grams}$$

The idea is that by eating foods with low energy density – that is, less energy per mouthful – you are eating fewer calories. And this means you can have satisfying portion sizes without piling it on.

It's a method already endorsed by diabetes charities and the British Nutrition Foundation, who both say that a low energy density diet can help maintain a healthy body weight.

Weighing it up

Studies have shown that people tend to consume about the same weight of food each day, but not necessarily the same amount of

^ This picture shows how two meals can have the same energy content but vary hugely in size. It's a no brainer which would leave you fuller for longer.

energy (or calories). So by eating a low energy density diet it may be possible to consume fewer calories without feeling hungrier.

What is the energy density of your food?

VERY LOW <0.6kcal/g
LOW 0.6-1.5kcal/g
MEDIUM 1.5-4kcal/g
HIGH >4kcal/g

Top tips to create low density meals

- + Bulk them up by adding extra veg and pulses.
- + Choose high fibre versions of carby foods, like brown rice and wholemeal bread.
- + Add extra water where you can to sauces or soups.

+ Swap the cream on your

dessert for extra fruit.

+ Buy lean meat.

+ Avoid fatty dressings on salads.



Picture *perfect*

Bag that winning shot for the Army Photographic Competition 2019 with these tricks of the trade from *Soldier's* pro, Graeme Main

► **ENTRIES** will soon open for the Service's annual showcase of all things photographic.

Anyone can submit images and the good news is you don't need a fancy camera to get the money shot – smart phones will get the job done too.

Judges are looking for anything that promotes the Army's work, so take a closer look at what's going on around you and snap away.

But first, check out the following tips:



What's your focus?

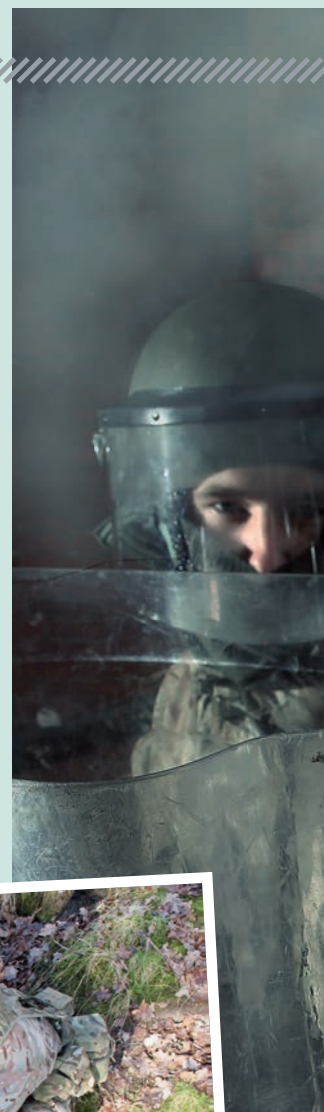
Every picture should have a point of interest. If you're photographing people this is usually the eyes, or maybe it's the turret of a vehicle. Whatever it is, it doesn't necessarily need to be in the centre of the frame, but it does have to be in focus. Think dynamic, not static, and try to capture people's emotions.

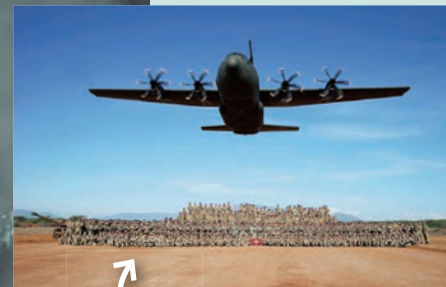
Be prepared to get dirty

If moving closer or achieving the right angle means getting into a river, lying down in the mud or wading through a swamp, do it.

Brace up

Keep the camera as steady as possible – holding it against something solid can help.





Get up close

Move nearer to whatever you are photographing to fill the frame. Avoid lots of empty space – you don't need enough room to fly a Hercules across the top of the picture – unless that's the plan.

Beware of clutter

Make sure the background is free of distractions. It should enhance your image, so keep it plain or make sure it's relevant to the topic.

Mix it up

Change the heights and angles from which you shoot your photos – go low or high. Experiment with filters but do it sparingly and keep hold of the original version.

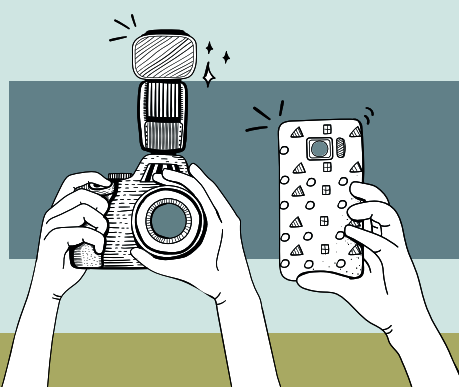
Is your light right?

Unless you're doing it deliberately you don't usually want dark shadows across people's faces or for objects to appear silhouetted. Keep the sun behind you and turn your flash on outside – even if it's set to auto – to light up your subject and fill in any dark areas. Remember though, this won't work for landscape shots.



Most importantly...

Be creative! It's ok to break any of the above rules, or even make up your own. Imagination will make your images stand out.



Want to know more?

Full details about the Army Photographic Competition, including categories and entry rules can be found in **ABN 20/19**

FEELING





It's not all fun in the
sun in Cyprus...



Report: Steve Muncey

Pictures: Graeme Main

THE SMALL BAND OF MEN TRY TO STAY AS LOW AS POSSIBLE...



...winding their way through soggy sand dunes as a fast jet roars overhead.

One of the group swings around, the long lens of his camera aiming squarely at a smooth black wing.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a Land Rover appears. Four British soldiers jump out and ask the men to identify themselves. It turns out they are Russians; just tourists, they claim.

The troops seize their camera before reviewing the saved images.

The wings that have been

photographed belong to nothing stealthier than a rare black flamingo – a cherished target for birdwatchers – but several stills are deleted anyway.

In the background of the pictures were antennas and sub-stations belonging to the Ministry of Defence – and photographing any of these assets is strictly forbidden.

This is an area called Salt Lake, near Royal Air Force Akrotiri in the UK's Western Sovereign Base Area of Cyprus.

The installations are a vital part of Britain's global intelligence-gathering network and, as a result, they and



the surrounding land are under constant surveillance.

In a small camp on the marshes a team of soldiers watch over a large bank of CCTV monitors 24 hours a day.

And if anything suspicious arises, like this real-life scenario from recent months, a four-man quick reaction team is dispatched to investigate.

"The troops on observation duty couldn't be sure who these Russians were exactly, or what they were doing," explains Sgt Daniel Ward (Mercian, pictured below left).

"They had a large lens camera and were pointing it in a direction they shouldn't.

"We have certain rights and can tell people to delete images if necessary. If they refuse to cooperate they can be detained and dealt with by the Sovereign Base police."

Chop and change

Sgt Ward is stationed at Salt Lake along with 16 colleagues from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment – one of two infantry formations stationed in Cyprus.


The work of these units goes largely unsung but it's absolutely crucial to the UK's defence efforts.

The Mercians are currently providing security at three major sites – Salt Lake, the Troodos radar station and the joint Service signals facility at Ayios Nikolaos in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area.

Meanwhile, the other formation – 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment – is on high readiness to deploy in 48 hours while also being responsible for guarding numerous Operation Shader assets at RAF Akrotiri.

These roles are swapped between the two resident units every 12 months, so troops' skills and drills need constant refreshing for the many threats or crises that could crop up.

One of them is going into combat at very short notice, and



on a training area near Episkopi Royal Anglian personnel are preparing for just that.

They are chasing a mock enemy through boggy ground, rocky escarpments, streams and heavy undergrowth that, at times, limits visibility to less than 20 metres.

“This is a good chance to shake out as a company with fire support elements and put our basic soldiering abilities to the test in a steep and rocky environment,” says Pte Jordan Sizer.

There are civilian houses in sight, public roads, shepherds and even locals picking herbs on the river banks.

“At times it feels more Middle Eastern here than European and it all adds extra realism,” explains Maj Jim Phipps, officer commanding C Company.

“The arduous and complex terrain challenges the guys as much as the enemy and as we train in the heat of summer we’re also acclimatised for operations in this part of the world.”

Surprises in store

This particular exercise is simulating being deployed to a war zone at two days’ notice.

The recall mechanism was tested first, ensuring a lead group of 108 troops had reported to Alexander Barracks in Dhekelia with their kit, equipment, travel documents and weapons within ten hours.

“We tested processes at



“
This is a good
chance to
shake out and
put our basic
soldiering
abilities
to the test
”





⇒ RAF Akrotiri, the freight and logistic elements and used coaches to simulate transport aircraft,” explains Capt Sam King (pictured below).

“We then moved to a drop-off point and went into a major combat operation with riflemen, reconnaissance troops, snipers, mortar teams and anti-tank units.”

The high readiness battalion may also be called upon to help manage a humanitarian disaster or an evacuation so a completely different set of skills needs to be ingrained as well.

“Green stuff like this exercise is enjoyable, but it’s the variety of training that’s the best thing about being based in Cyprus,” says LCpl Peter Bell.

“The civil order exercise we did recently was really interesting – we simulated extracting British citizens out of a foreign country during an emergency.

“We had to familiarise ourselves with something new, which was to segregate people according to their nationality and status. We also learnt how to control a crowd and keep a lid on a situation.

“You don’t expect to get involved in something like that when you join the Army.

“Now I’ve done that exercise, I’ll never forget the skills I’ve acquired.”

Slower times

Not all the duties associated with the high readiness battalion are



eye-opening though, and around 60 Royal Anglian personnel are required to guard RAF Akrotiri and carry out maritime and helicopter patrols of the surrounding areas.

A two-month stint here is made up of a series of four-day rosters.

After guarding the airfield troops move on to leave periods, training on the nearby ranges and mock urban village or manning the quick reaction force that responds to any breaches of security on the air base.

“The duties here can be slightly boring for these guys from time to time but we mix it up,” says Maj Will Otridge.

“They get the importance of their role in supporting Op Shader, making sure the airfield is secure and the jets can go off and do their stuff and not be affected by intruders or foreign object damage.

“The main threat here is espionage so we need to be vigilant of anything suspicious, maybe people sneaking around or coming close to the base in a boat to have a snoop.

“They do try to get on to the airfield through the maritime flank or through the fence on occasions.”

Big bad world

Any doubts about the importance of these duties are dispelled when RAF pilots brief the soldiers about their

“
They get the
importance
of their role
in supporting
Op Shader
”





forthcoming missions.

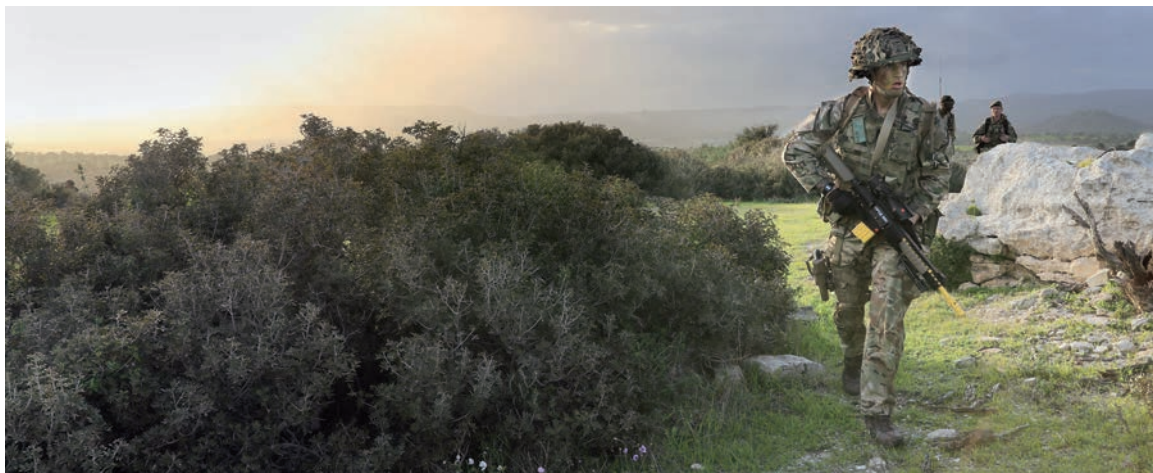
"The talks are really interesting and the fact we are part of Op Shader means a lot to us," says Pte Jordan Smith.

"We do regular patrols around the airfield perimeter and in and around the hangars, making sure everyone who is there should be there and hasn't somehow evaded the entry checkpoints.

"We are under no illusion about how important that is and to stay vigilant; our role feels very real."

It would be understandable if troops didn't appreciate this. There's no carnage to be seen, no sound of guns being fired in anger and Cyprus's golden beaches and friendly locals can make the troubles of the world seem far away.

But thankfully the soldiers based here – whether on adrenalin-fuelled exercises or routine guard duties – recognise that with Syria just 90 miles across the water, that is not the case at all. ■





TORAL TRIUMPH

Having troops held at constant high readiness in Cyprus proved its worth last autumn when around 125 personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment were asked to assist with Nato's mission in Afghanistan.

Over a three-month period they bolstered the battlegroup of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards – providing a force protection role to advisers and mentors with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

Soldier asked personnel about the experience...

What stood out most for you about the tour?

It was different because while there was a threat, you never saw it. It wasn't what many of us expected – **some of us had done Herrick tours** but Kabul is a massive built-up city and **everything around you was a potential threat.**

Did the tour make you a better soldier?

Yes, in terms of confidence and leadership. I briefed and guarded a three-star American official and a major general a couple of times. **It's given me the sort of experience you can't get from an exercise.**

LCpl Tom Lunt



What was the biggest challenge of the deployment?

Getting out of the door. We knew we could be moved at 48 hours' notice anywhere in the world – it just came at us a lot quicker than we expected because we had literally just arrived in Cyprus when we received the order to deploy.

How did you prepare infantry soldiers for that?

On our mission rehearsal training we prepared hard for the insider attack. We had to get it in the lads' heads **to be aware of what was going on around them at all times** and that if they suspected something, or felt uncomfortable about a person hanging around, **they should act straight away.** Drag your adviser out of the meeting. Even private soldiers guarding a three-star officer had to be prepared to do this.

WO2 Liam Thomas

What were you asked to do?

We were deployed to take over from US troops and had to **backfill bodyguarding tasks** until the scheduled arrival of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment. In the main, we supplied two- to four-man teams to provide **protection to senior advisers.** Our men often had to brief senior US officers directly on the movement plan and the actions on should anything happen.

Maj Paul Goddard



LAST ORDERS: Time's Running Out for 2014/15 MOD Tax Refunds



The new tax year starts in April and what that means for you depends on what you've done before.

If you've never claimed a tax refund yet

If you're new to MOD tax refunds, there's never been a better time to get back what HMRC owes you. You could even retake lost ground from previous years if you've missed out before. There's a limit of 4 years on tax refund claims – so if you haven't made a claim for 2014/15 yet, the clock's ticking.

An average Armed Forces refund currently comes to £2,261 for a 4-year claim, and there's no reason to leave the taxman sitting on your money.

If you've claimed with RIFT in the past

It's time to make sure you've got everything ready to make your next claim as soon as the tax year ticks over.

Just log into your MyRIFT account, or get in touch, to enter or update:

- ✓ The bases you've worked at and postings you've had.
- ✓ Your work travel and any training you've been on.
- ✓ Payslips and records of work expenses.
- ✓ Details of any other cash you've got coming in (from rent, for instance).

Over 1,000 existing Armed Forces customers have already told us they'll be claiming their refunds with us again next year, and we're getting amazing feedback from them:

- ✓ 88% are recommending us to friends, families and colleagues.
- ✓ 89% tell us how easy we are to work with.
- ✓ 90% say it's our expertise that keeps them coming back.

Whether it's your first RIFT refund or your 20th, we've made the whole process simple and painless.

Since being awarded Armed Forces Covenant Silver status last year, we've been fighting harder than ever for the military community. We've already claimed £68 million in tax refunds for MOD customers, and our Military Engagement events are putting those refunds within reach for more personnel than ever before.

When it comes to Armed Forces tax refunds, you're always better off with RIFT.

'ATTENTION' Claimed before?

Reduced fee of 25%* when you claim again.

Our promise to those we serve.

CALL OF THE *WILD*





In a few weeks these soldiers
will boldly go where no
British troops have gone
before – Canada's remote and
inhospitable Baffin Island

Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Peter Davies

NORTH of the Arctic Circle the nights are already shorter. By mid-April the sun will no longer set fully – its rays casting a pale glow across the sky even in the small hours.

As the twilight lifts on Baffin Island, a desolate landscape of forbidding mountain peaks, deep glaciers and spectacular fjords is revealed.

Even at the height of what passes for summer in these climes, visitors had better strap in for an uncomfortable stay.

It is a place of sub-zero temperatures, driving snow and biting winds. The ideal setting, then, for an Army expedition.

Next month, a team of Servicemen and women will venture deep into the wilderness to spend two weeks exploring this picturesque but unwelcoming environment.

And in doing so they will be in uncharted territory – at least as far as the British Forces are concerned. Organisers can find no record of previous military parties from the UK having visited the area.

The rare chance to break new ground in such a remote location is clearly a bucket-list experience for those involved, but the long-term goal is to secure the future of mountaineering within the Service by bringing on the next generation of potential leaders.

When WO2 Will Brant (RAPTC) began planning the trip more than three years ago, the remoteness of Baffin made it an obvious choice as a suitably stern test.

"We were looking for somewhere with enough isolation but where real-world rescue is available," he explained.

"There's a requirement to develop people in extreme, exposed areas rather than the usual ski-leader training that takes place in the Alps.

"You can count the ski-mountaineering instructors within the Forces on two hands, so there's a real need for more.

"Building that experience takes time and you can't do it unless you've been on an expedition like this."

Having settled upon a destination, the call went out for team members.

Eighty hopefuls applied and over the course of 18 months have been whittled down to the final squad, who have the prerequisite adventurous training experience to cope with the demanding mission.

The 12-strong group are a mixed bunch, ranging in rank from sergeant up to lieutenant colonel and including three women and





two Reservists.

Aside from the chance to challenge themselves, there is a sense among the team that opportunities to visit such remote areas are under threat from climate change and mass tourism.

Indeed, the expedition was moved forward by a week on the advice of Inuit guides, who say they've observed the sea ice melting earlier year on year.

"It's a privilege to be able to go to parts of the world that are still frozen because you don't know whether in ten to 20 years time there'll be sufficient snow to go and do stuff like this," said Maj Pam Buttifant (AGC (ETS)).

"I'm grateful I've been to Greenland twice – the second time it was raining, not snowing, and I got wet and almost suffered from hypothermia.

"That change must be because of global warming.

"Also, if you think about Everest – so many people go there that a lot of guides are saying it's not that nice a place to visit because there's a lot of rubbish and it's basically being trashed by climbers.

"So part of what this expedit is trying to achieve is to show there are these remote places that we have to look after and preserve because that's as the planet should be, unspoiled by humans."

To that end, the team will try to leave little more than footprints behind them on Baffin, taking all their waste away with them.

"Just like the Army does a lot of conservation on exercise areas like Salisbury Plain and Batus, we will train on Baffin but will leave it as we found it – untouched," added Maj Buttifant.

Exercise Arctic Mountaineer, as the expedit is dubbed, will begin with a six-hour snowmobile insertion across a frozen inlet and inland to Auyuittuq National Park Reserve, where the soldiers will establish a base camp from which to explore.

Once the guides drop them off they will be completely alone

with the elements, around 100 kilometres from rescue, so with just a few weeks to go before their departure the squad is busy with final preparations.

Soldier caught up with four of them at the Alpine Training Centre in the Bavarian Alps to get some specifics about the individual skills they are bringing to the expedit, as well as the risks they will face in the course of their adventure...



MEET THE TEAM



THE BOSS

WO2 Will Brant, RAPTC

Profile: With around 16 years of mountaineering experience under his belt, the 37-year-old warrant officer is a veteran of multiple expedit – including one to Antarctica in 2012. He also advised the Ice Maiden team ahead of their record-breaking mission to the South Pole.

"I'm looking forward to taking the group into an environment that few people get to see, full stop, and inspiring them to achieve something amazing. I'm lucky that I've been developed as a mountaineer since I was a corporal up to the level I am now, but we need the next lot of instructors capable of running this kind of trip to come through. Hopefully this will show people what is possible."



THE DOCTOR

Capt Sarah Bass, RAMC

Profile: A Reservist since 2009, the 28-year-old has gained experience of trauma wards during her training as a GP, and immediate care through her role with 335 Medical Evacuation Regiment. She is also studying towards a diploma in mountain medicine.

"I've come up with the medical plan and put together training for the team. It's a little daunting. The worst-case scenario would be someone getting a bad injury and being unable to extract them quickly because the weather's bad. So we are having to take a bespoke medical kit – drugs, strong painkillers and kit for splinting a leg or stitching up a wound. It's all about risk mitigation but if something does go wrong, it could go badly wrong. It's dangerous and exciting."

“

It's a privilege to be able to go to parts of the world that are still frozen

”



THE EX-ICE MAIDEN

Maj Sandy Hennis, R Signals

Profile: The 37-year-old Reservist has significant cold weather experience to share with the team having spent 62 days crossing Antarctica with five other Servicewomen during Expedition Ice Maiden in 2017/18.

This trip is more complex than the Ice Maiden expedition in some ways. The mountaineering aspect and the downhill skiing make it more technical so the chances of injury are higher. The risk of frostbite is probably fairly similar. Even though the weather in Antarctica is more aggressive, you can still make the same mistakes

here with gloves or clothing. Adventurous training like this is the only way we can push soldiers to their limits in an environment akin to war, without actually going to war. When you put people out of their comfort zone you develop their confidence and resilience, and you end up with a more capable individual.

”



THE MAP MAKER

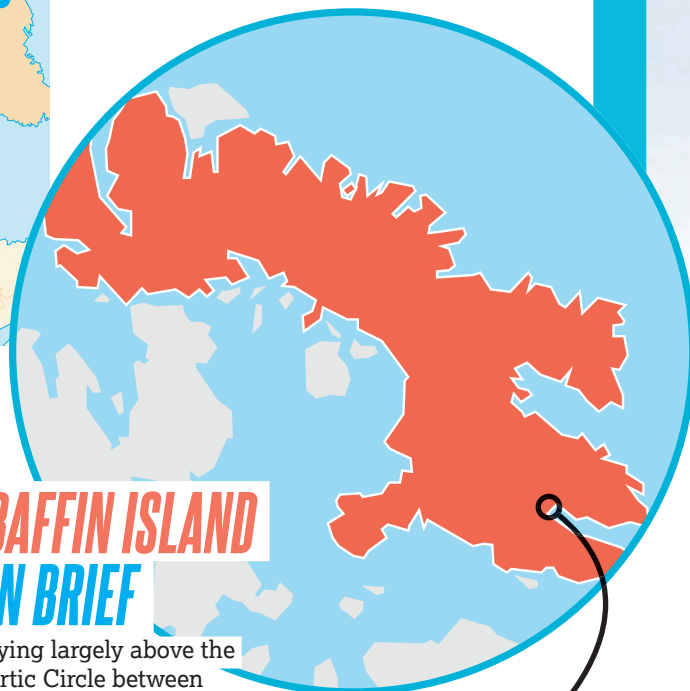
Capt Joe Bass, RE

Profile: Having joined the Army in 2012, the 31-year-old serves with 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) and his specialist skills have helped build a picture of the terrain the team will face.

I sourced Baffin Island mapping from the Canadian authorities and then created bespoke 3D versions so the team could visualise the ground during the planning stages, and use them for briefings about the expedition. I have also been using geographical data to create avalanche risk maps, showing areas that are more hazardous due to the terrain, to assist with route selection on the ground. If available, up-to-date satellite imagery will also help us avoid crevasse-prone areas.

”

WHERE ON EARTH?



BAFFIN ISLAND IN BRIEF

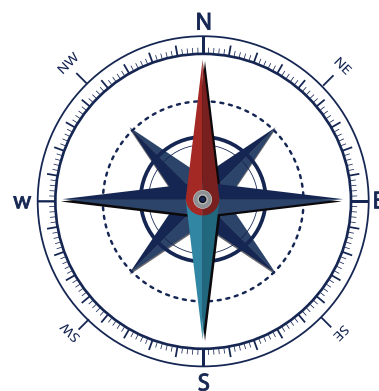
Lying largely above the Arctic Circle between Greenland and the north American mainland, Baffin Island is part of Canada's Nunavut territory. It is surrounded by sea ice for much of the year and is home to some **11,000 inhabitants**, many of whom are indigenous Inuits.

195,928

**area of the
landmass in
square miles**

– more than twice the size of the UK and the fifth largest island in the world

-10°C average annual temperature in Iqaluit, a town in the south of the island



64-73 degrees north
its approximate latitude range

27-48

**age range
of the group**

12

**number of
soldiers on
the team**



DANGER ZONE

Venturing into such remote territory brings risk as well as reward. Here's how the team plan to mitigate the hazards they will face...



POLAR BEARS

These fearsome predators usually stick to sea ice along the coast but have been known to roam inland. They are the largest land carnivores on Earth so the best bet for humans is to avoid encounters altogether.

“We will have perimeter fences around our camp and deterrents like bear spray and flares, however we can't take any guns with us. The park rangers keep a record of sightings and there are very few where we are going – their main food source is seals so they want to be by the sea. As long as we keep our food barrels well away from the area where we're sleeping they'll go for those, rather than us.”

WO2 Will Brant



AVALANCHES

Whereas in the Alps skiers have daily snow reports to warn them of the avalanche risk, on Baffin the team will have to analyse weather patterns and conditions on the ground to make their own forecasts.

“We'll all be wearing transceivers (shown above), which you use to find anyone buried. You probe the snow until you locate them then you dig hell for leather. If you get them out within 15 minutes the likelihood of them surviving is more than 80 per cent, but any longer and their chances fall off a cliff. I've been involved in a couple of avalanches – once in France I was buried up to my waist when we were skiing off-piste. I brushed myself off but it gave me an appreciation of how things can quickly go wrong.”

WO2 Will Brant



COLD WEATHER

With temperatures potentially as low as -30 degrees Celsius and wind chill to consider, the team's cold weather drills will certainly need to be on point.

“Hypothermia and cold injuries like frostnip and frostbite are something we're going to have to manage the whole time. Hypothermia could affect any of us – that's when your core temperature drops below 35 degrees Celsius. But it's not like you can stick a thermometer in someone's ear – you need to know how to recognise it. The first signs can be people seeming withdrawn or their admin getting slack. Nutrition, hydration and tiredness all come in to it too. We will have a buddy system and check on each other throughout the trip.”

Capt Sarah Bass

“

When the aircraft
are coming in
and you're getting
underneath them,
that's when the
fun starts

”



THE ART OF HOOKING UP

Meet the troops who
spend their days
beneath the blades
of UK military aircraft

DO YOU know your strops from your swivel hooks? If not, your unit has probably called on the expertise of the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron (JHSS) at some point.

Whether that help involved rigging up combat supplies for an exercise or ensuring landing sites are made safe on operations, there are not too many areas of the Army's work this team isn't caught up in.

And if you've ever witnessed the disconcerting sight of an Iso container dangling perilously overhead from a Chinook, you probably have the JHSS to thank for your skull remaining intact.

Based at RAF Benson, the squadron is made up of personnel from the Royal Logistic Corps, Army Air Corps and Royal Air Force.

And as the go-to experts in preparing underslung loads, "the hookers" (as they are known to colleagues) deploy small teams in support of most major training packages and many international missions.

Guided by complex sets of diagrams on their iPads, the troops work in rigging teams of four, overseen by instructors furnished with some fascinating stories – from their part in the 2014 flood relief efforts in southern England to Op Ruman, the humanitarian mission to the hurricane-struck Caribbean three years later.

"To be honest, rigging the loads is the most boring part of the job," explains A/Tpr Jason Vaughan (AAC, pictured left) on Salisbury plain, where he and the rest of the squadron are honing their skills on week two of their annual training package, Exercise Habile Hooker.

"When the aircraft are coming in and you're getting underneath them, that's when the fun starts.

"Running around with a Chinook right over your head; that's pretty exciting.

"It's good to mix about with other cap badges, too. We went on exercise with the Royal Artillery recently and got to hook up their guns."

Their fortnight-long stint in the field has thrown some bitter weather at these troops as they practise preparing and securing different underslung loads.

But highly challenging environments are par for the course in this role.

After all, the downdraft from a Chinook's rotors is easily strong enough to knock a soldier off his feet and send any unsecured kit flying.

"If you mess any of the links up and they're not right – especially on Iso containers – it could have disastrous consequences," says Pte Paul Pearson (RLC).

"If these things fall out the sky, things go very wrong.

"And it's pretty different doing this out on exercise compared with back in camp."



⇒ He's not wrong. As a cold fog sets in, the low visibility threatens to cancel the arrival of today's airframe, and it becomes clear how challenging this sort of work can be in unpredictable conditions.

"When it's freezing cold and you're tying up knots you need to double check those knots to make sure they're not loose because your fingers are cold," A/Tpr Vaughan adds.

His job as a defence landing point commander means he is qualified to oversee and check a rigging team's work – a substantial responsibility for someone of junior rank.

But the scale of the task and its importance is not lost on him or his seniors.

"The biggest risk for me in this role is anything that is being carried in the sky," says squadron OC, Maj Emmit Andrews (RLC, pictured right).

"But the RAF personnel in our team project a massive culture of air safety and airworthiness, which is obviously great.

"In the aviation world, errors tend to result in fatalities. So we need to come on exercise and let the pilots and crew lift.

"Whether those loads are 1,000 or 2,000 kilos is immaterial."

The exercise is also proving an opportunity for individuals to share knowledge and operational stories, which range from last year's movement of 100 tonnes of chalk to replenish a National Trust carving to the removal of a suicide victim's car from a cliff edge in the South West.

But according to Maj Andrews, experience must be tempered with making sure the right boxes are ticked.

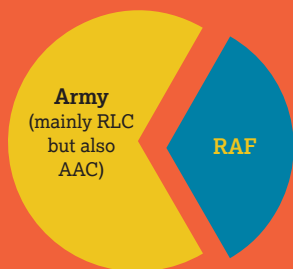
"Someone might say 'I have rigged a lot of these things, it's easy', but currency is everything in this role," he explains.

Most of their work may be focused on helicopter landing sites, but the JHSS's vital



FACT FILE: Joint Helicopter Support Squadron

PERSONNEL



ROLE

Ground support to UK support helicopters. Troops are experts in packing, preparing and rigging underslung loads for British military helicopters as well as ensuring landing sites are safe and suitable.

LOADS

Could include anything from vehicles – WMIK or Jackal, for example – to food, water, ammo, artillery pieces or trailers.

HISTORY

Its formation dates back to 1982 around the time of the Falklands conflict, when the need for specialist teams was recognised.

WEIGHT RANGE

1-9 tonnes (max load for a Chinook)



“
The RAF personnel
in our team project
a massive culture of
air safety
”



PERSONNEL

Troops are split into four-man rigging teams, known as “heli handling teams” with a mobile air ops team of recce specialists who find suitable landing areas and prepare them.



DID YOU KNOW?

A Chinook is capable of carrying another Chinook (or Apache) as an underslung load if required

HELI GOOD

Found yourself operating on, or near, a helicopter landing site? Members of the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron have the following advice...

› **STAY ALERT** as to what is going on around you at all times and report any safety concerns to whoever is in charge of the HLS.

› WEAR THE CORRECT PERSONAL PROTECTIVE

EQUIPMENT. As a minimum this means helmet, ear protection and eye wear.

› **ALWAYS LISTEN TO THE GROUND CREW** and the instructions they give you.

› **WEAPONS** should all be made safe.

› **THINK DOWNDRAFT** and if something is loose and flapping around in a dangerous manner, don't just ignore it – secure all kit.



operational capability means broader soldiering skills must also be up to scratch.

Today's stint on Salisbury plain comes hot on the heels of a week on Longmoor Training Area, where the squadron conducted patrolling drills and section attacks as well as an urban fighting package.

It's a thankless time of year to be under canvas, but with so many commitments over the warmer months – including regular exercise postings to El Centro, California – winter is the most practical period for the squadron to come together.

Another burden on their busy diary is the training wing's week-long courses which are held 12 times a year and teach personnel from across the Forces how to rig underslung loads and run landing points for themselves.

Junior troops are certainly enthusiastic about the part they are playing in the bigger picture of military life.

Pte Pearson talks glowingly about his stint on exercise in the United States last year, and on a cold weather survival package in Norway.

“There's so much opportunity to do courses and better yourself here,” he adds.

Comms specialist Pte Leah Andrews (RLC, pictured left) – one of five women in the squadron – agrees.

“I originally joined the Army to be a dental nurse but it wasn't for me,” she explained.

“I wanted a change and a comms specialist I know sold the job to me, so I transferred and I'm really glad I did. I love being outdoors and this is such hands-on work.

“I like going to different places and there have been more opportunities to do sport here as well.”

Troops in the JHSS appear to be as driven as they are professional. No wonder they are called on with such regularity by the wider military community. ■





Kosovo kickabout: May 21, 2001

« This was taken on patrol with 1st Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment in the capital Pristina when they were involved in peacekeeping duties. It was early doors in my time at *Soldier*. I was keen on becoming a sports photographer and I'd quickly found that football is a universal language wherever in the world you go.

SHOOTING GALLERY

Soldier stalwart tells the personal tales behind his pictures as he prepares to receive an MBE later this month for his services to military photography



WHEN Graeme Main's passion for photography began as a student living in 1990s Edinburgh, he could never have envisaged where it would take him.

But nearly three decades later, as *Soldier's* senior snapper, he has clocked up thousands of air miles recording military ops and activity around the world.

And this month he is to be appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his work, in a ceremony at Windsor Castle.

Main served as a unit photographer with the Royal Air Force in Berkshire before starting his tenure at the magazine in 1999.

Since then, the job has seen him embed with troops across many of the world's conflict zones – among them Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Elsewhere, his love of sport has seen him capture the extraordinary success stories of soldier athletes at the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and countless other competitions at all levels.

While he has won many awards for his work along the way, Graeme admitted the moment he received a letter telling him of the MBE was among the proudest of his life.



Ardoyne the morning after: September 5, 2001

« This is the aftermath of demonstrations at the Church of the Holy Cross School in Belfast – the first time I had to photograph real conflict. The area, Ardoyne, was a notorious flashpoint between Protestant and Catholic communities. The evening before it had been the most violent place I'd ever seen. I was absolutely terrified, but then I saw the soldiers dealing with the riot in a composed and professional way and it was reassuring.

Mean streets of Basra: June 8, 2003

» It's Op Telic 2 and the second time the magazine had been in Iraq. We were in a convoy of Warriors. The image sums up a moment in time – a lady in traditional Arabic dress, the smoke rising from a pile of burning tyres. What you don't get is the fetid smell of this place, which could be overpowering at times. This picture won me Army image of the year.



Kabul cricketers: November 19, 2003

» Another picture showing my love of sport – in this case soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles are fielding while an Afghan child bats in an unorthodox cricket match during one of the earlier Op Fingal tours. Before this was taken a youngster in the capital Kabul sold us a wooden box and we broke it up to make some stumps and a bat.



End of an era: April 10, 2009

» This was my last time in Iraq, after the country's army, backed by coalition troops, had pushed insurgents back from Basra. This is the 1st Royal Tank Regiment in their Mastiffs on a journey from the Shatt al-Arab hotel to Basra Palace – which were both British bases. With the ferris wheel in the background, I felt the sense of some fun and normality returning.



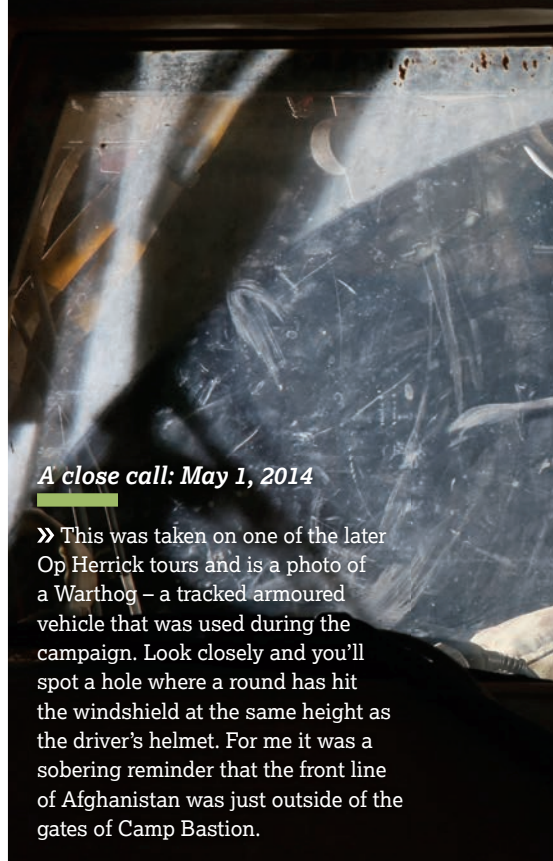
***Escape to the country,
March 27, 2011***

» We're in Afghanistan flying out of Lashkar Gar to Patrol Base 2. You can see the green zone – the verdant expanse surrounding the Helmand River. This was on Op Herrick 13, an intense and brutal tour for our soldiers. While I was there I got to visit a shura – a meeting with local elders – and saw the amazing work the troops were doing to promote reconstruction. They were extraordinary.



A close call: May 1, 2014

» This was taken on one of the later Op Herrick tours and is a photo of a Warthog – a tracked armoured vehicle that was used during the campaign. Look closely and you'll spot a hole where a round has hit the windshield at the same height as the driver's helmet. For me it was a sobering reminder that the front line of Afghanistan was just outside of the gates of Camp Bastion.



By your side: April 30, 2014

» Photographing the Kabul Support Unit in Afghanistan was great fun. This is the subject of the two photos here featuring 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards. The pictures were taken as the soldiers went through training drills. It makes a real difference if you have somebody around who is enthusiastic with the media. In this case the then CO Lt Col Toby Till was fantastic in helping set this up.





Perfect pugilism: May 13, 2015

✓ I've been privileged to cover all kinds of sporting events in the last 20 years. But nothing beats the atmosphere of unit boxing. Here, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment are taking on the 3rd Battalion at the Bryan Budd VC gym in Colchester. The atmosphere was electric that evening – a cauldron of different emotions and a unique experience.



Need for speed: November 16, 2008

⤴ Anyone with aspirations of being a sports photographer will find a dream job at *Soldier* – you have the opportunities to take pictures of a whole raft of different activities. This occasion was particularly dramatic – the image is of a rider with the Army motorcross team doing what they love. It was a great day out.

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Engaging property puzzle

MY FIANCE and I are currently renting together and have requested a Service house.

We were offered a property but were informed we couldn't move in until ten days before our wedding, which is four months away.

We were told cohabitation is not allowed, which I cannot understand. It's not as if we haven't made a commitment to marry each other – and we are already living together.

Not only that, we went to view the house before we accepted the offer and found that not only was it empty, with no sign of recent occupation, but the dwellings on either side were vacant too.

Given the recent negative media about MoD properties sitting unused, we saw an opportunity to help this situation as well as our own. When we contacted the agency to ask if we could move in sooner they point blank refused.

Our bemusement was compounded when some colleagues told me they had been allowed to move into their houses before their wedding day on the grounds they were buying a puppy.

How can the Service's housing policy be so uncompromising for us but so flexible for others? – **Name and address supplied**

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head Personal Services, replies: Current MoD policy is that those who are married or in civil partnerships (or single parents who are their children's prime carers) are entitled to Service family accommodation (SFA).

In order to allow unmarried

partners to cohabit in it, a definition of a relationship other than marriage or civil partnership would have to be established in policy and set at a level where demand could be met.

However, we recognise that this is increasingly out of step with the way many people live and under the future accommodation model we are looking at ways to take account of modern lifestyles and provide greater flexibility and choice.

A pilot that's due to start this year will test the principles being considered under the scheme.

Your letter also highlights the presence of unoccupied SFA.

There is always a need for this to enable mobility and, in certain areas, a large amount is required in preparation for Germany-based troops returning to the UK.

There are, however, several initiatives aimed at reducing the amount of empty housing, such as supporting applications for surplus quarters for eligible personnel, using SFA for single soldiers in place of substitute single living accommodation and identifying properties for sublet.

We have not disposed of the majority of SFA that will be surplus to requirements in the future, and we continue to look at ways to fill empty houses.

I understand your frustrations and, rest assured, your feedback is valuable as we continually review the accommodation offer and how we can make improvements.

Talkback

“They point blank refused”

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

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
 🐦 @soldiermagazine



Army Sergeant Major says...



WO1 Gav Paton has been tweeting about a new mental health initiative

@ArmySgtMajor

We are developing new initiatives to inculcate mental fitness and resilience training under the title of Optimising Performance through Stress Management and Resilience Training (Op Smart)

@knackeredbiker

Is a top-down approach going to work? To effect change it needs to be brought into the sergeants' mess. Be good to see this rolling out on junior/senior command courses shortly

@ArmySgtMajor

It's not a top-down approach and starts at initial training.

@Dacopsey1

Is this in anyway similar to the performance triad the US Army use?

@ArmySgtMajor

No, that is about exercise, sleep and nutrition. This is how to prevent and identify problems. It should remove unhelpful stigma.

@Fromtheranks

We need junior NCOs on the mental health first aider course. We are first to notice when something goes wrong. Could it be worked into command, leadership, management training?

@ArmySgtMajor

You are bang on. Op Smart will be incorporated into CLM for all ranks, is a career-long journey and it won't end, like we consistently do PT to stay fit.



Picture: Steve Dock

Between Rock and hard place

WHY have commanders in Gibraltar ignored policy by giving all but one block of four-bedroom Service family accommodation (SFA) units to senior NCOs and above without regard to family size?

It means there are 36 four-bedroom properties for these personnel but just six for junior NCOs.

An allocation system based on rank has resulted in some of the more senior soldiers with just one child or none at all being given four-bedroomed units while lower ranked colleagues with large families are in three-bedroom housing.

This type of prioritisation for relocation, which occurred after moving out of the old SFA that was handed back to Gibraltar's government, is outdated and has no place in the modern Armed Forces.

All that has been achieved is an increase in dissatisfaction among Service families in a military that is already losing dedicated, professional and highly trained individuals at an alarming rate. — **Name and address supplied**

Meghal Shah, Workforce Policy and Engagement Lead for Joint Forces Command, replies: On face value the situation you describe does not seem to make best use of the new Service family accommodation assigned to British Forces Gibraltar.

But having sought advice from the commanding officer of the Joint Support Unit there, I have some important context to add.

Following the 2011 Lands Agreement between the MoD and

the Gibraltar government, new accommodation was built around existing units on Four Corners estate.

It was decided to design them around officer scaling, so 42 type four houses (four bedrooms, accommodating up to six people) and 42 type five properties (three bedrooms, for up to five individuals) were constructed.

When planning the relocation, consideration was given to those junior NCOs who wanted to be housed away from the senior NCOs and officers.

The layout of the new development meant they were mostly put into three-bedroom type five units.

It was decided to stagger the moves of 84 families using the military rank structure, ensuring that they were allocated housing within their entitlement.

A small minority of personnel were dissatisfied, but more than 95 per cent were not.

Policy states that other ranks' accommodation is based on need and the age and number of children in the family is a major factor.

In locations where the availability of this type of housing allows for above-entitlement allocations to be granted, larger families can be prioritised but there is no policy that enforces this.

Ultimately, it is for housing staff in conjunction with the chain of command to manage the process.

“Why have commanders ignored policy?”



Picture: FreePik

‘When do children come first?’

THE Army Personnel Centre (APC) recently gave me assignments that moved my duty station more than 65 miles, although they remained within a 50-mile radius of my home.

As a result, Defence Business Services (DBS) said I am not sufficiently mobile and withdrew my eligibility for the continuity of education allowance.

They advised me that I should select a school wherever my future assignments are located.

Meanwhile, the APC class me as fully mobile, liable to serve anywhere and have even decided to reassign me ahead of schedule, possibly to Canada.

Having placed my son in a local school I face moving while he is in the two-year window leading up to his GCSEs.

Although an assignment order states that it is made under Queen's Regulations, does the DBS ruling take precedence, allowing an assignment to be refused to safeguard a child's continuity of education? – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Jon Lowe, Army Remuneration Policy Department, replies: It is family – not individual – mobility that affects eligibility for continuity of education allowance (CEA).

Claimants who do not demonstrate this when living in their own home and assigned more than 50 miles away will often be deemed as ineligible for such support.

While I appreciate this can

be frustrating, it is vital CEA is protected as an allowance that attends to a genuine need.

Within the policy, provisions exist to help personnel with children within two years of public examinations (GCSE and A level).

They allow soldiers to serve on involuntarily separated status, with an associated waiver of single living accommodation charges and increased longer separation allowance when serving overseas.

Troops are not able to refuse an assignment order, however, because it's based on the principle contained within Queen's Regulations that a soldier must be available for worldwide assignment at any time.

It's one of the conditions of service that is accepted by personnel when they enlist.

The aspirations and preferences of the individual should be considered though, and career managers must try and achieve a level of domestic stability for troops.

Moves should only occur if there is a genuine Service need, for career development purposes or at the request of the individual.

And while soldiers cannot refuse an assignment because of the continuity of education of a dependant, they should make their career manager aware of their desire to remain in a certain location because of these requirements.

“I am not sufficiently mobile”

MESS ROOM MOAN

● WHEN will single personnel be given greater scope to leave the confines of their mess rooms and live in the outside world?

As I approach 50 years of age, after a lengthy military career, I am contemplating how much longer I can tolerate living in a communal block.

I'm finding it increasingly challenging when my sleep is continually broken by colleagues 20 years my junior returning from nights out, or listening to the protestations from the antiquated toilet plumbing on the floor above me.

I have not yet managed to find suitable earplugs or other devices to silence the doors banging in the corridors or the incessant snoring from the next room.

Sleep is a rare commodity that I grasp in hourly chunks.

I own my own house, to which I return when I can. However, this is a couple of hundred miles from where I'm posted, and as I work near London there are no affordable properties to buy or rent.

Please could you let me know if there have been any further thoughts about a housing scheme that offers hope for individuals like me who want to enjoy a normal quality of life.

I realise this would probably involve personal contributions towards expenses, but exhaustion and frustration are now forcing me to consider leaving the job I enjoy, and to which I believe I still have much to offer. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head Personal Services, replies: I am sorry to hear of your difficulties living in the mess.

The future accommodation model (FAM) is currently under development and aims to provide Service personnel with more choice over where and how they live.

Its options might include moving into a private property with a contribution to the rent that will vary according to the region.

Trials are due to start soon in a limited number of areas and will run for a few years before a decision is taken on whether to adopt the scheme across the UK.

Visit the FAM website to find out more: www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-accommodation-model

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



APPOINTMENTS

Maj Gen Christopher Tickell, currently Director Capability, to become lieutenant general and **Deputy Chief of the General Staff** in August 2019.

Maj Gen Thomas Copinger-Symes, currently Commander of Force Troops Command, to be **Director Capability** from August 2019.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Capt Paul Taylor, Telford, Shropshire.

DVD: John Dargavel, West Midlands; Iain McCallum, MoD Abbey Wood, Bristol; Maj A Banks, Queensland, Australia; Nick Boldrini, Gateshead; Tim Norton, Worcester.



DIARY

March 4: Deadline for the MV **Boudicca voyage**. See Searchline for more.

March 8: Lecture by Mehmet **Ogutcu** on how competition for energy could affect international geopolitics and potential future military activity. Hosted by the Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research at the Churchill Room, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 1030-1200. See www.chacr.org.uk for details.

March 9: *The Adventures of Mother Ross* – a free live performance telling the story of a woman who disguised herself as a man to join the Army and find her husband missing in action. Showing at 1100, 1300 and 1500 at the National Army Museum, Chelsea. See www.nam.ac.uk

March 16: Military charity ball in support of **SSAFA** and **Walking with the Wounded** at Mercure Elcot Park, Newbury. Tickets £50 per head including a three-course meal, DJ, auction and raffle. To book email enquiries@newburyweddingservices.co.uk

March 28: Author **Andrew Roberts** discusses his new book about wartime prime minister **Winston Churchill**. Tickets for the event running from 1800-2000 at the National Army Museum, are priced at £15 and £12.50 for concessions. See www.nam.ac.uk.

March 28: The Whacky Specs Ball in aid of Help for Heroes at Farnham Castle. Fun will include fizz, canapes, three-course meal, 80s disco, auction and raffle. Tickets £75 per person via 01252 720402.

May 11: Stoke-on-Trent Military **Tattoo**, in support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, at The King's Hall, Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
www.soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
www.afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
www.afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
www.adviceasap.org.uk

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

Army LGBT Forum:
www.armylgbt.org.uk;
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124;
www.blesma.org

Blind Veterans UK:
(formerly St Dunstan's)
020 7723 5021;
www.blindveterans.org.uk

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
01372 841600;
www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
www.erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901;
www.felixfund.org.uk

Forcesline:
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association:
www.nesa.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
www.ngvfa.org.uk

Poppyscotland:
0131 557 2782;
www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058;
www.rfea.org.uk

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
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www.legionscotland.org.uk

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The Not Forgotten Association:
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www.nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
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www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes:
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www.starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

Troop Aid:
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www.uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:
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0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);
www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 17/19: National fraud initiative

ABN 16/19: Continuity of education allowance update for academic year 2018/19

ABN 15/19: Employment of Army catering personnel to support hospitality events

ABN 14/19: Army audit and inspection unit self-assessment – upload to ARMS2

ABN 13/19: Army Reserve recruit basic training timeline

ABN 12/19: Changes to appraisal reporting

ABN 11/19: Direct entry officer pink list filter requirement

ABN 10/19: Notification of new land doctrine – *The Ground Reconnaissance Tactics Handbook (2019)*

ABN 9/19: Reserve land force regulations 2016 – amendments

ABN 8/19: 2019 families continuous attitude survey

ABN 7/19: Army Reserve senior soldier entry commissioning course

ABN 6/19: Potential instructor briefings

ABN 5/19: Revised daily food charge

ABN 4/19: Army Servicewomen's Network conference 2019

ABN 3/19: Functional skills

2019DIB03: Recording external knowledge, skills and experience on JPA

2019DIB02: Army Sports Lottery ticket price increase

2019DIB01: Daily food charge

DIN 2019DIN01-016: MoD civilian consultants pay award 2018

DIN 2019DIN01-013: Buying added pension and an effective pension age

DIN 2019DIN04-013: Removal of all electrical and mechanical engineering regulations

DIN 2019DIN06-001: Guidance on bringing a common law claim for compensation against the Ministry of Defence

● **From the next issue, Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices will be available only online through Defnet, Defence Connect and the Army Knowledge Exchange.**



REUNIONS

13 (Martinique) Battery reunion on April 13 at the Copthorne Hotel, The Waterfront, Brierly Hill, Dudley, DY5 1UR. For more details contact

Kevin Brooks-Usher on 07834 287426.

23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades Association remembrance and reunion dinner on June 21/23 at the National Memorial Arboretum and Bosworth Hall, Market Bosworth. All ranks past and present welcome. For details contact Roy Hatch on 01926 812363.

8 Regiment, RASC/RCT/RLC 18th anniversary reunion weekend, October 18-19, 2019. A pre-reunion event will be held on Friday evening at a venue TBC with the main event at The Village on the Green Club, Aspull, Wigan. All past members, irrespective of cap badge, are invited along with a partner or guest. Cost £30 per head or £10 for the pre-reunion event. For details contact jimmyasp@hotmail.com



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Group welcomes members of the public to its roadshows. For more info call 01276 412880 or visit www.army.mod.uk/engagement

March: 13, Swindon; 14 Wrexham; 27, Bradford; 28, Hull.



SEARCHLINE

The Royal British Legion is calling on communities to help spread the message to D-Day veterans who are eligible for a fully funded trip for them and a guest/carer to this year's 75th anniversary commemorations in the UK and France. Some 300 Normandy veterans will be taken across the Channel on a specially chartered ship, MV Boudicca, to mark 75 years since the landings in France. But there are still spaces on the trip, with the deadline for applications extended to March 4. Visit www.britishlegion.org.uk to find out more.

An aspiring Scotland-based musical combo is appealing for donations to buy kit. **The Paisley Comrades Pipes and Drums**, which is starting from scratch, is hoping funding will give it a good head start in delivering top-notch performances at ceremonial occasions. Contact Ronald Scobie at flightless.scotsman@hotmail.com

Frank Tilburn Hodson (ex-REME) is looking for information on craftsmen Pete Boots and Jim Gascoigne, who served with him in Hong Kong from 1959-61. Contact carolmorgan2412@icloud.com



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Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, no later than March 29.

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

The first correct entry drawn after the closing

date wins a Jetboil MicroMo Stove for outdoor cooking. The winner's name will be published in the May issue. All the usual rules apply.

January's winner: Teresa Wingate, Provost Barracks, Aldershot.



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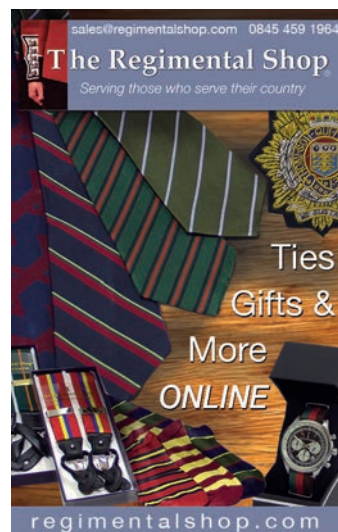
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Defence
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REVIEWS

MOVIES

THE AFTERMATH

Passion, grief and betrayal in the chaos of post-war Germany

SET in Hamburg in early 1946, this gripping romantic drama is, at times, dark and uncomfortable to watch as the main protagonists grapple with the tragic events of the past.



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BOOKS

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MUSIC

MOVIES



Based on the book by Rhidian Brook and directed by **James Kent** (*Testament of Youth*), it follows **Keira Knightley** as Rachael Morgan, who travels to the devastated city to be reunited with her estranged husband Lewis, played by **Jason Clarke** (*Mudbound*, *Everest*).

He's a colonel in the British Army who has been tasked with managing the rebuilding effort, and is clearly worn down by years of war, tragedy and the carnage he's now forced to confront on a daily basis.

The pair struggle to reconnect after spending years apart and she's shocked when he reveals that the former residents of the luxurious house they've been allocated – Stefan Lubert (a superbly moody **Alexander Skarsgård**) and his troubled daughter Freda (**Flora Thiemann**) – are to share the property with them.

This intriguing backdrop provides the catalyst for a story of ensuing treachery and deception.

Rachael doesn't think the Luberts should be there at all, but sent off to a camp. However, her initial hatred and distrust of Stefan and his German heritage gives way to physical attraction and companionship stemming from their mutual wartime loss – his wife died during allied bombing while the Morgans' young son was killed in a London air raid.

Clarke's stiff-upper-lip performance

is particularly powerful and it's easy to feel sympathy for him in his role as the betrayed husband.

Meanwhile, Knightley's character stirs up a mixture of emotions, ranging from contempt at her behaviour to pity because of the lack of emotional support she received from Lewis after the death of their child.

There are no adrenalin-fuelled action scenes but there are enough twists and turns – such as the tense subplot when Freda falls into a relationship with an underground fascist activist and Lubert is investigated for suspected links to the former Nazi regime – to keep most people fully engaged.

Shot on location in Germany and the Czech Republic, it is a beautiful film to look at with superb costumes and set designs, as well as some stunning



● *The Aftermath* is out in cinemas on March 1

DIGITAL/DVD RELEASES



Submergence Out now

ADAPTED from the acclaimed novel by JM Ledgard, this film has a very deep and meaningful plot that explores love and emotional boundaries. The two protagonists – a British Secret Service operative (**James McAvoy**) and a progressive bio-mathematician (**Alicia Vikander**) – fall madly in love and, after a brief spell together, go off on their respective missions. The pair then find themselves torn apart by fate and left fighting to reunite against the obvious immeasurable odds. Beautiful people in beautiful locations who end up in hostile arenas which are then used to draw emotional and philosophical analogies – this is a very heavy-going film.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



Schindler's List Out now

PERHAPS there has never been a better moment for the rerelease of

Steven Spielberg's unforgettable story of courage and faith. Making its debut on 4k ultra HD for the first time, this 25th anniversary edition also includes a new bonus feature, *Schindler's List: 25 Years Later*, where Spielberg joins actors **Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley** and others to reflect on the legacy of the internationally renowned film. The incredible true story of Oskar Schindler, who saved the lives of more than 1,100 Jews during the Holocaust, is reason enough to watch this movie. But against the backdrop of a rise in far-right movements across Europe, this once again becomes compelling and vital viewing.

Becky Clark, Soldier

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Email reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk



cinematography depicting the frozen winter landscape and desolation of post-war Europe.

The evocative music is superb too with Bafta winner Martin Phipps' score accentuating the charged atmosphere and dark sentiment of the plot.

Overall, *The Aftermath* is a thought-provoking film depicting the physical and emotional devastation caused by conflict.

The simmering undertone of hatred, loss and raw feelings left me feeling disturbed and while the ending could

have been more satisfying, it did cause me to question whether there really are any winners in war as well as reconsidering the preconceptions I had on infidelity and marriage. ■

REVIEW: GEORGINA COUPE, CIVVY

VERDICT:

A darkly compelling tale, highly recommended ★★★★★

PICK OF THE MONTH:

DOUBLE CROSSED

Veteran reveals historic allegations ordeal

➤ BRIAN Wood was aiming for the top. Decorated for bravery at the age of 23, his sights were set on one day becoming a regimental sergeant major in The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

But fate had other plans. The same engagement for which he was awarded the Military Cross – the so-called Battle of Danny Boy in 2004 – would see him and his comrades subsequently cross-examined as part of the controversial Al-Sweady inquiry that focused on war crimes in Iraq.

Lawyers representing the families of some of the 28 Iraqi men killed during the encounter alleged the dead had not been insurgents, but innocent civilians who had been captured, tortured and executed by British troops.

Nine years later, Wood found himself having to defend under oath the decisions he had made in the heat of close quarters combat with around 100 heavily armed militia.

Ultimately the claims were found to be baseless, but the sense of betrayal lingers and now, in his new book *Double Crossed*, he is putting the record straight.

Talking to *Soldier* just ahead of its publication he admitted to being nervous about speaking out.

"It's terrifying because it's my story – it's really personal," he said.

"But I've just been honest – I've been myself – and the feedback has been really incredible."

Wood's nightmare began when officers from the Royal Military Police's Special Investigation Branch pulled him out of a career course in Brecon to interview him, sparking the process that would lead to the inquiry.

"I'm no different to any other soldiers who because of the tempo over the last 15 years, will all have had their own war-fighting stories to tell," he added.

"But what was different was having

to fight an even harder battle back on home soil.

"I didn't think the lies would gain any traction but they did, and the government funded it.

"My back was against the wall. I even felt like I needed to justify myself to my friends and family."

The inquiry would eventually come to a spectacular close, with the Iraqis' legal team conceding they had insufficient material to prove their case.

Phil Shiner, the director of Public Interest Lawyers, would later be struck off after admitting potential clients in

Iraq were offered financial incentives to bring claims.

But his fall from grace was cold comfort to Wood.

"I don't hold grudges and he has to live with the consequences," he said.

"He didn't apologise but I can't do anything about that now – I have to just try and live my best life with my family."

While the 38-year-old explained the memoir had "closed some chapters" in his life, he also found the writing process reignited painful memories.

Little wonder. From seeing men die by his hand and dealing with mutilated bodies, to witnessing a comrade engulfed by a petrol bomb and the immediate aftermath of a suicide, the pages reveal a litany of trauma.

His return from operations was, sadly, a familiar tale of PTSD-related problems and family strife.

To add insult to injury, the sabbatical he took from the Army to help process his experiences would later cost him his full pension – he resigned in disgust when this came to light in 2014.

But things are finally looking up. His public profile has led to speaking engagements and brand ambassadorships with House of Fraser and watchmaker Bremont, while the launch of the book has prompted a succession of media interviews.

He seems bemused that he suddenly has a platform but has been using the opportunity to discuss issues that are close to his heart, including mental health and the various problems faced by veterans.

"It's important to remember that good things come if you hang in there and put one foot in front of the other," he said.

"In the darkest times, no matter what journey you're on, if you can be resilient in adversity things will get better.

"The Army taught me that. Despite everything I have a lot to thank the military for – I loved the life, the belonging, the togetherness and if my sons wanted to join I'd be happy."

Reflecting on what might have been, he added: "If I could go back in time I'd try and achieve my ultimate goal, which was to become RSM, regardless of all the good things happening now.

"I'm gutted I didn't get the chance but I believe it just wasn't meant to be." ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, *SOLDIER*





● *Double Crossed*, by Brian Wood is published by Virgin Books and priced £20

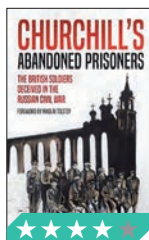
BOOK RELEASES



Courage After the Battle by Peter Jackson-Lee

BOOKS about what happens to soldiers after conflict often deal solely with physical and mental wounds but this fantastic offering goes further. The author explains advances in medical services since the First World War, especially regarding the identification of PTSD. He covers the struggle to readjust to civilian life, including for those with historical inquiries about Northern Ireland and Iraq hanging over their heads. The last third of the title details the help available to Servicemen and women. More of a handbook than a story, this wonderful volume is well worth a place on your shelf.

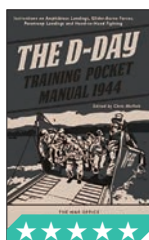
Andy Kay, ex RS



Churchill's Abandoned Prisoners by Rupert Wieloch

DURING the civil war following the Russian Revolution, Britain and its allies sent troops to fight the Royalist cause against the Bolsheviks. In 1919 several British Servicemen were taken prisoner by the Red Army and sent to run the railways in Siberia and Eastern Russia. Among them was Captain – later General – Brian Horrocks of Operation Market Garden fame. Their conditions were horrific and disease was rife. To say they had a hard time is an understatement and this book details very well the extreme privations they endured. It is a very informative account of a lesser-known chapter.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



The D-Day Training Pocket Manual 1944 Edited by Chris McNab

THE rapidly approaching 75th anniversary of Operation Overlord will inevitably trigger the release of waves of low-grade recycled books about D-Day. I have not been looking forward to that part of the commemorations at all, so it was a pleasant surprise to receive this excellent compilation. The subject matter gives some great insight into the doctrine of the time and the minute detail packed into each of the chapters is genuinely fascinating and useful when compared to current thinking. It's also great value for money so I recommend it unreservedly.

Mike Peters, ex-AAC

MUSIC



PICK OF THE MONTH:

I'VE GOT IT COVERED

Ex-Serviceman launches debut album as new career hits top gear

► HAVING found fame on TV talent show *The Voice*, former soldier David Barnes has embarked on the next step in his musical career with the release of debut album *I've Got It Covered*.

Featuring 11 cover versions of tracks from artists such as **U2** and **Rudimental**, the offering forms the springboard for a follow-up record of original material that is already planned for later this year.

The projects represent the latest instalment in a whirlwind post-Army career that has seen the 40-year-old sign with Sonic Boom Records and star in the hit stage show *80s Mania* as a principle vocalist.

Barnes was medically discharged in September 2017 after almost 22 years' service with the Corps of Army Music and while singing was an

avenue he was keen to explore he was pleasantly surprised at how quickly such opportunities came round.

"I was discharged on the Thursday and then left on the Friday," the former staff sergeant told *Soldier*.

"I woke up that morning thinking 'what am I going to do now?'"

"I had been in charge of 30 to 40 men and all of a sudden I had nothing to do.

"That break in routine is the weirdest feeling in the world. I was sat on the sofa twiddling my thumbs when I got a call from Sonic Boom Records.

"I always thought something would happen, just not that soon."

Barnes was part of **Ricky Wilson's** team in the 2016 season of *The Voice* and his profile boost meant the offer of a



MUSIC



first theatre show came just two months after he walked away from his life in uniform.

Gigs and corporate appearances across the country followed and these performances formed the proving ground for the tracks that would ultimately comprise his first album.

"After around 12 months of shows I found that people like specific songs," Barnes explained. "This record is the culmination of that."

"Going into the studio was an incredible experience. It took two to three months to get it absolutely spot on and when I listened to it for the first time it was amazing."

"It is upbeat pop music and the idea is to get my voice recognised. I've already started work on the next album and am collaborating with some American songwriters."

"While it's a work in progress it is super exciting and should build on the growing interest

that's out there."

The artist performed as a singer, piano and flute player with the Band of the Corps of Royal Engineers for 16 years and later served as an instructor with the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall.

But it was only after starring on the small screen that the possibility of showcasing his talent to a wider audience became a reality.

"Since appearing on *The Voice* my life has taken a dramatic turn," Barnes added. "After completing a full Army career I want to get the message out to other personnel that life can be successful afterwards if you put the hard work in."

"I knew I wanted to do something in music but it was only when I met Mark Wickenden, founder of Sonic Boom Records, that I thought I could take it to the next step."

"I never imagined that I'd be releasing music on iTunes but here we are." ■

INTERVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*



● *I've Got It Covered* is now available via all major streaming platforms

MUSIC RELEASES



Half Way There by Busted

BUSTED'S fourth album, *Half Way There*, speaks true to

its ninth track – *Nostalgia*. The trio have returned to their punk rock origins with ten songs to delight their core fan base, all of whom were probably in their early teens when the band first came onto the scene. The record delights with a light-hearted tale that follows on from previous offerings like *Air Hostess*, while finishing with the sad ballad reminding us of the group's sudden 2005 split in *It Happens*. While the sound is unlikely to draw any new fans to the cause, this triumphant comeback will certainly appease those who felt short changed almost a decade ago.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



Head Above Water by Avril Lavigne

IT HAS been six years since skater

girl **Avril Lavigne** last graced us with her musical presence. The radio silence since then suggested an end to a career that started in spectacular style when her debut album sold 16 million copies. But with comebacks and reunions proving the flavour of the month, it appears the Canadian pop-rocker has some fuel left in the tank. Unsurprisingly, *Head Above Water* is a more mellow offering compared to her early to mid-noughties pomp and her divorce and battle with the debilitating Lyme disease have clearly influenced the tone of proceedings. While not Lavigne's most upbeat offering its honesty should be admired. But the lack of variety makes it hard work at times.

Richard Long, Soldier



Protected against cold and the occasional bullet

During the First World War, Private Stephen Palmer was sent an OXO tin filled with treats from his brother. This act of brotherly love saved Stephen's life when this very tin stopped an enemy bullet.



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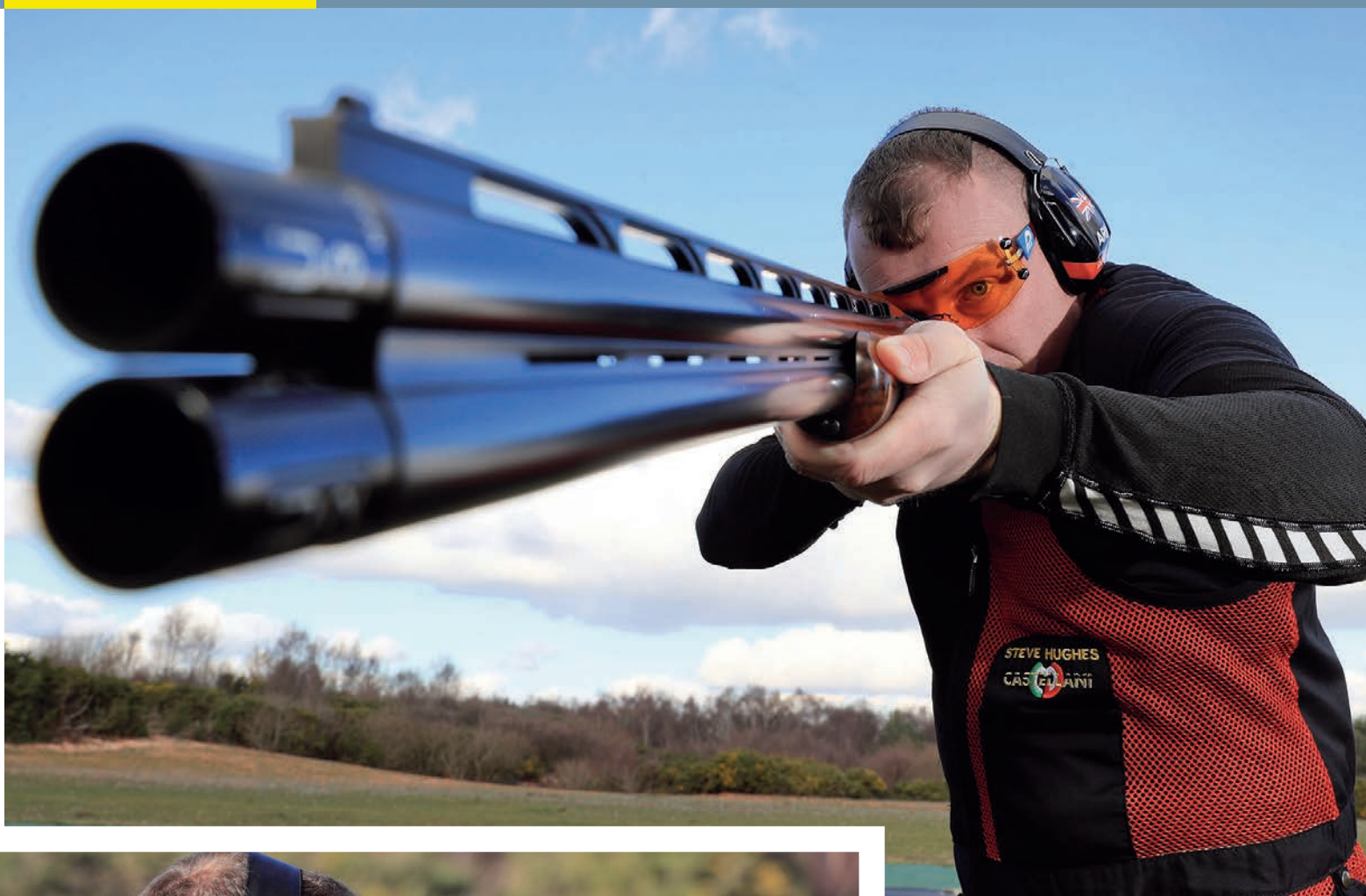


SOLDIER SPORT



PICKING UP STEAM >>

THE Service's rugby union team have made an encouraging start to 2019 under new head coach Maj Burnie Burnard (REME). Read about their victories over Oxford University and the French Army on page 74...



GAMES TARGET IN SIGHT

SHOOTERS CHASE OLYMPIC DREAM AS ARMY LAUNCHES NEW PATHWAY PROGRAMME

WITH marksmanship forming a key tool in a soldier's armoury it would seem there is an obvious choice when it comes to considering a sporting crossover from the day job.

Personnel within the Army's elite pistol and rifle shooting set-ups are already delivering promising results on the national and international stage and the clay target discipline is now hoping to follow suit with the creation of an Olympic pathway programme.

Launched at the end of 2018, the initiative has identified 15 individuals with the potential to reach the upper echelons of their sport and is providing a five-year plan that could ultimately see them represent their country at the 2024 Games in Paris.

Developed in association with governing body British Shooting, the scheme will see troops working with some of the UK's top skeet and trap coaches in a series of sessions throughout the coming months – the first of which was recently held at the National Clay Shooting Centre in Bisley.

"The guys go out and shoot and are then assessed in a number of different areas," programme lead Capt Jason Wright (AGC (RMP), pictured right) told *SoldierSport*.

"It could be anything from the standing position they fire from to health and nutrition – it is the equivalent of a full professional athlete package.

"This is only the start of our first year and by December we want to see people pushing for places in county competitions and squads.

"In years two, three and four

we will be looking for national selections for major events.

"The ability is out there and while they are not of an Olympic standard yet their dedication, enthusiasm and will to win is evident."

More than 50 soldiers attended an initial talent identification day and the final squad of 15 has been divided between eight trap and seven skeet shooters.

Some were recruited from the existing Army clay target team but the remainder were newcomers to the fold.

"They are from all walks of life with different levels of experience," Wright added. "Everyone has shot before and the programme offers an absolutely open field.

"The reality is that very few people reach the pinnacle of sporting success but we are giving them an opportunity that others in the shooting world would not have.

"We are setting them up to succeed. The biggest barriers are cost, time and access to facilities and we can offer considerably more help in these areas compared to those on civvy street.

"We have the grounds, units are happy to give their personnel time to take part and we receive funding through the Army Sport Control Board."

Lead skeet coach Allen Warren, from British Shooting, was impressed with what he saw in the group's debut showing but admitted there were some initial technical issues to address.

"They are really eager to learn but it has been hard at times as they have been taught to shoot rifles, which is a completely



**"THE
ABILITY
IS OUT
THERE
AND THE
WILL TO
WIN IS
EVIDENT"**

different skill," the civvy, who was head coach of the England clay target team at both the 2006 and 2010 Commonwealth Games, explained.

"With the rifle and hand gun you have to aim the weapon but with this it is a case of pointing and almost looking away from the gun.

"The learning curve is quite steep to start with but we have done some good work and they have performed well.

"Competing at the Olympics is the pinnacle. Whether you make it or not it takes time and a lifestyle change, but you have to start somewhere.

"The Army has people who are handling guns on an almost daily basis.

"In our sport you do not always get the access but the military is a really good source of talent."

Those involved are not yet part of the Service's elite sports programme, meaning their shooting commitments have to be balanced with the requirements of the day job.

However, progression to that standard is a firm aspiration.

In the meantime their focus is on maintaining their improvement via the forthcoming training sessions while also negotiating a major summer test.

A number of members will compete at the European Masters Games in Turin and Wright is keen to see how they perform under pressure.

"That will be our first real benchmark," the officer added.

"It will push people out of their comfort zone as they will be competing in a foreign country against some of the sport's top professionals." ■



BURNARD SET FOR SERVICES SELECTION DILEMMA

H EAD coach Maj Burnie Burnard (REME) has spoken of his excitement for the challenges to come after seeing his new-look Army team record back-to-back wins at the start of the 2019 campaign.

A 22-10 victory over Oxford University was followed by a 30-11 defeat of the French Army and, with a host of players catching the eye, Burnard is facing some tough selection calls as he finalises his squad for this season's Inter-Services battle.

"We have changed a lot of things from last season while trying to maintain the Army way of playing fast, attacking rugby," he told *SoldierSport*.

"We have challenged people to come through the system and have used 60 players so far.

"After our next fixture we will look to name a 30-man squad as we start preparations for the Inter-Services.

"There is real competition

for places. We've already had a meeting to discuss the squad and some really good players will miss out this year."

Gnr Miteli Vulikijapani, Gnr Jo Visei (both RA) and Cpl Ross Parkins (RLC) were among the scorers as the soldiers downed the students in the opening game and a further four tries followed as the French were swept aside.

Skipper Capt Jamie Miller (AAC) was the first to cross and veteran Fijian international Sig Jack Prasad (R Signals) rolled back the years when he touched down following a trademark break through the lines.

Pte Frank Boginisoko (RLC) and Cpl Isoa Matacagi (Scots DG) completed the rout.

"These games have allowed us to try different combinations and change the teams up," Burnard said. "The Inter-Services is so competitive and we need to be in a fight for 60 minutes before pulling through.



**"SOME
REALLY
GOOD
PLAYERS
WILL
MISS
OUT"**

"The matches we have played so far have been like that and we have had to find different ways to win.

"The French posed some difficult problems and the fixtures we have moving forward will represent a step up."

Burnard was also keen to praise the contribution made by his senior squad members.

He added: "Jamie Miller has been outstanding and has led from the front with his performance levels.

"We have created a leadership group behind him who are responsible for different facets of the game and that has really helped the team.

"Jack Prasad has conditioned himself to be available for selection; he is a good player with vast experience and it is nice to have him around.

"If people are playing rugby and want to be involved I will not discount them." ■

GAME BRIEF

DATE: February 9, 2019
COMPETITION: Army women v England Under-20s – rugby union friendly
VENUE: Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot

ARMY

Wilson 1	Mimmagh 2	Athawes 3
Silcox 4	Gattlin 5	
Smith 6	Dainton 7	
Gilbert 8	Stott 9	Pearson 10
Dodd 11	White 12	
Irvine-Thompson 13	Palmer 14	
Mullen 15		

SUBS: Lewis, Miller, Lumb, Fay, Morgan, Rowland, Deane



THE Army enjoyed a double international test on home turf last month as the newly formed A squad faced the might of the German national team.

Unfortunately, their rivals proved too strong and dominated proceedings throughout to claim an emphatic 78-5 victory.

"This was only the second official match for our A team and they were up against an experienced side who are ranked 18th in the world," said head coach Maj Gemma Stonebridge-Smith (AGC (ETS)).



Pictures: Alligin Photography

REDS OUTGUNNED BY EMERGING STARS

FRIENDLY
FIXTURE
ARMY
WOMEN

5

ENG
U20s

33



ENGLAND'S young roses maintained their winning run against the Army women as a five-try burst steered them to a convincing 33-5 victory in Aldershot.

The clash has become a regular fixture on the soldiers' calendar in recent seasons but their hopes of claiming a first success were ruthlessly dashed in the early stages of their latest encounter.

Shauna Bennett opened the scoring in the sixth minute as the England pack held firm to create the platform for the centre to touch down under the posts and Amelia Harper doubled the advantage as the visitors effortlessly rolled through the phases.

Cara Clarke cut through a static Army defence as the Under-20s added a third converted try before Bennett barged through a succession of would-be tacklers for her second score of the day.

A 26-point half-time deficit left the hosts facing the prospect of a heavy defeat but they rallied in the second period to stem the tide.

Cpl Lou Dodd (QARANC) threatened with a run that was thwarted by some determined England defending but the Reds crossed for a deserved score when Sgt Sarah Mimmagh (AGC (RMP), pictured left) intercepted a loose pass to sprint home.

However, their rivals had the final say as winger Clarke seized on turnover ball and ghosted down the line for the final try of the afternoon.

"England Under-20s are a quality side," head coach Maj Gemma Stonebridge-Smith (AGC (ETS)) told *SoldierSport*. "They have a number of players who are performing week in, week out at Premiership level.

"We didn't come out of the blocks in the way we would have liked but we had greater resilience in the second half and showed what we can do.

"We had a couple of girls coming back into the team and they were playing to our patterns for the first time.

"The score was not ideal but there were some encouraging signs as we move forward." ■

ARMY CYCLING

MOUNTAIN BIKE CROSS COUNTRY

2019 SERIES

Army Cycling will be running 6 events in 2019, open to all serving personnel and reserves. These races are for all levels of experience from beginners to seasoned racers, with prizes for individuals and Major/Minor Units. Races last approximately 1 hour over terrain that all can manage but will be challenging at speed!

You can race an individual round or get a team to race a single event or the whole series. £6 flat rate entrance fee (per rider, payable on the day).

Dates and Venues

Round 1. 03-Apr-19 Erlestoke (near Devizes)

Round 2. 01-May-19 Tidworth

Round 3. 22-May-19 Sherwood Pines

Round 4. 12-Jun-19 Wimbish

Round 5. 03-Jul-19 Pirbright

Army Championship. 17-Jul-19 Cannock Chase

ONLINE ENTRY - Follow the QR code or visit www.armycycling.org for more information. POC James.Cooper431@mod.gov.uk



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- **TWITTER** - @BritArmyCycling
- **FACEBOOK** - Army Cycling
- **MODnet** - Army Cycling Union

Creative Media Design ADR008046



ARMY
CYCLING



TOP OF THE TABLE

HAVING attracted a steady influx of players to the sport in recent times the Army table tennis set-up is enjoying an upward curve.

A sign of its current strength was witnessed at this season's Service championships in Aldershot, when more than 40 soldiers battled it out for individual and collective titles during four intense days of training and competition.

There was a familiar feel to the winners in the men's and women's tournaments as Pte Bibek Kakri (RLC, pictured) and Sgt Hilary Greig (RAMC) topped the standings once again.

Kakri then partnered Sgt Peter Owusu (RLC) to glory in the men's doubles, while Greig joined forces with LCpl Kiran Tamang (RE) to claim the mixed doubles crown. Pte Ignatilis Etude (AGC (SPS)) was victorious in the plate final.

However, the event is not just aimed at elite performers and serves as the ideal proving ground for those at grass-roots level.

"This was a chance for them to come and see what we're about," SSgt Robert Culf (RA), secretary of the Army Table Tennis Association, said.

"It gave them an opportunity to have two days of coaching with a British champion. The sessions focused on the basics of the game but there were also elements for the leading players to work on."

The top performers will go on to represent the Army at next month's Inter-Services, where they will be looking to defeat reigning champions the Royal Air Force.

"They will be our main rivals," men's A team captain Owusu explained. "We are fighting to make sure we can beat them this year."

"It all depends on our confidence, style of play and belief on the day." ■



REDS FALL SHORT IN FINAL FIXTURE

IT PROVED to be a campaign to forget for the Army Under-23s as a 3-0 loss to the Royal Navy saw them relinquish their Inter-Services title.

The Reds went into the fixture on the back of a 3-3 draw with the Royal Air Force and, with the Senior Service defeating the same opposition, it was winner takes all as the two sides lined up in Aldershot for the final.

Unfortunately, the hosts suffered an early setback when their rivals opened the scoring in the sixth minute and their failure to create

meaningful chances ensured they trailed 1-0 at the interval.

The Navy doubled their advantage midway through the second period and further punishment followed in injury time as they conceded a third goal.

A late strike also proved costly in the Army's match with the RAF, who scored a 90th minute equaliser to square the contest.

A brace from Tpr Nathan Donnachie (RAC) and a further strike from Cfn Jordan Hicking (REME) had given the soldiers a 3-2 lead.



SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Alligin Photography



Minley mission mastered

ATHLETES tested their powers of endurance at the annual Army Cross Country Championships.

Staged at Minley's Gibraltar Barracks, the competition featured some familiar faces among its winners as former champions Cpl Dani Hodgkinson (QARANC) and Maj Ady Whitwam (RLC) claimed the women's and men's masters titles respectively.

Elsewhere, Capt Ed Knudsen (REME) secured the men's senior crown and WO1 Kelly Haniver (RAPTC) the women's masters honours.

Runners from 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery sealed the major units team prize.



Series dates confirmed

THE Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Series returns next month, with Erlestoke playing host to the opening round on April 3.

Aimed at riders of all experience, the event features six races and culminates with the Service Championships at Cannock Chase on July 17.

Prizes will be awarded to the best individuals and major/minor unit teams.

For more information on the series email james.cooper431@mod.gov.uk



TARGA TESTS TAKE FLIGHT

RALLY driver Maj Clive Allford (RLC) has been testing himself in a lesser-known form of motorsport designed to challenge technical skills on shorter courses.

Billed as the ideal entry-level discipline, targa rallying sees standard road cars racing in events at slower speeds on courses set out by cones. It requires close teamwork between the person at the wheel and the navigator.

Allford's first challenge came at Royal Marines Base Chivenor, where a two-mile runway was converted to host 20 military and civilian cars over a series of five special tests.

Armed Forces' drivers claimed third and 11th places in the final standings but the officer enjoyed a successful second showing at the Mini Ilfracombe Targa Rally.

Competing alongside novice navigator Cpl Michael Clarke (RM) in a 1968 Austin Mini (pictured above), they negotiated eight stages covering between two and seven miles and went on to claim the overall victory.

"We had to navigate around the course using hand-drawn maps and tulip diagrams, stopping every 300 metres or so to record a number board placed on the side of the stage," Allford explained.

"The weather was horrendous, with typical exercise-like horizontal rain and high winds.

"However, we bonded well and soon established a rhythm that would eventually see us secure the win."

Any serving personnel based at RMB Chivenor who would like to get involved in future targa rallying events should email clive.allford522@mod.gov.uk ■

● THE Army's cricketers return to Lord's on Thursday, May 30 on a mission to reclaim the Inter-Services Twenty20 trophy.

Having won the competition for five successive seasons the Reds suffered a 41-run defeat to the Royal Air Force in the 2018 final as their dominance came to an end.

The result handed their rivals a famous victory in their 100th anniversary year.

Tickets for the latest clash will be available on the gate. Visit www.interservices20.co.uk



MONTH IN SPORT

March's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services hockey
WHEN: March 5 to 6
WHERE: Portsmouth
NEED TO KNOW: The Army women have

dominated this competition in recent times and will start as heavy favourites this year. But can the men's team make it a double in 2019?



WHAT: Grand Military Gold Cup
WHEN: March 8
WHERE: Sandown Park
NEED TO KNOW: The highlight of the Forces' racing season, this meeting features two races for military jockeys and a further four for the sport's top professionals. Discounted tickets can be purchased at www.sandown.co.uk quoting "GM2019"



WHAT: Army v Royal Air Force football
WHEN: March 20
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The Reds will be looking to retain the men's and

women's titles in this season's Inter-Services showdown. The women play at the Army Football Stadium at 1500, with the men at Aldershot Town from 1900

CUP IN NUMBERS

TEAMS
TAKING TO
THE PITCH
IN THE FIRST
ROUND

52

YEARS OF
CHALLENGE
CUP ACTION

123

TRIES
SCORED
BY THE
SOLDIERS
IN THEIR
DEFEAT TO
BENTLEY

2

CUP WINS
BY WIGAN
WARRIORS
- A RECORD
TOTAL

19

POINTS
POSTED BY
CATALAN
DRAGONS
IN THE
2018 FINAL
AS THEY
BECAME
THE FIRST
FRENCH
WINNERS

20



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

BENTLEY BLUNT CUP HOPES

HAVING celebrated the high of winning a first Inter-Services trophy in five years the Army's rugby league stars were brought back down to earth with an agonising first-round defeat in this season's Challenge Cup.

The Reds battled their way to the third round of the prestigious competition in 2018 but hopes of a repeat performance were dealt a cruel blow as a spirited Bentley team triumphed 18-16 in Doncaster.

The soldiers took the lead on a crisp afternoon through an acrobatic finish in the right corner from centre LCpl Pete Holmes (REME) – an effort that proved just reward for their early endeavour.

Pte Kieron Roche (RAMC), a constant thorn in Bentley's side with his cultured boot, added the extras to make it 6-0 with 20 minutes played.

The home side responded in perfect fashion with a try and conversion of their own to draw level before Roche slotted a penalty to give the

Servicemen an 8-6 advantage at the break.

With a bumper crowd spurring them on, Bentley started the second half with renewed vigour and quickly took the lead as they crossed for their second try of the day.

And further punishment followed in the 65th minute as the Yorkshiremen crashed home under the posts to set up a simple conversion and extend the lead to 18-10.

Cfn Uraia Naulusala (REME) reduced the arrears when he caught a cross-field kick to touch down in the left corner late on, with the impressive Roche again adding the extras from the tee.

"We didn't stick to our game plan and switched off at times," head coach WO1 Ben Taylor (REME) said afterwards.

"It just didn't click for us today and we'll learn from these mistakes.

"Our main focus is to prepare for the Inter-Services and we're now going to build for that." ■



Pictures: International Paralympic Committee

MEDALS CONTINUE TO MOUNT FOR GB'S GOLDEN GIRLS

AFTER becoming Britain's most decorated Winter Paralympians during a stellar 2018, skiing sensations Menna Fitzpatrick and Maj Jen Kehoe (RE) have set about adding further honours to their haul.

The dynamic duo have been in fine form this season and secured five medals at the World Para Alpine Skiing Championships in Slovenia and Italy – including gold in the visually impaired downhill and super-G races.

Silver medals were also claimed in the slalom and super combined events, with a bronze in the giant slalom completing an impressive return.

Their recent winning run means they are the first British skiers to hold Paralympic and world titles at the same time and Kehoe told *SoldierSport* their success exceeded the goals set before the competition.

"We went there with modest expectations as that is how we

have performed at our best in the past," the officer added.

"Winning a bronze and silver early on meant we quickly smashed our targets.

"The second week was very tricky. There were a lot of weather issues due to the fact there was too much snow and that meant we had no training runs ahead of the downhill.

"Our preparations were far from ideal but we raced hard and put in a strong performance.

"That was our most successful championships to date. Being the first British Paralympic and world champions is not something we set out to achieve but it is pretty cool that we are continuing to make history."

Kehoe also revealed that returning to action after the high of the Paralympics, and the subsequent media attention, had proved challenging.

"It is hard to maintain the motivation after a Paralympic



"A GOLD MEDAL MEANS SO MUCH"

year," she added. "The different governing bodies want a break and less time and effort is spent on organising events.

"We also came into this on the back of a full summer of public appearances, visits and inspirational talks.

"Coming from an almost non-winter sports nation you think 'who is going to be interested?'.
"But a gold medal means so much to the country.

"It was a surprise and an honour that people were so invested in us.

"It has been really busy and we are definitely more tired than we were this time last year; we will be ready for a break come the end of the season.

"But that is the life of an athlete, we know what is expected and work hard."

Fitzpatrick and Kehoe return to action in the World Cup series this month, with three further events scheduled. ■

SPORT SHORTS



Nihell set for pro debut

ARMY boxing star LCpl Chez Nihell (RLC) was due to make his debut in the sport's professional ranks as this issue went to press.

The reigning English elite superheavyweight amateur champion was named on the undercard of James DeGale's clash with Chris Eubank Junior at London's O2 Arena.

Fighting at cruiserweight, the current Army sportsman of the year had named wife Cpl Alanna Nihell (RLC) as part of his corner team for the night.



Junior soldiers step up

ASPIRING fighters at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate took to the ring for ten energy-charged bouts at the centre's annual boxing night.

The contests ranged from a female lightweight match to a clash in the men's heavyweight division and featured 20 junior soldiers – many of who were total novices in the sport.

More than 150 athletes registered an interest in competing, meaning there was an intensive selection process to decide the final fighters for the event. Those making it through completed 140 training sessions before setting foot on the canvas.



FIGHTERS FOCUSING ON FORCES PRIZE



**"THEY
FEEL
THEY
HAVE A
LOT TO
PROVE"**

THE Army's boxers return to the ring this month on a mission to avenge their shock defeat in last season's Inter-Services showdown.

Having won the trophy for 34 consecutive years the Reds saw their impressive run come to a crashing halt as a resurgent Royal Navy outfit claimed a spectacular win.

The Senior Service have the home advantage in 2019 as they welcome their rivals to HMS *Nelson* on Thursday, March 28 but the soldiers will head to the contest in confident mood following some strong showings in the campaign to date.

They dominated proceedings at a high-profile round-robin tournament in Aldershot and have recently returned from a ten-day training camp in Ukraine – where the fighters tested themselves against the host nation's top talent.

"They were sparring with athletes on the Olympic programme," Nathan Pearce, secretary of the Army Boxing Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"It was really hard work but will be beneficial in terms of their preparations for the Inter-Services and national championships that follow.

"They feel they have a lot to prove after what happened last year. It was a wake-up call for us and the mood in the camp is very good.

"We now have a lot of competition for places and that makes things very interesting."

The women's team also travelled to Ukraine for a separate training camp as they ramp up preparations for the Elite Amateur Boxing Association Championships.

The trip followed a successful showing from Gnr Karris Artingstall (RA) at the Bocskai Tournament in Hungary, where she won a gold medal for Team GB in the 57kg division.

Elsewhere, LCpl John Marvin (PWRR, pictured left) was in action for the Philippines at the 70th annual Strandja international tournament in Bulgaria as this issue went to press. ■



Partners have a great lifestyle and the housing is cheaper than in the UK so there's a chance to save money. I also stay at all-inclusive hotels with my family here every month in the summer if I'm not employed on a tasking.

CSgt Gareth Collins, Lincs

It's good to be posted somewhere sunny but the winters are very wet and you can't tell when it's going to rain.

LCpl Tom Lunt, Mercian



The opportunities here are brilliant – where else could I get my family to come out for six holidays a year and enjoy guaranteed good weather? A lot of the single lads don't even bother travelling home in the summer, they shoot off to Ayia Napa or Paphos.

WO2 Liam Thomas, Mercian



My highlight has been completing the foundation parachute training course here and then doing the two-week intermediate course which involves freefalling from 7,500ft.

Pte Jordan Hill, R Anglian

Taste of adventure

Troops of the resident infantry battalions in Cyprus reveal the highs and lows of island life...



Adventurous training is top notch here, I've done parachuting and diving and the summers are really enjoyable, especially now Ayia Napa is back in bounds. In the winter life can be a bit dull so we're all happy to be working on the ops sites and getting some good training in.

Cpl Dean Watts, R Anglian



It's great to serve abroad because everyone always seems to gel better as a team. I've been out in Germany as well and it was the same there. There's always something different to do.

Sgt Daniel Ward, Mercian

My family love the beaches. The allowances are generous too – I get around £1,000 extra per month because my wife and kids are out here with me.

Fus Alex Sweet, R Welsh



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Jess Moon Bowen, Mountain Rescue Volunteer

📍 Brecon Beacons, Wales

I am Jess

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It's definitely the team and of course,
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knowing that I'm going out there
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