

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

# SOLDIER

MAY 2008 £2.50

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camp on the eve  
of the battle of  
Babcock**

## LEGLESS AND ON THE PISTE

**Battling back,  
injured soldiers  
hit the slopes  
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"Hell's teeth, Fordyke's blown it again . . . he's got to sort out those iffy leg straps."

● Legless and on the piste – Pages 43-45

# No sex, Nazis or videotapes

## FIRST SIGHT

The Service which helped to develop the talents of Dame Kelly Holmes, Nigel Benn and Maik Taylor is also hard at work honing a new seam of sporting stars.

Battle Back, an initiative set up by Lt Col Fred Hargreaves and inspired by the American Wounded Warrior programme, is helping injured soldiers re-engage with sport and there are strong hopes that exercises such as Snow Warrior (Pages 43-45) will help to identify future Paralympians.

Emulating the courage, drive and commitment shown daily by its soldiers, the British Army remains as potent a force on the field as it is in the field.

And finally . . . for all those who contacted *Soldier* HQ alarmed at the news that genetically modified soldiers were being cultivated as of April 1, rest easy in the knowledge that Green Beret DNA is set to remain firmly in the genes of the Marines.

Among the many concerned callers were a retired defence correspondent, a reporter from a national daily newspaper and a lance corporal in the Intelligence (ahem) Corps. For the record, the MoD has no plans for a Rambo Regiment just yet. ■

**T**HE indiscretions of Formula One boss Max Mosley, misbehaving Premiership prima donnas and pro-Tibet protestors armed with Olympic flame extinguishers aside, sport rarely makes the long jump from the back to the front pages of newspapers.

*Soldier*, however, makes no apologies for bucking the trend with this month's cover, which shuns the seedy world of Chelsea dungeons and Nazi uniforms to celebrate sporting success rather than sporting scandal.

Despite the considerable demands of operations, the Army continues to nurture its wealth of sporting talent and is showing no signs of surrendering its number one billing to its Service rivals.

Under the command of Commonwealth gold medallist WO2 Chris Bessey, the Army boxing team recently stretched their rule of the Inter-Services ring to a quarter of century (Pages 84-85). Not since 1983 – a year which saw Lord Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* scoop eight Oscars (Pages 46-47) – has the team trophy been out of Army gloves.

And it is not just in the square ring that the Army has made winning a habit. Rugby coach WO2 Andy Price was in bullish mood when it came to discussing the outcome of this month's showdown with the Royal Navy at Twickenham (Pages 82-83), insisting his squad will deliver a seventh successive victory and do so in style.

**'The Army remains  
as potent a force  
on the field as it  
is in the field'**





# YOU DID IT!

The Army Benevolent Fund wishes to thank all those who volunteered to take part in the Flora London Marathon on 13th April 2008. Every penny that you raised will be used to help soldiers, former soldiers and their families in times of real need. We sincerely appreciate your hard work.

Special Hotels of the World in conjunction with Lakeside Hotel 'the best four star hotel and spa on the shores of Windermere' is pleased to support the Army Benevolent Fund runners and look forward to rewarding the top fundraiser with a sumptuous short break in the English Lake District. Please visit: [www.lakesidehotel.co.uk](http://www.lakesidehotel.co.uk)

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FREE STUFF . . . win a copy of Lt Col Mike Snook's book *Into the Jaws of Death: British Military Blunders, 1879-1900* (Page 59), take home a DVD of Eugene Jarecki's excellent documentary *Why We Fight* (Page 73) and reel them in with *Sega Bass Fishing* and a rod for the Wii (Page 75).



Cover picture (left): Army prop LCpl Chris Budgen, 2 R Welsh, is determined to ensure the Reds retain their Inter-Services' number one billing. See Pages 82-83 Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: Injured soldiers hit the ski slopes during Exercise Snow Warrior. See Pages 43-45 Picture: Graeme Main





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Back on the road: Coalition forces have been providing specialist assistance to Iraqi Army units battling militia in the suburbs of Basra Picture: Cpl Martin Coleman RAF

# Embed in Basra

British and American soldiers join Iraqi Army on streets of second city

**D**ETERMINED Iraqi soldiers were pushing ahead with the latest phase of an ongoing operation to restore order in and around Basra as this issue went to press.

It was reported that, following sporadic fighting, troops from the Iraqi Army's 1st and 14th Divisions had unearthed huge weapons caches in a militia stronghold in the Hayyanayah suburb of the city. The action was part of the wider Iraqi-led operation, Charge of the Knights.

British and American soldiers were embedded with the Iraqi units to assist with specialist tasks, such as directing air and artillery strikes against the insurgents.

As Charge of the Knights continued, hardline Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr warned that any further attacks against his Mehdi Army militia would lead to "open war". Despite the strong words, however, reports suggest that civilians in Basra have been backing their fledgling national Army and were keen to restore peace.

Iraqi civilians are believed to have guided troops to huge stockpiles of hidden weapons, with a find in one house netting mortar bombs stacked three deep. The arsenal was loaded onto trucks to be taken away for analysis and then destroyed.

Commanders were pleased with the success of the mission, which they said had bolstered the confidence of their Iraqi counterparts and demonstrated their professionalism.

Col Richard Iron, British Military

Adviser to Gen Mohan al Furaiji, the Basra Operations Commander, said troops had received a warm welcome from Hayyanayah residents, who showed they had a great pride in their military personnel.

He said: "Nobody could be in any doubt about the quality of this new Iraqi Army. People came out of their houses to

join soldiers, singing and dancing in the streets. The operation was well planned and well executed by courageous soldiers led by professional officers determined to succeed. The Government of Iraq is clearly winning its battle to restore law and order in Basra."

● Basra blitz – Pages 29-31

## MoD goes NUTs at claims

**CONCERNED** officials at the MoD have hit back at claims by a leading teaching union that the Armed Forces are actively recruiting youngsters in schools.

In issuing a firm rebuttal, the Department denied that any of the three Services signed up young people from the classroom, adding that they only aimed to "raise awareness" of the opportunities and challenges of a career in uniform.

The statement also refuted National Union of Teachers (NUT) claims that the MoD presented a rosy picture of military life, stating that "all aspects" of a career were presented. It added: "The Armed Forces do not recruit in schools. The single-Service schools teams visit about 1,000 schools a year between them – only with an invitation – with the aim of raising the awareness of the Forces in society.

"A career in the Armed Forces is not something to be ashamed of and we are proud to raise awareness of the tremen-

dous work that our Service personnel do."

The rebuttal followed the union's annual conference, at which members agreed that teachers who opposed recruitment activities in schools should have their backing. They also endorsed a proposal to take part in demonstrations should there be any military attacks against Iran by the United States or UK Armed Forces.

However Steve Sinnott, the NUT General Secretary who died shortly after the March conference, later added that the union wanted to work with the MoD. He accused the media of misrepresenting members' position, and added that teachers needed to ensure any recruitment materials used in schools were fair and balanced.

He hoped something constructive would come out of the fracas and said he would write to the MoD to invite them to a summit of teachers and other interested parties on military marketing and recruitment activities in schools.



# Targeting safety

## New law could land MoD in dock if it fails in its duty of care to soldiers

**S**ENIOR officers and legal eagles have warned troops to put safety at the top of their priority list after legislation to clamp down on workplace deaths came into force.

Under the new Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act, the MoD could find itself in the dock if there were fatalities and, if convicted, face fines amounting to millions of pounds.

The legislation, which came into force last month, introduces a corporate criminal offence for deaths arising from very

serious health and safety failings in the UK in which it is felt that senior management have not shown sufficient care.

It means the MoD will now be treated in the same way as commercial organisations in the event of serious safety breaches leading to accidental fatalities, even though it retains a special immunity under health and safety legislation.

While the Department cannot be prosecuted for activities relating to military operations and the hazardous training needed for deployment, it is

thought officials would need to prove that the manoeuvres were directly related to an operational tour for the defence to be successful.

The Government has also made it clear that the MoD will be held accountable for accidental deaths in routine training, adventurous training, trials and development and activities with recruits.

Gerard Forlin, a top disaster litigation barrister who has been involved in several high-profile court cases, believed that the Act could have serious ramifications.

He said: "Each death will now have to be looked at on its own particular facts.

"Although there may be immunity for specific wars, terrorist activity or peacekeeping and the training that relates to them, the total shroud of immunity has gone," he added. "The dividing line in certain cases will be very fine."

With the far-reaching implications of the Act in mind, military experts have ordered a series of briefings for all personnel, including those deployed overseas. Col Chris Manning, the Army's Chief Environment and Safety Officer, said those responsible for soldiers' training, administration and welfare had to carry out their safety duties thoroughly.

He added: "While there should be no serious ramifications – all of us have always been criminally liable for individual health and safety failings – this new law means the MoD itself can be prosecuted. This may mean more detailed police investigations if something goes wrong. But otherwise nothing changes as long as everyone, especially senior officers, keeps safety at the top of their priorities.

"Near misses, accidents and equipment failings must be reported under kit arrangements to the Army Incident and Notification Cell. We must also follow the rules and restrictions on kit."

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, was also adamant that safety should be given top priority and maintained that all troops had a role to play. He said: "Safety is no more or less than force protection, and I am totally committed to delivering high standards to ensure that we continue to deliver forces at readiness. A small number may see health and safety – safety management – as somehow alien to the military ethos and inconsistent with the robust conditions and standards required to deliver forces at readiness for operations. Nothing could be further from the truth."



Battle plan: Simon Smith, left, issues his orders during his reign as project manager on *The Apprentice*

## Gunner, you're fired

A FORMER Royal Artillery gunner who boasted an IQ of 170 has found himself among the latest casualties on the BBC reality TV show *The Apprentice*.

Simon Smith, who served in the Army for seven years, was given his marching orders by Sir Alan Sugar after making a financial loss while project managing a task in week four of the hit series.

Despite being described as a "grafter" by the multi-millionaire Amstrad boss, the former lance bombardier was accused of being out of his depth before being dismissed from the show, in which 16 contenders battle to secure a six-figure salary job with Sir Alan.

Speaking after his sacking, Smith told *Soldier*: "They fired the right man, my time was up on that show."

"I knew that during the task. Before going into the boardroom I packed my bag

and cleared out my room as I was convinced I wasn't coming back. And I was proved right. Being in that boardroom was very intimidating, it was like being in front of the commanding officer when you have lost your ID card."

The ex-gunner tipped former team member Alex Wotherspoon, who he described as "manipulative, clever and successful", to go on and win *The Apprentice*.

However, Smith confided that he wanted his friend Raef Bjayou to come out on top and pledged to "buy him a pint" as soon as he left the programme.

The former NCO went on to thank his Army colleagues for their messages of support: "I don't think I let the Army down and think I came out OK. The Army is a great grounding as it really makes you who you are as an adult. You never feel like you leave the Army, you always feel like a soldier."



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# Bridge repairs

## New software checks-in with movements staff

**S**OLDIERS deploying on ops can expect a smoother ride as a new multi-million pound IT system promises to improve the air bridge between the UK and theatres.

A secure PC package, Swift2Move, will bring the current MoD booking and tracking procedures up to date and give movers access to real-time bookings and cargo information.

It will also allow checking-in and booking systems to be set up anywhere with a laptop and printer, so that boarding passes could theoretically be provided at remote forward operating bases.

Gp Capt Andy Towler, RAF, one of the executives responsible for the MoD's interests in the project, said military personnel always worked to keep disruption to a minimum.

Speaking to *Soldier* at the demonstration of the IT application, which is pro-

vided by French defence firm Thales under a £27 million contract, he admitted that the 1970s technology currently in service was showing its age.

"It is so old that it is getting to the stage that we are the only people using it," he added. "If you have joined-up information systems you can see straight away what's going on, which is the key requirement that is needed in-theatre."

Gp Capt Towler was confident that Swift2Move would bring far-reaching improvements to military travel when it is introduced in September next year.

He said: "While we are introducing something that will give a greater capability, passengers must still allow themselves sufficient time to be processed."

"We have got to look at what the capability will do for defence as a whole and that is where the key changes are going to be."

● **MILITARY** air bridge operations are continuing to become more efficient according to senior Royal Air Force personnel at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

Between February and November 2007, three-quarters of TriStar flights to and from Afghanistan arrived within an hour of schedule while 85 per cent of them touched down within three hours – an improvement on the same period in 2006. Despite the statistics, however, many Service personnel passing through Brize Norton have continued to complain of suffering delays on

RAF flights. Gp Capt Malcolm Brecht, the station commander, explained that given the current operational tempo it was impossible to run Brize Norton like a domestic airline.

"Military air bridge operations are not like running a commercial airline as we are connected by an umbilical cord to operational theatres," he said. "So when something happens in Bastion, Basra or Baghdad and they need us to respond to situations such as to an aero-medical evacuation, we have to prioritise."

### IN BRIEF

● **BRIGADES** preparing to deploy to Afghanistan will get Op Herrick-focused training from a new divisional headquarters formed last month in York. The 6th UK Division HQ is under the command of Maj Gen Jacko Page, who recently returned from HQ Regional Command (South) based in Kandahar.

The first to undergo 6 Div's pre-deployment training will be 3 Commando Brigade, which will begin its southern Afghanistan tour in the autumn. The distinctive white circle insignia that will be worn by the division was adopted from its ancestor, the 6th Division, which was established in the build-up to the First World War.

● **BRITISH** soldiers have carried out a series of controlled explosions at a home in Bristol.

Troops from 721 Squadron, 11 EOD Regiment RLC were called to the property after residents had been evacuated. A spokesman from Avon and Somerset Police confirmed that three small controlled explosions had been carried out.

The Tidworth troop was called in after a suspicious substance had been found at a home in Westbury-on-Trym.

A 19-year-old man was arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000 on April 16 and remained in custody at a police station in the Avon and Somerset force area as *Soldier* went to press. Acting Chief Inspector Andy Jackson said: "This has been an excellent example of multi-agency partnership work in action. Well-rehearsed plans were rolled out and put into motion quickly and effectively."

● **SOLDIERS** can get a comprehensive snapshot of their total earnings package following the launch of an easy-to-use online benefits calculator by the MoD.

Service personnel can see how their basic and specialist pay adds up as well as getting an overview of individual allowances, pension and other financial perks of the job.

The Armed Forces Benefits Calculator is also being made available to potential recruits, who will be able to see the reward package on offer if they sign up.

Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg believed the online initiative would be well received.

He said: "Our Service personnel receive an excellent remuneration package, which is fully deserved for the outstanding contributions they make in the UK and overseas."

"The new Armed Forces Benefits Calculator makes it easy for our troops to see the full worth of the benefits available to them."

Go to [www.mod-abc.co.uk](http://www.mod-abc.co.uk) to find out more.



## IN BRIEF

● **THE** annual Buddhist conference will be held at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in Amport, near Andover, from May 21-23.

Following the success of the meeting last year the event, which will include meditation and spiritual discussions, is open to all Service personnel and dependants. Space is limited and will be allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis. For more information or to book a place contact Dr Sunil Kariyakarawana, Buddhist chaplain, 020 7414 3411 or email Sunilkari59@gmail.com

● **POLITICIANS** gave officers and soldiers from 52 Infantry Brigade a warm welcome back from Afghanistan by hosting them at the Palace of Westminster. Members of the All Party Parliamentary Group, which aims to promote the Army among MPs, were full of praise for the returning troops, who served on Op Herrick 7.

Group chairman James Gray, Defence Secretary Des Browne and Michael Martin, the Speaker of the House of Commons, were among the high-profile politicians at the event.

● **ACTOR** Ewan McGregor, musician James Blunt and comedian Al Murray are among the high-profile personalities backing a new charity event organised by BFBS.

Billed as the Forces' own Red Nose Day, the Big Salute is running on the Armed Forces' own TV and radio channels in the week from May 4-11.

The sale of merchandise, including special wristbands, will help raise funds with the cash earmarked for five high-profile Forces charities, including Combat Stress and the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association. Visit [www.ssvc.com/bfbs/bigsalute](http://www.ssvc.com/bfbs/bigsalute) for further information.

● **WORLD-RENOWNED** professor Mark Welland has taken on the mantle of the Ministry of Defence's chief scientific adviser following the resignation of Prof Sir Roy Anderson.

Prof Welland will be responsible for providing quality scientific advice to ministers, senior officials and the Armed Forces to support military operations.

The 52-year-old will continue in his position as professor of nanotechnology at Cambridge University during his secondment to the MoD.

● **ARMY** chaplains have raised £27,500 towards a £35m project to build a new infirmary at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. The money was raised from a variety of events organised by the Chaplain General's Project, including collections from garrison churches, and takes the appeal fund to £26.5m.

# Trailblazer

## Service amputee trials prosthetics breakthrough

**W**OUNDED soldiers could benefit from a pioneering new technique in the fitting of artificial limbs, according to defence medical experts at Headley Court.

Doctors say the method, by which patients have a metal post implanted in the bone and to which the new arm or leg is fitted, could give amputees better movement and greater comfort.

Amputees currently have prosthetic limbs fitted over their old injuries with a silicon sock in between the two, but this can become wet with sweat during exercise. While the so-called osseointegration techniques are at an early stage, it has been confirmed that a volunteer from Headley Court is helping consultants with their research.

"If these trials are ultimately successful then there are great benefits for amputees," said physiotherapist Maj Dave Hepburn, RAMC.

"The technique involves a rod made of a special honeycomb metal being placed into the bone while the artificial limb is securely fitted to the implant. One of the main benefits of this is you can run and walk for far longer."

Maj Hepburn said the pioneering techniques could alleviate discomfort and could potentially revolutionise the process of prosthetic limb fitting.

"The implant means that the limb cannot slip off, as you have no silicon sock, and you have better control of the prosthetic limb as a result," he added.

"I can confirm that we have had one patient here who has been referred to a hospital in London involved in pioneering trials. We are watching the trials with interest."

Maj Hepburn pointed out that key issues with the surgical techniques would have to be resolved before they could be widely used, as a dangerous infection could develop in the event of any complications.

Alan Tanner, a prosthetics expert with specialist artificial limb firm Blatchford, was confident that there was plenty of potential in the new initiative.

He told *Soldier*: "There have been trials going on to look at this technique, and we have already referred a patient to a specialist involved in this initiative."

● Legless and on the piste – Pages 43-45

## Trooper dies in Helmand

**FRIENDS** and colleagues have been remembering a "popular and respected" young soldier who was killed while helping to escort a supply convoy in Afghanistan.

Tpr Robert Pearson, of The Queen's Royal Lancers, died when his vehicle hit a suspected mine en route to Camp Bastion in Helmand province on April 21.

The 22-year-old, who had served with the regiment for just over a year, was pronounced dead at a field hospital despite the best efforts of a medical team to save him.

One other soldier was injured in the blast and was being treated as this issue went to press.

Known to his friends as Chesney, Tpr Pearson had joined the QRL early last year and was quickly identified by his superiors as being both confident and capable.

As a member of A Squadron, he was trained to drive Viking all-terrain vehicles and deployed to Afghanistan in January in support of 52 Infantry Brigade.

Leading the tributes, QRL commanding officer Lt Col Richard Nixon-Eckersall said

Tpr Pearson, who was from Grimsby, had "made a name for himself" in his year with the regiment.

He added: "He was a popular and respected individual, his outgoing and confident manner giving a strong indication to his chain of command that he was one to watch. For those that might question whether or not today's soldiers are a match for their forebears, he was ample proof that they are every bit as good and more."

Lt Col Nixon-Eckersall said his thoughts were with Tpr Pearson's loved ones.

"Our loss, while great, is nothing compared to that felt by his family," he added.

Defence Secretary Des Browne echoed the CO's sentiments. He said: "Tpr Robert Pearson was, by all accounts, a very promising soldier who had a bright future."

"His loss is a tragedy and I was deeply saddened to hear of it. My thoughts are with his family, friends and comrades at what must be the most difficult of times."



● Tpr Robert Pearson





**Express delivery:** A convoy of the latest heavy trucks are steaming across the Atlantic to British troops training in Canada. The shipment of 100 of the latest support vehicles were loaded by soldiers from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC

in Southampton, and will form part of the fleet at the British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus). The vehicles feature more comfortable cabs than their predecessors, with air conditioning and automatic gearboxes. The lorries were provided

under the £1.3 billion replacement Support Vehicle Programme awarded to manufacturer MAN Trucks, which will ultimately see more than 7,000 new cargo and recovery vehicles rolled out for service with the Army.

# Rats ready for action

## 7 Brigade troops hone their battle skills in Bavaria ahead of deployment

**F**IRED-up soldiers from the Desert Rats have been showing their teeth during an extensive series of manoeuvres to sharpen their skills for potential operations in the coming year.

About 2,800 troops from the 7th Armoured Brigade rolled out in Germany for their mission rehearsal exercise, working through a demanding package of serials.

Officers were satisfied with the performance of the soldiers who, they said, had proved themselves committed and prepared for operations.

Speaking from the Joint Mission Readiness Centre in Hohenfelds, Bavaria, brigade spokesman Capt Liam Wilson, of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, said personnel had gained a great deal from the exercise.

As well as 1 RRF, the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards had been among the battle-groups successfully proving themselves.

But Capt Wilson added that there had been shock at the death of Pte Scott

Mugridge, 2 R Anglian, who was killed in a road accident at the outset of the manoeuvres. "This has been a very difficult time for his many friends," he said. "Our thoughts are with his family and it is tragic that he lost his life on this exercise. However, the soldiers have been getting everything together really well during this training and they are looking forward to going on tour once again."

Capt Wilson said the brigade had been backed up by air support provided by Tornado fast jets from 617 (Bomber)

Squadron RAF plus American F-16s and Apache helicopters.

"This is the second time a brigade from 1 (UK) Armoured Division has used this training area. It has allowed us to do serials including live firing."

Soldiers taking part in the exercise said they had spent a hard but enjoyable time in Bavaria.

LCpl Steven Nicholson, Scots DG, said: "We have been ramping up for operations and morale is really good."

● **Telic hero killed** – Page 12

## Army command reshuffle

**NEW** Army Staff and Land Forces units have been created as part of a significant reorganisation of the top level military management structure.

Last month, the Commander-in-Chief's Land Command, at Wilton, and Upavon-based Adjutant General's Command merged to form Land Forces. The new group, which brings the Army in line with

the Royal Navy's Fleet Command and Royal Air Force's Air Command, will move to Andover in 2012.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, has also formed the Army Staff to support the delivery of military capability, and to ensure the fighting effectiveness and efficiency of the Army and bolster morale.



## IN BRIEF

● A BRITISH soldier was killed in Iraq on March 26, the MoD has confirmed. He died as a result of gunshot wounds following an early morning firefight. In line with the family's wishes, no further details have been released.

● GERMANY-based sappers have been busy perfecting tactics with their new Titan and Trojan vehicles.

Troops serving with 35 Engineer Regiment gave the mechanical workhorses the thumbs-up after being put through a rigorous training package.

Based on the Challenger 2 platform, Titan can lay a 25-metre bridge in less than two minutes while its Trojan cousin can carry out tasks such as mine clearance and demolishing anything in its way with a raptor-like claw.

Lt Dave Luke, of 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron, said: "The vehicles do what they were designed to do, but the way to adapt is to start using Trojan and Titan in the same way as the old kit and change accordingly."

Maj Andrew Devey, OC of the Paderborn-based squadron, believed the two new additions to the sapper armoury had yet to prove their full potential. He said: "There is a lot more to come from them. We haven't found out the full capability of Titan and Trojan and they have not yet been deployed on ops."

● THE commander of British Forces in Gibraltar has praised his troops for their role in training African Union personnel heading to war-torn Darfur.

Cdre Matt Parr, RN, said his soldiers had played a key role in helping Gambian soldiers by passing on their knowledge and experience. He added: "The Royal Gibraltar Regiment troops performed well. Fewer than 100 of them went to Gambia and they were responsible for training 500 soldiers each day.

"There were only a small number of them but they provided a massive return in training the African Union troops. The service they provided was vital."

The contingent from the Rock spent just under a month in Gambia, instructing on key skills such as setting up vehicle checkpoints, patrolling and public order drills. As well as training infantrymen, the Gibraltar troops trained specialist intelligence operators, clerks and policemen deploying under a United Nations mandate to Darfur.

Maj Andrew Bonfante, who led the British Military Advisory Training Team, added: "Some of our junior NCOs found themselves giving lectures to about 150 troops, much bigger than any audience they would face in Gibraltar. This was an invaluable experience."



Picture: Mike Weston

# Anyone for tennis?

FILLING time in one of the most dangerous cities in the world is a challenge for most soldiers but for a table tennis champion with no opposition it's near impossible.

Based at the British Support Unit in Baghdad's International Zone, LCpl Abs Aboagye, pictured, who is originally from Ghana, has been shunned by friends scared off by his prowess on the table.

The human resources administrator of B Company, 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, clocked up the title of Ghanaian youth champion, but has not played profes-

sionally since joining the Army five years ago despite having a table tennis table at his base.

The 29-year-old told *Soldier*: "It's all psychology really, no one wants to play me as they think I will disgrace them. As a result I cannot practise as I have no challengers.

"I am always looking for someone to play and I am keen to get back into competing within the table tennis arena."

LCpl Aboagye discovered his talent and passion for the sport after injuring himself playing football as a 12-year-old.

# Telic hero killed

## Soldier wounded in Iraq dies in Mastiff crash

**F**RIENDS of a soldier who was killed in an accident while on manoeuvres have paid tribute to him for returning to duty despite being wounded in southern Iraq.

Pte Scott Mugridge, of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment – who survived a rocket-propelled grenade attack on Op Telic 8 – had been on exercise in Germany when his Mastiff troop carrier was involved in a crash on April 14.

A dozen other troops were injured, one seriously, although no other vehicles were involved.

Military police officers are investigating the cause of the accident. According to reports, the Mastiff had been on a routine move as part of 7th Armoured Brigade's latest mission rehearsal manoeuvres in Hohenfelds, Bavaria.

Lt Col Simon Browne, CO of Celle-based 2 R Anglian, said Pte Mugridge

had been an inspiration to others for his good humour and upbeat outlook on life. The commanding officer added: "His death has had a very profound effect because he was not only a dedicated professional soldier but also a close personal friend.

"He was an ally, confidant and inspiration to so many and none more so than me.

"When I first met him he was lying on a bed in a field hospital in Iraq having been badly wounded in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on Op Telic 8. Despite his wounds he was cheerful, God alone knows why, and from that point on I noticed how upbeat he was about everything."

Lt Col Browne said the loss of Pte Mugridge would be keenly felt, adding that the soldier's willingness to return to operations after being seriously injured was humbling.



# Model soldier

## Telic veteran on verge of conquering England

**A**N accidental beauty queen has beaten scores of contestants to reach the semi-finals of one of the biggest competitions in the UK.

LCpl Katrina Hodge is now a strong favourite to be named as Miss England after a friend secretly entered her picture in the hometown heats of the high-profile pageant.

Now life has been turned upside down for the Adjutant General's Corps clerk, who was overjoyed when judges called to say she had won the title of Miss Tunbridge Wells.

The 21-year-old, who has a tour of southern Iraq under her belt, admitted that she was delighted to have progressed to the semi-final stages of the national competition, which are taking place in Leicester on June 15 and 16.

To win, LCpl Hodge, who has been dubbed Combat Barbie by *The Sun*, must prove that she can represent the country for a year by showcasing her talents and convincing the judging panel that her charity is a worthy one. Being Miss England is a role she sees as an opportunity to raise cash for a range of military charities.

She confided: "The judges put me straight through to represent Tunbridge

Wells because they thought I had a good cause, which was to raise money for injured soldiers.

"I plan to represent all Army charities and I hope to raise awareness across the UK. All of the Forces charities are worthwhile and I wouldn't want to choose one over the others."

The Miss England contender, pictured right, thanked her Army training for turning her into a confident and disciplined young woman and believed her military qualities have helped her progress as far as she has.

But while flirting with the lifestyle trappings of a beauty queen has been a welcome experience, LCpl Hodge insisted that she remained fully committed to her Army career and her job at Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

"Even if I won Miss England I would like to return to Army life as I enjoy what I do," she said.

"I see this as a great opportunity to raise money for worthwhile charities such as Help for Heroes and, of course, SSAFA Forces Help."

● To follow Katrina's progress visit [www.missengland.info](http://www.missengland.info) or donate to her chosen charities by visiting [www.justgiving.com/katrinahodge](http://www.justgiving.com/katrinahodge)

## High life on the Rock

**HIGH**-flying sappers put themselves out on a limb for their trade as they carried out a heart-stopping renovation job dangling off the Rock of Gibraltar.

The soldiers from Germany-based 35 Engineer Regiment braved high winds and pouring rain to convert an old wartime bunker into a viewing platform for visitors.

They worked 100 metres up a cliff face, tethered to scaffolding with safety harnesses as they battled relentlessly to complete the testing mission on time.

The job was part of a package of tasks given to 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron on Exercise 29th Shot, an eight-week series of construction projects on the Rock.

Lt Dave Luke, who led the 1 Troop soldiers carrying out the dangerous observation point work, told *Soldier*: "The job was a high-risk version of the complex command tasks that you have to do before you go to the Royal Military Academy.

"The soldiers were working outside their comfort zones, in high winds and with the rain hurling down on them. The environmental conditions were tough."

During the job, which took three weeks to complete, the troops – who are normally

based in Paderborn as part of the 20th Armoured Brigade – had to secure the area below the bunker before breaking up reinforced concrete.

They erected scaffolding and secured themselves to cliffs with harnesses before clearing three tonnes of rubble. With the demolition complete they set about transforming the site into a viewing platform overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar.

"The young junior NCOs were in their element in this work, although I have to say that I breathed a sigh of relief when the task was complete," said Lt Luke.

"But I know that I can absolutely trust the section commanders because of the way they have worked together out here. We have built a lot of cohesion."

Squadron OC Maj Andrew Devey was also delighted with the achievements of the soldiers during Exercise 29th Shot. They had also taken part in other projects including a demolition and sprucing up the Royal Marines diving centre on the Rock.

"This was a hugely valuable exercise for the troops in preparation for future operations. The guys are hugely confident in their trade abilities," Maj Devey concluded.



Picture: Steve Dock



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# Birthday blessing

## Queen pays tribute to volunteers' dedication

**T**HE Territorial Army's century of loyal service has been recognised by the highest echelons after the Queen sent a special message to its soldiers past and present.

In a widely distributed commemorative card, the Sovereign praised the troops for their contribution in times of peace and conflict. The Queen, who is the patron of the TA 100 commemorations, also expressed her admiration for those volunteering to serve on current operations in Iraq and southern Afghanistan.

The Sovereign wrote: "Throughout the century, volunteers have served this country with selfless duty and courage, through two World Wars and many other operations, and they have been supported in this through their families, society and employers.

"This tradition of service has, perhaps, never been more vital to the Army than now. In recent years I have admired the way in which so many Territorials have volunteered to serve or to support the work of those deployed."

The Queen's message added: "I wish to express my gratitude to every member of the Territorial Army, serving and retired, to your remarkable record of service to the nation."

The exclusive cards dropped through mailboxes or were presented to soldiers by their commanding officers as part of a programme of national events to commemorate the TA's remarkable record of service. It includes a service at St Paul's Cathedral in London this month and an act of remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

The Armed Forces memorial in Lichfield lists the names of more than 300



Picture: Graeme Main

**Royal recommendation:** The Queen penned a message of thanks to members of the TA past and present

TA soldiers killed in training, battle and on peacekeeping operations during the last 60 years.

● Senior salute – Page 17

## Charity hoping to coin it in

**FAMILY** members will be able to visit wounded soldiers in comfort as a result of a campaign launched by a leading Armed Forces charity.

In its latest cash drive, SSAFA Forces Help is appealing to the public to put £1 in a special envelope, and write a message of support to troops and their loved ones.

To date, £3.7 million has been raised towards the £5 million appeal target to buy and run two homes-from-home for families visiting their injured relatives at Headley Court in Surrey and Birmingham's Selly Oak hospital, while the messages will be

copied into books to be kept at the homes to inspire recovering personnel.

SSAFA Forces Help spokesman Michael Ivatt said the Pound for Your Thoughts campaign would provide much-needed havens for those visiting wounded soldiers.

He added that Norton House – named after George Cross winner Capt Peter Norton RLC – had already opened at Ashted close to Headley Court and that a second property close to Selly Oak had been earmarked.

Special envelopes are available from SSAFA offices, across the Army community or online at [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

**National events to mark the 100th anniversaries of the TA, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association include:**

**May 15:** Service of Thanksgiving, St Paul's Cathedral, London

**June 14:** Locomotive Dedication, National Railway Museum, York

**June 21:** National Pageant, Horse Guards, London

**June 21:** CRFCA National Reception, St James's Palace

**July 10:** Royal Garden Party, Buckingham Palace

**July 16:** Voluntary Uniform to Work Day

**September 13:** TA100 Act of Remembrance, Armed Forces Memorial, Lichfield

**November 8-9:** Remembrance Events

For more information visit:  
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IN BRIEF

● FALKLANDS War veterans have applauded a Government decision allowing them to take advantage of cheap travel for pilgrimages back to the islands. Under a new scheme, former Service personnel can now use the MoD Indulgence Flight system.

Veterans must hold the South Atlantic Medal to apply for the initiative, which begins in September, with bids confirmed two days before flights are due to leave.

Kenny Dawkins, deputy chairman of the South Atlantic Medal Association's pilgrimages committee and a former soldier with the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, said: "The Government has really played for us and has helped with this issue. If guys cannot pay to go back to the islands, we will help raise money for them."

Further information on the indulgence scheme is available by calling 07730 267 307.

● THE new incarnation of the ArmyNet web portal was set to be launched as this issue went to press and programmers have promised a host of new features.

The secure website, which now has 155,000 users, has been given a complete makeover with refreshed features including a much-upgraded email system. Established high points of the site already include an instant messaging facility and an SMS service, allowing soldiers to send out texts to several mobile phones at once.

● *SOLDIER* staff members have been short-listed for three class awards in the national competition of the British Association of Communicators in Business (CiB).

Cliff Caswell's impressive coverage of last year's 25th anniversary of the Falklands War, which included interviews with Argentinian veterans, earned an award of excellence for best event reporting, and there were similar accolades for photographers Mike Weston and Graeme Main.

Weston's dramatic shot (March 2007 edition) of the Royal Artillery's new "60km sniper", the Guided Multiple-Launch Rocket System (GMLRS), test firing on the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, was nominated in the best news photo category, while Main was singled out in the best illustration class for his heart-warming picture (December) of 3 Para amputees Sgt Stuart Pearson and Cpl Stuart Hale winning their battle for fitness after sustaining serious injuries in combat in Afghanistan.

Class winners will be announced at the CiB's national conference in Brighton later this month. Judges described *Soldier* as "a quality magazine".

Picture: Graeme Main



From the top: Gen Sir Richard Dannatt praised the professionalism of reservists at the launch of TA 100

# Senior salute

## TA's commitment key to Army efforts, says CGS

**B** RITAIN'S most senior soldier praised the Territorial Army as an "essential" component of operations at an event to celebrate the organisation's centenary.

Speaking exclusively to *Soldier* during the TA 100 launch at the Tower of London, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, paid tribute to the volunteer troops' professionalism and said their commitment was key in keeping a hectic Army from faltering.

Gen Dannatt told *Soldier*: "As I have often said, the engine is running hot and it can run hot provided it has enough oil to keep it going."

"The 1,500 or so Territorials deployed every year are part of that oil which keeps the engine going. They are essential and I am delighted they are here and willing and able to serve."

CGS added that TA soldiers fitted in well to the "One Army" concept, working alongside full-time colleagues to make sure operational demands were met.

The head of the Army added: "When you see soldiers deployed on operations in their full kit they are indistinguishable from a Regular. They are doing the same job. When we talk about having

'One Army', it is one team and that is absolutely right. Some people are full-time Regulars; others are part-time Territorials. But it is one job."

Gen Dannatt added that he was positive about future TA recruitment, claiming the intake for the Army was "pretty buoyant" and that retention was now the key issue.

CGS admitted: "Our strength would come much closer to 100 per cent if we could keep trained serving soldiers for a little bit longer and that's why we are focusing quite a lot of our efforts on keeping manning up."

Gen Dannatt went on to pay tribute to the bravery of TA soldiers past and present. He highlighted that troops such as Pte Luke Cole of the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment – who won the Military Cross in Afghanistan – were an example to the whole Army.

"His award will inspire his mates in his TA unit and the Regular unit he was serving with," Gen Dannatt concluded. "I salute him as I salute the whole TA in their 100th year."

● *Territorials: A Century of Service*  
– See Pages 78-79





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A full-page photograph of two soldiers in a city street. The soldier on the right is a British soldier in desert camouflage, wearing a helmet with a night vision device and a THALES communication unit, holding an assault rifle. The soldier on the left is an Iraqi soldier in green camouflage, wearing a helmet with goggles, also holding a rifle. The background shows a stone wall and some debris.

Back to back training: Patrol commander  
Sgt Maj Uda Mhaibes Ajeef, 10th Iraqi Army  
Div, left, with CSgt Dean Fraser, 1 Scots, on  
a joint patrol in East Rashid, Baghdad

# Mean streets

On a patrol with British and Iraqi troops in  
one of the world's most dangerous cities »



Report: Heidi Mines  
Pictures: Mike Weston

**A**T first glance the neat rows of houses, narrow streets and welcoming cul-de-sacs seem normal enough.

It's only as the eyes adjust to the glare of the sun that you notice the scars left by fierce fighting and the rubble-filled gaps where homes once stood.

The bloodstains on the pavements are a stark reminder that we are on a foot patrol in the most dangerous city in the world.

"Get ready to run," shouts CSgt Dean Fraser, 1 Scots, as we approach an open area with a potential sniper threat. He has been based in Baghdad with five other members of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland for the past three months. With 11 US soldiers they form the Military Transition Team (MiTT) and their role is to train and mentor Iraqi Army units patrolling residential areas or muhallas.

Although Baghdad is predominantly the responsibility of the US military, the small team of Royal Scots Borderers has followed an Iraqi Army battalion trained in Basra to East Rashid, a central district of Baghdad.

CSgt Fraser explains that following a recent American surge in Baghdad, Basra-based units of the Iraqi Army have been asked to assist in the north.

"We are here because the Iraqi battalion is from the 10th Division based in the Basra area. They have all been trained by us so we have moved to Baghdad with them to help continue their training."

As our patrol moves down another narrow street, Sgt George Smith, 1 Scots, keeps a watchful eye on Iraqi 2iC Sgt Maj Uda Mhaibes Ajeef.

"Once the training is completed in Basra it doesn't just stop," he says. "I am taking a mentoring role and making sure that the 2iC is keeping to the brief issued earlier by the patrol commander and to steer him in the right direction if I think he is moving away from the correct protocol."

The reason for deploying Iraqi soldiers on the ground in East Rashid is to try to win the support of the local community and to encourage people to move back to their homes.

It is not long before residents approach members of the patrol, many complaining that they have lived without electricity for more than two years. They want the Iraqi Army to help by making the provision of power their top priority.

Our patrol stops at the home of a middle-aged woman who invites us into her modest front garden, which is dominated by a large birdcage. She tells us that she is positive about the future and says: "We welcome the Iraqi Army, we want them to do their best to make the area better and listen to people's



problems and respond to them."

The security of the district is complicated by the fact that the Iraqi soldiers share the responsibility with the Sons of Iraq, a well-armed neighbourhood watch-style force funded by the Americans.

As CSgt Fraser leads us through the winding streets he tells us to keep up the pace and stay close to the walls. We have now reached the once bustling shopping hub of 60th Street, a stretch of road vital to the rebuilding of the whole district.

He explains that the American government is offering grants to former shopkeepers under an initiative to help them rebuild the area by encouraging them to open up for business. CSgt Fraser says: "It is a very difficult and slow-moving process and our aim is to encourage the people who fled from here to come back to their homes, but you can't expect people to want to return to an area with no power or water supply."

Sgt John Knox explains that in the short time they have patrolled East Rashid he has seen an improvement. "In just over a month the shops at the north end of 60th Street have started to open and there are more people moving around the area."

Although some progress is being made, the area is still prone to violence and volatile incidents. An Iraqi soldier had been killed on 60th Street just a few days before *Soldier's* visit and another had been shot and injured soon after.

"It would be stupid to say you don't worry about the constant threat but you just have to remain focused. We are constantly aware of what the threats are and where they can be," says CSgt Fraser. "A number of IEDs have been found in the Rashid district by the Iraqi Army and successfully destroyed."

The battle on the streets of Baghdad is now one for hearts and minds, encouraging local people to have confidence in their own army.

**"It is a very difficult and slow-moving process and our aim is to encourage the people who fled from here to come back to their homes"**





**Clockwise from above, Street scene:** CSgt Jonathan de Courcy, 1 Scots, on a joint patrol with the Iraqi Army

**On the beat:** Patrol commander Sgt Maj Uda Mhaibes Ajeef, 10th Iraqi Army Div, checks in at a security post with Sgt George Smith, 1 Scots

**Mentoring:** Sgt John Knox, 1 Scots, looks on as his Iraqi colleague rests during a patrol of East Rashid



Sgt Smith says: "I volunteered for this role because we are out on the streets and interacting with the locals. There is a respect between the Iraqi soldiers and us. We are professionals and we are teaching them to be professionals."

Despite Baghdad's reputation, our patrol passes without incident, although we hear an explosion in the distance as we return to the Iraqi unit's safe house. For two hours we have been met with nothing but courtesy and kindness from the people who live and work on these tense and dangerous streets. ■

As this issue went to press 1 Scots were returning south to join colleagues at the Division Training Centre in Shaiba.





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Snatch shot of Baghdad:  
Soldiers from B Company,  
1st Battalion, The Mercian  
Regiment have been  
escorting VIPs through the  
streets of the Iraqi capital



# Highway patrollers

Mercians ensure safe passage on  
Baghdad's Highway of Death »



**Report: Heidi Mines**  
**Pictures: Mike Weston**

**O**NCE described as the Highway of Death, the 12km road between Baghdad's International Zone and the city's airport is one of the most notorious roads in the world.

There were 135 recorded attacks or hostile incidents in one five-month period between 2004 and 2005, earning Route Irish its morbid reputation.

In the past, negotiating even a short section of the highway could take hours due to the painstaking process of searching any suspicious object or vehicle along the way. To enemy forces, Route Irish offered a perfect "killing zone" which guaranteed high-value victims conveniently compressed into

**'To enemy forces, Route Irish offered a perfect 'killing zone' which guaranteed high-value victims'**

four lanes. Today, the RAF provides the preferred – and safer – mode of transport to and from Baghdad's airport; a speedy Puma flight across the city. However, when helicopters are unable to fly, the trip to the International Zone is made by road.

For the soldiers of B Company, 1st Battalion, The Mercians, the dash along the world's deadliest road is just another day at the office.

Based in the high security International Zone with the British Support Unit, (BSU), B Coy's main mission is to protect and escort the senior British military representative in Iraq and other senior officers and VIPs when they have to move across the city.

It is also responsible for guarding the British base and neighbouring Maude House, the residence of the senior British officer.

The BSU camp overlooks the River Tigris. The iconic outline of the Hotel Sheraton looms on the opposite bank. As *Soldier* went to press the unit had a narrow escape when two mortars fell short and landed in the river. Others living within the International Zone have not been as lucky in recent weeks as attacks have increased.

We joined the Mercians on an assignment to transport two generals from Baghdad International Airport to the International Zone formerly known as the Green Zone.

Although the number of incidents has dropped considerably, there are still risks to the convoys which have to make the journey. Maj Alex Osborn, OC B Coy, explained that the two main threats were Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and small-arms fire.

"The Americans, following their surge,





have done a lot of work to improve security on Route Irish. They clear the road twice a day and they have managed to reduce the threat of well-prepared, well dug-in IEDs. The more likely threat now is a possibly smaller device put in more hastily."

Morale among the troops is high as the Mercians have recently swapped with their A

Company to work on the front line.

Having previously been confined to the repetitive routine of guarding the internment

facility in Basra, the lads were very keen to put into practice all their hard training.

Journeys along Route Irish are never straightforward or routine. Tactical

driving and evasive manoeuvres are precise and controlled and very much part of B Coy's box of tricks. The drivers constantly weave their Snatch Land Rovers across the road while keeping station in the convoy.

They adopt blocking moves at every junction to prevent other vehicles from breaking into their formation.

"We are the force protection for the escorts. The G wagons [heavily armoured vehicles] hold the dignitaries. If anything happens, our job is to protect the VIPs and get them out of harm's way," explained the platoon commander, 2nd Lt Ben Smyth.

"We put the escort vehicles in the best position to remove them from the danger area safely."

Although the humour and camaraderie among the Mercians is ever-present, the soldiers are well aware that the personnel they are transporting and protecting are responsible for shaping the future of Baghdad. Before

every mission there is a detailed brief and every step of the journey is carried out with complete professionalism.

Vehicle tactics are practised every day in a safe environment. "Before each mission we will rehearse the appropriate scenario as we do not just patrol Route Irish, we also escort VIPs to meetings across the Red Zone [effectively the rest of the city outside the Green Zone]," said 2nd Lt Smyth. "The lads have a lot of confidence in the drills because we practise them so often."

Today the vegetation which lined the route and gave the bombers a perfect hiding place has been cut back. High concrete walls protect both sides of the road, which is patrolled by the US Army day and night and guarded by Iraqi military and police units manning the many checkpoints.

Despite all the measures to make it safer, Baghdad's infamous Route Irish continues to claim lives and limbs on a regular basis. ■





# Sgt Craig Calvert

## A role model who makes a real difference



Since 1901, the Military Provost Staff (MPS) has been helping men and women who have breached military law to get back on their feet, on track and in many cases, return to their service. The MPS also provides critical operational support and technical advice for Prisoner of War handling during conflicts and monitor POWs in custody.

Based at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester, the MPS works with members of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force serving periods of detention ranging from two weeks up to two years.

At the MCTC the MPS acts as a team of role models, leaders and mentors to rehabilitate, re-educate and return detainees either to a productive military career or a constructive future

in civilian life. The very purpose of the MPS is to make a difference to the lives of personnel under sentence at the centre.

Sgt Craig Calvert is just one person who makes a difference and understands what it takes to turn lives around. Aged 32, and with a military career spanning 16 years, Sgt Calvert previously served in the Royal Logistic Corps and Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He has been a member of the MPS since October 2006.

"I spent a lot of my time working alone when I served with the REME, so I was looking for a new challenge that enabled me to be part of a team and also demonstrate a different level of responsibility. I was certain I wanted to stay in the Forces and sought advice from my father-in-law, who had also been a member of the MPS."

"I knew immediately that this would be the perfect career move – it's very rewarding to know that you can make a real difference to people's lives."

A career with the MPS is a truly unique challenge in an environment which allows you to test your range of skills. Staff need to be able to create a feeling of self-respect and confidence among

those serving sentence, and motivate disillusioned personnel towards taking control of their lives.

Sgt Calvert continues: "You very much need to be able to deal with different personalities and flexibility is one of the most important attributes needed to be successful with the MPS.

Being approachable is also necessary, as is the ability to strike a rapport with people."

Discipline is upheld by applying a firm, fair and consistent approach and leadership by example is a must. To succeed, MPS personnel have to be everything that those serving sentence need to help them get back on track – this means being energetic, dynamic and inspirational.

It's not an easy job by any measure, and nor is it a job for anyone. But one of the most rewarding roles the military can offer awaits those who succeed.

Do you think you can make a difference? To find out more, visit [www.army.mod.uk/mps](http://www.army.mod.uk/mps) or call the Military Corrective Training Centre on 01206 543 591.



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# Basra blitz

**British soldiers return to familiar territory in support of an Iraqi Army operation against rogue militias »**

**Out of sights: Pte Euan Jardine, 1 Scots, peers out from behind cover as he observes an area in Basra city infamous for snipers**

Picture: Cpl Mark Nesbit RLC





#### Report: Cliff Caswell

**A**PHASED withdrawal from Basra has been put on hold after scores of British troops were pressed into action to help deal with an uprising in southern Iraq.

Soldiers from 4 Mechanised Brigade units including the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, and the 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, have been passing on their infantry experience to their Iraqi counterparts, embedding in their ranks and helping take the battle to the rogue militia enemy.

The move prompted a swift announcement by the British Government that an imminent withdrawal of 2,500 troops would be put on ice as clashes between Iraqi forces and insurgents erupted around Basra and the neighbouring provinces of Dhi Qar and Al-Muthanna.

In addition, several days of fighting were reported around the port of Umm Qasr – the country's main maritime gateway – although the Iraqi Army and Navy soon restored control. A number of "corrupt individuals" were removed following the action and a backlog of goods, including food and oil, were soon on the move.

As this issue went to press, coalition commanders remained confident that the Iraqi-led Operation Charge of the Knights had so far been successful in inflicting a serious blow against criminal militias attempting to destabilise the region.

In an interview, the British Army's spokesman in Basra, Maj Tom Holloway, KRH, told *Soldier* that Charge of the Knights had the solid backing of coalition troops.

As well as British soldiers providing mentoring support on the ground, he confirmed that Royal Engineers

had helped to build barricades and defences, assisting sapper counterparts from the Iraqi Army's 14th Division.

British personnel had also been providing logistic and intelligence support while Royal Air Force Tornado jets and US Apache helicopters had provided top cover.

Maj Holloway added that the British presence in Basra had been bolstered by hundreds of American personnel – led by Maj Gen George Flynn, US Army – who had been pulled in from Baghdad to continue mentoring Iraqi units they have been training in the north of the country.

The British officer praised the Iraqi forces for their courage during the uprising adding that they were turning their attention to the "harder core" elements of the troublemakers.

Scores of weapons had been netted in the raids, including rocket launchers, mortars, anti-aircraft missiles and





Main picture, Shoulder to shoulder: A British soldier and his Iraqi counterpart scan the doorways during a search operation

Above right, Streetwise: Iraqi troops man a vehicle checkpoint on the streets of Basra  
Right, Safety in numbers: British troops join a Basra street patrol

Pictures: Cpl Mark Nesbit RLC



many stolen Government vehicles. Maj Holloway said: "We have in the order of 700 US soldiers around the Contingency Operating Base as well as assets including Apache helicopters, which the British do not have in theatre.

"It is encouraging that operations have been progressing as successfully as they have. It is a baptism of fire for the Iraqi Army but they have proved themselves.

"They have been making really good progress. They have cleared the Al Quibia district to the south west of the city and located and rescued British journalist Richard Butler." He added that they had also been conducting high-profile ops in the volatile suburb of Hayyanayah.

Maj Holloway emphasised that the

**"It is a baptism of fire for the Iraqi Army but they have proved themselves"**

hectic pace of action had fired the morale of the 4 Mech Bde soldiers. "Business has been hectic but the troops have a real sense that we are doing something positive," he added.

Meanwhile MPs have been told that UK force levels in southern Iraq would remain consistent for the time being.

Addressing the House of Commons, Defence Secretary Des Browne warned that planned British troop cuts – from around

5,000 to 2,500 – were now unlikely to take place in the near future "in light of events". He added: "What is happening in Basra is a manifestation of our policy to give Iraqis control of their own security – the road will not always be smooth.

"We, along with our coalition

partners, are providing support to the Iraqis in line with our commitments and in accordance with our usual rules of engagement.

"Requests for support are being made through the coalition, and UK forces have continued to meet all of their obligations as part of the Multi-National Corps," said Mr Browne.

Op Telic may have been eclipsed in recent months by the heavy fighting against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, but the battle for peace is not over yet.

By providing support on the streets of Basra, British troops have proved the value of the overwatch capability and demonstrated the ability to intervene when needed.

Above all, the Iraqi Army has showed that it has the experience and maturity to operate independently and that it is fast becoming a competent force in its own right. ■



# Rapid reaction

United effort is delivering the right kit to the right place at the right time

Report: Cliff Caswell

**H**AVING the right kit has never been more critical for the British Army than in its operations in Iraq and southern Afghanistan, where it faces extreme environments on two fronts and a rapidly evolving array of sophisticated terrorist weaponry.

As the insurgents have upped their campaigns, the MoD and industry have raised their game, rolling out new equipment and adding potency to existing weapons platforms.

In parallel with the fighting on different front lines, the battle to send urgent operational requirements (UORs) to theatre is being conducted on the home front.

It has been a major action in itself. Funded by the Government and often involving swift intervention to resolve key issues on the ground, the timely delivery of vital equipment has become an ongoing priority for engineers, scientists and contractors.

According to senior executives at UK defence

contractor BAE Systems, the company delivered more than 80 UORs, including **night vision** and **electronic countermeasures equipment** in an 18-month period from 2006-2007. They admitted that the pace of change had been hectic and challenging for staff.

"We have been doing a huge amount of work across all of our platforms," said Bill Jamieson, a member of the demonstration and manufacturing programmes team at the company's Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based Land Systems Division. "There have been several projects given top priority."

The success of the UOR system has been critical for front-line troops dealing with constantly changing threats. In a hostile environment, the process has provided soldiers with everything from **body armour** to **air conditioned military dog kennels**.

"Such has been the pace of change that there is already a huge difference between the sort of equipment that a British

infantryman used in Kosovo in 1999 and what they are now using in Afghanistan ten years later," said the Defence Equipment and Support Minister, Baroness Ann Taylor, at the Future Soldier exhibition in London.

"Much of this is as a result of responding to urgent operational requirements, funded by the Treasury and often involving numerous scientists to crack the problem. They have resulted in brilliant assets for troops in theatre. One example of the improvements in kit is personal body armour," added Baroness Taylor.

"The **Osprey** and **Kestrel** armour show that we are listening to our soldiers, responding to the increasing threat and, with the help of scientists and engineers, delivering the best possible equipment to the front line."





Progress in equipment procurement has been rapid since the Iraq campaign began five years ago. As well as upgraded personal protection kit, new armoured vehicles have been quickly rolled out and modified to meet the conditions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Mastiff** – a conversion of the US Marines' Cougar troop carrier – was among the early additions to the armoury, as was **Bulldog** from BAE Systems, an upgrade that massively enhanced the capability of the 40-year-old FV432. It has been fitted with modifications including **Enforcer** – a system that allows soldiers to fire the vehicle's weapons remotely with the hatch down.

But it is not just the creativity of contractors that is making a difference – the support provided by experts actually based in theatre has also proved a decisive factor in the success of new kit. With a dedicated team of 9,000 professionals in the Defence Engineering and Science Group,

the MoD has been deploying more specialists on ops than at any time since the Second World War, making sure that troops retain the technical edge.

At the same time, contractors have been targeting ex-soldiers to join their ranks in a bid to ensure that their expertise continues to be used in new kit design.

Colin Horner, vice president of sales and marketing at Italian defence company Selex, which makes **Enforcer**, said they were keen to employ former military personnel.

"They have experience of operations and know the sort of conditions a new piece of equipment will need to operate in," he said. "Having access to that knowledge, as well as the military training, is important for a company such as ours. I am one of the very few people employed here with no military experience. Currently we have one former member of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and another who has joined

us from the Armoured Trials and Development Unit."

The experience is certainly appreciated. Troops responsible for testing new equipment before it is deployed to the battlefield said they were impressed with the prompt delivery of new kit and the effect it had on boosting morale.

CSgt Paul Guppy of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, said kit such as the **grenade machine gun** had been used to great effect in Afghanistan. "It's big but an excellent system," he added. "I'm with the Infantry Trials and Development Unit,

and our job is to make sure that kit is right for the role."

The close cooperation between contractors, the MoD and the Armed Forces increasingly means that equipment being rolled out is making a difference and proving to be vital in the battle with emerging threats on ops. With the latest technology and the expertise of scientists and engineers, cutting-edge equipment has been helping to prosecute the war against insurgents while offering the best protection.

The UOR process has become a war-winning weapon in itself. ■

**'MoD has been deploying more scientists on ops than at any time since the Second World War'**

In a theatre near you: Kgn Mike Garner, 1 Lancers, inset, wears the Kestrel enhanced protection body armour on patrol in Iraq and, main picture, a Mastiff armed with a mounted grenade machine gun patrols Camp Bastion in southern Afghanistan

Pictures: Steve Dock and Graeme Main





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# Treading carefully

New mine detection package is step in right direction as fight against IED threat heats up

Report: Cliff Caswell  
Picture: Mike Weston

**S**APPERS serving in Afghanistan's demanding southern provinces have given the thumbs-up to a new mine detector delivered well ahead of schedule.

The hand-held Vallon has been pressed into service nearly a year before its expected arrival date and has already been helping to save lives in theatre.

Supplied as part of a £12 million deal with Ultra Electronics, the metal detector can pinpoint mines in all types of conditions. The kit is more sophisticated than the Ebex detector already in service and is fast establishing a track record for unearthing well-concealed mines and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Both systems will continue to be used side-by-side by troops in southern Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

Last year's intensive testing of Vallon by the Royal Engineers Trials and Development Unit (RETDU) proved highly successful and, as a result, more than 1,000 of the detectors are now en route to units in the front line.

Unlike Ebex, troops using Vallon will be able to lead their searches with the metal detector rather than using prodders, enabling them to cover ground more quickly. The new arrival also comes with a range of protective kit for its users, including a visor, groin protector and gloves worn with Service body armour.

Training kit, including exercise mines that use compressed gas to simulate explosions, are included in the package provided by the manufacturers.

Capt Simon Doyle, RETDU, was confident that the British Army's latest countermeasure against roadside bombs was "the best available".

"During trials and training, soldiers were quick to see the improved performance the Vallon offered compared with the old detector," he said. "They were also very pleased with the new reactive training mines."

Maj Richard Walker, OC of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, was equally impressed with the way the detector had performed on tour in southern Afghanistan.

**'It is saving soldiers' lives and enhancing our freedom of manoeuvre'**

"The quality of the metal detector and the levels of assurance it delivers in an environment of rapidly evolving threat has found Vallon to be right up to the requirement," he said.

"We have proven it to be very effective on operations – there is a step change in capability and we are now very comfortable with the equipment."

Vallon, which is also being rolled out to the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines, is part of the wider Dismounted Counter Mine Capability Initiative.

The scheme, which is managed by the Manoeuvre Support Integrated Project Team (MSIPT) at Abbey Wood in Bristol, includes an explosive mine lane clearance system, due to enter service in three years' time.

Maj Greg Blunden, RE, requirements manager at the MSIPT, said Vallon had been a success story. He added: "We have delivered a good capability ahead of time. It is saving soldiers' lives and enhancing our freedom of manoeuvre in the fight against Taliban forces. To me, this is what acquisition is all about." ■



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A soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet with a headlamp and a tactical vest, is carrying a simulated casualty on his back. The casualty is also in camouflage and has a rifle slung over their shoulder. They are moving through a dense jungle with many thin trees and green foliage. The scene is misty or foggy, creating a sense of a difficult environment.

**Walking wounded:**  
Simulated casualties  
from the 1st Battalion,  
The Rifles are carried  
out of the jungle after  
the Tesex dawn attack

# Going down a storm

Riflemen put next generation Tesex kit through its paces on exercise in the heart of Belizean jungle »





**Report: Stephen Tyler**  
**Pictures: Steve Dock**

**A**S a company of riflemen silently advance on an enemy camp in the half-light of a Belizean early morning, the soldiers' prey remains unaware of the impending attack.

The troops, from the 1st Battalion, The Rifles, move so stealthily through the dense jungle that many of their foes remain fast asleep in their makeshift bedspaces among the trees.

But while the British soldiers taking part in Exercise Tropical Storm may have escaped the attentions of the enemy, they are far from alone. Perched

atop a hill a couple of kilometres away, commanders at battalion headquarters are watching, recording and scrutinising their every move thanks to the latest generation of deployable tactical effect simulator (DTES) equipment.

Developed by Saab Training Systems, the new kit allows directing staff to watch battles as they unfold on a computer screen and lets soldiers on the ground find out in real time whether they have been injured or worse.

Cpl Jay Vincent, 1 Rifles, is a veteran of previous tactical engagement

simulation exercises (Tesex) and believes the current equipment to be a vast improvement on its predecessor.

The junior NCO also reported favourably on the targeting system, which he believes forces soldiers to concentrate on and hone their weapon-handling skills.

"This version is much lighter than the old one and you don't really notice it when you're taking part in an exercise," he said. "We were all crawling through the trees and it wasn't a problem.

"It's also good that this kit punishes you if you try and use spray-and-slay tactics. You could get away with it using the old version, but with this one we all had to try and target our shots a lot more."

The cutting edge DTES technology operates via a two-way radio link between transmitters worn by soldiers on the ground and a portable base station situated at a central headquarters. As well as having transmitters fitted to the barrels of their rifles, the troops also wear personal detection devices which register incoming fire.


During an attack, the shoulder packs act as tracking systems that allow commanders back at base to watch their soldiers' movements as they happen.

Platoon commander Lt Mark Endersby, 1 Rifles, was taking part in his first Tesex during Exercise Tropical


**'This kit punishes you if you try and use spray-and-slay tactics'**







**Sim soldiers:** The hi-tech TESEX kit forced troops from the 1st Battalion, The Rifles to concentrate on their tactics during the dawn jungle attack, while (bottom right) commanders used the latest DTES software to watch the raid in real-time on computers back at headquarters



Storm and told *Soldier* that the new equipment had left a very good impression.

"It's much more realistic than when we carry out blank attacks," said Lt Endersby after the dawn raid in Belize. "The data that the equipment provides you with give a much fairer reflection of things like casualties. This is the first Tesex I have done, but the guys who have used the old version have been saying that this is much better. The only criticism I have is that the packs are a little bit uncomfortable."

As the Rifles conducted the early-morning camp assault, it was not just the threat of enemy fire they had to guard against.

The perimeter of the Belizean camp was rigged with electronic devices which simulated explosions when triggered, giving the Herrick-bound troops an invaluable chance to practise spotting and avoiding lethal booby traps.

When a soldier did fall victim to enemy fire, a voice played through speakers on the personal detection devices immediately told them not only that they had been hit, but also the location and severity of their injury. Their colleagues then had to provide emergency care

before the casualty became a fatality.

LCpl David Abbott, a Royal Engineer attached to 1 Rifles, was happy to get the chance to test his front-line soldiering.

"It was useful for us to experience this," he said. "We've been doing a lot of engineering serials since arriving in Belize, so it was good to get out and show the Rifles what combat engineers can do. I have never used Tesex before, but it's a useful system. It records a lot of info so you are always making sure you follow your drills."

Once a Tesex attack is done and dusted, all of the data recorded from the personal detection devices are instantly available to be replayed and analysed. With just the click of a mouse, officers can watch the whole attack from a bird's eye view or zoom in on individual soldiers to make sure that important lessons are learned.

Saab spokesman Hugh Ward said the company deployed the equipment on two Tropical Storm exercises and hoped to continue using it to develop British soldiers' skills in the future. ■





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# Silent but deadly

## New state-of-the-art sniper rifle gets big thumbs-up on exercise trials

**Report: Stephen Tyler**  
**Picture: Steve Dock**

**A**RM Y marksman can't wait to get their hands on a fearsome new sniper rifle which is proving to be deadly accurate at very long ranges.

The L115A3 weapon's larger calibre round and high-tech telescopic sight will enable marksmen to engage targets as far out as 1,500m. It is designed to achieve first-round hits at 600m and deliver harassing fire out to 1,100m.

Snipers from the 1st Battalion, The Rifles put the weapon – developed over two years under an £11 million contract – through its paces in Belize during Exercise Tropical Storm.

Instructor CSjt Sidney Hawkins was one of those to be impressed. "This is the first set to be released and I have to say that it is living up to what everyone expected from it," he told *Soldier*. "We have had no problems with it whatsoever in this climate and it has already passed hot wet, hot dry and cold climate trials."

During testing in Belize, marksmen using the L115A3 were regularly hitting targets almost a mile away, a dramatic improvement on the 1,000m range of

the weapon it replaces. The L115A3's telescopic sight provides twice the magnifying power of its predecessor, and the addition of all-weather day and night sights will allow it to be used around the clock.

CSjt Hawkins pointed out that the main improvements were the new sight and the sound suppressor, which should allow users to fire it without being heard. "We have been engaging targets here up to 1,500m and that is because the rifle's stability has made shooting over greater distances that bit easier."

The inclusion of a bipod by Portsmouth-based manufacturers Accuracy International Ltd has proved to be among the biggest hits with the rifle's users. Rfn Andrew French reckoned the extra stability

offered by the support allowed snipers on Tropical Storm to easily exceed their usual hit rate. "It's Christmas come early for us as this rifle will improve our capability massively," he said.

"The bipod makes accurate shooting a lot easier and that makes it easier for us to do our job. Already we have a lot of confidence in the rifle and I'm sure that it will make a massive difference when it is used on operations."

Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) close combat team leader Col Peter Rafferty added that he was delighted with the new rifle. "Snipers give our forces the ability to remove high-value targets without collateral damage," he said. "They represent precision attack and a covert surveillance capability." ■

### RIFLE FACT FILE

Calibre: 8.59mm  
Weight: 6.8kg  
Length: 1,300mm  
Muzzle velocity: 936m/s  
Feed: Five-round box  
Effective range: 1,100m plus



**Deadly accurate:** The L115A3 sniper rifle with sound suppressor and night sights





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# On the piste and legless

Battling back, injured Servicemen and women hit the slopes of Oberstdorf »



**Snow Warrior:**  
LCpl Rory Mackenzie,  
RAMC, puts his new-  
found skiing skills to  
the test in Bavaria less  
than one year after  
losing a leg in an IED  
attack in Basra





**Report: Stephen Tyler**  
**Pictures: Graeme Main**

**T**WELVE of Britain's injured Servicemen and women were the centre of their fellow skiers' attention as they began their descent of a steep run above the German holiday resort of Oberstdorf.

It was not the team's bright red jackets or a morbid fascination with their missing limbs or lack of mobility that drew the stares, however.

Instead, the many eyes were looking on in admiration as the disabled athletes handled the slope with just as much style, grace and balance as their able-bodied counterparts.

The military men and women were on the mountain to take part in Exercise Snow Warrior (Adaptive), the first event organised as part of Battle Back, an initiative dreamed up by Lt Col Fred Hargreaves, Royal Signals.

Inspired by the American Wounded Warrior programme, Battle Back aims to help injured Service personnel get involved in sport by making it easier to access the array of opportunities available to them.

"Once the guys try adaptive skiing, it becomes clear to them that they can achieve a very active life," said Lt Col Hargreaves, adding that he hopes to

have two members of staff based at a new Battle Back office in the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court in Surrey. "There's a lot on offer to our wounded Servicemen that they don't know about, so we wanted to have one central point where they can ring up and speak to subject matter experts.

"The number of traumatic injuries is increasing and there is a push to try and tap into the sporting potential that creates. I have written a paper saying that we could have a massive impact with just a minimal input.

"From our point of view, this exercise



has convinced us that progressing with this is immensely achievable. I think we will be doing this now indefinitely.”

Adaptive skiing utilises special equipment to allow injured athletes to tackle exactly the same slopes as able-bodied people.

Skiers unable to stand up can use sit-skis to slalom their way down the mountains, while those missing a limb can do so on regular skis fitted with a prosthetic limb or descend on one leg, counterbalancing with outriggers – effectively crutches with mini-skis attached to them.

Learning the sport following a severe injury may sound like a daunting prospect, but the military adaptive skiers had all reached a proficient level by the time *Soldier* visited them four days into their ground-breaking course.

LCpl Rory Mackenzie, RAMC, was a dedicated sportsman before he was injured in an IED attack as he travelled in the back of a Warrior convoy in southern Iraq last summer.

He was rescued from the wrecked vehicle by Sgt David Lovell of the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, but the blast caused catastrophic damage to his right leg. LCpl Mackenzie underwent seven major operations back in the UK, resulting in the complete loss of the limb.

Since beginning his recovery at Headley Court, the self-confessed adrenaline junkie admitted that one of the things he missed most was the feeling of speed, so

he signed up for Snow Warrior as soon as he heard about the event.

“When you lose a leg, everything slows right down,” explained LCpl Mackenzie. “In the early days after I returned to my apartment from Headley Court, I used to hold my head out of the car window just to feel the wind on my face.

“I was a very active, sporty person before and after losing my leg I had to reassess my extra-mural activities, so to get to come skiing is just amazing.

“You have the extreme rush and the wind going past you. It’s as good as it gets.”

Joining the wounded Service personnel on the slopes were representatives from Disability Snowsport UK (DSUK), a charity which also runs the British adaptive skiing team.

Although it was the first taste of the discipline for many of the participants, DSUK staff have already identified potential team members and Lt Col Hargreaves hopes that future Exercise Snow Warrior courses will help develop a new seam of sporting stars.

“We have found that a lot of these guys are progressing faster than able-bodied students, which has a lot to do with their levels of balance and the fact that they have better core strength,”

Lt Col Hargreaves explained.

“They get one-on-

one instruction, which helps them to pick it up quickly, but it’s important to remember that adaptive skiing is no more difficult than able-bodied skiing.”

With expert coaching from fully-trained instructors, the Army’s adaptive skiers are progressing at a great rate.

True to his sporting roots, LCpl Mackenzie is already planning to break into an adaptive ski team and he is keen to convince other disabled soldiers that hitting the slopes is a great way to bounce back from injury.

“I was nervous about it at first, but I know the Army are not going to make me go down a black run first time and the instructors are absolutely brilliant,” he said. “My aim now is to get onto the Army’s adaptive skiing team and see where that takes me. I would love to compete because it’s something I

have got a real taste for.

“You can never rule this out until you have tried it for yourself, and I think that for most people once they do try they will never stop because it is so addictive.

“Apart from the excitement of skiing, this has given me back a sense of freedom and independence.

“As I see it, I have only lost a leg. I’m not dead and it’s not the end of the world. There’s a lot of light at the end of the tunnel and it’s exercises like this that can really help pull you through.” ■

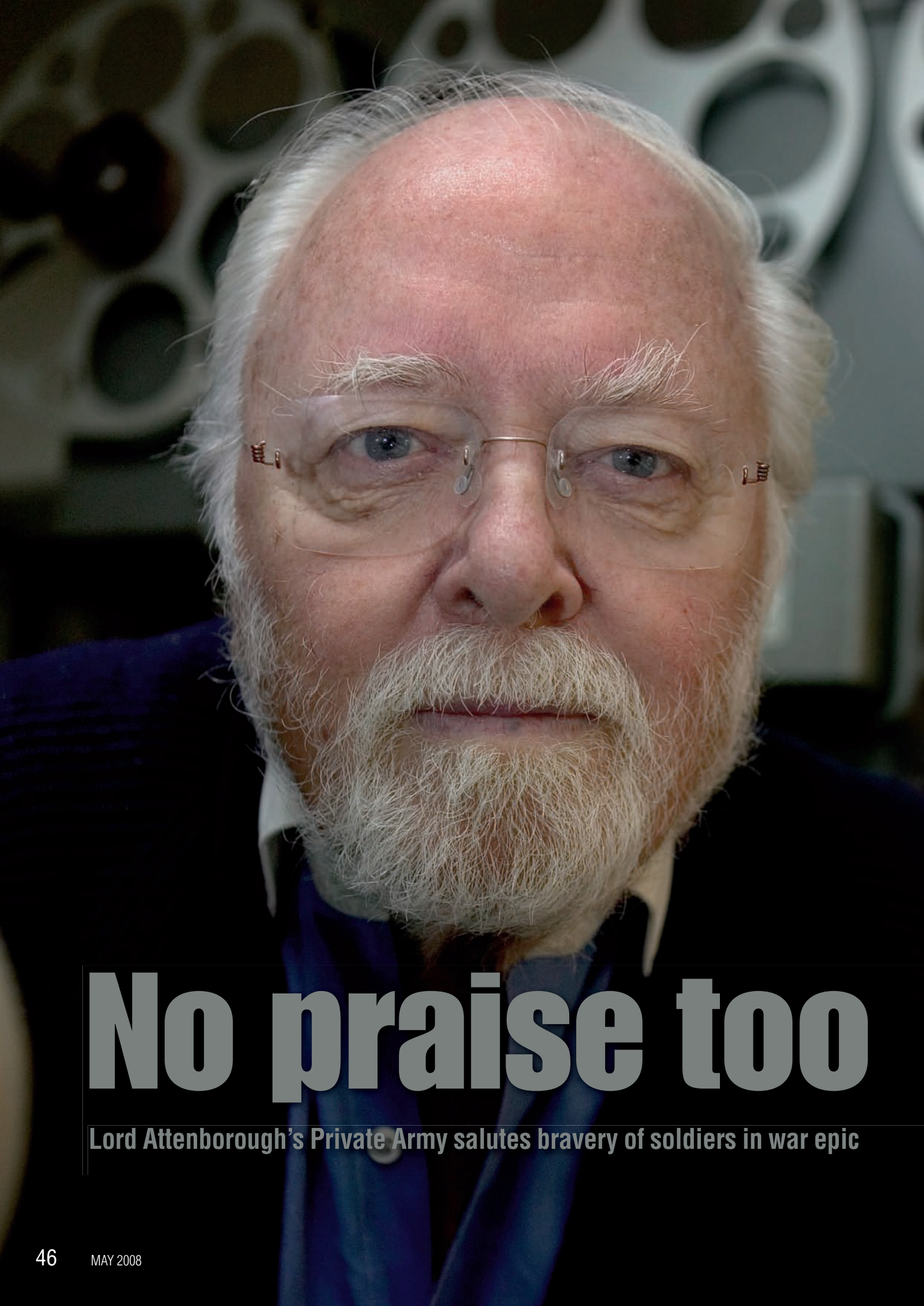
**“Once the guys try adaptive skiing, it becomes clear to them that they can achieve a very active life”**

● Sporting chance – Page 87

**Alpine assault:** Exercise Snow Warrior student Sgt Stu Pearson, 3 Para, dominates the Oberstdorf slopes on a sit-ski as one of his fellow adaptive skiers takes a tumble







# No praise too

Lord Attenborough's *Private Army* salutes bravery of soldiers in war epic



# Lord Attenborough – MY ARMY

Interview: Karen Thomas  
Picture: Graeme Main

**W**AR has played as big a part in Lord Richard Attenborough's 84 years as it has in his outstanding film roles and directorial masterpieces that still entertain millions the world over.

From his acting debut as war coward midshipman Chimmo Branson in *In Which We Serve* to *The Great Escape* war hero Sqn Ldr Roger Bartlett, Attenborough's combat credits have delighted audiences for more than six decades. His directorial vision to romance the Army onto the silver screen brought more accolades, but one film still holds the modern British soldier captive, especially if he wears a maroon beret.

*A Bridge Too Far* portrays the Second World War story of the disastrous Allied airborne assault into occupied Holland. Operation Market Garden saw more than 10,000 British paratroopers dropped at Arnhem – unexpectedly on top of élite German Panzer tank troops.

The short but bloody battle to seize the bridge over the Rhine and open the way into Germany decimated the British force.

Actors rigorously trained in soldiering recreated the superhuman effort of Lt Col Johnny Frost's men to hold Arnhem Bridge against overwhelming odds. Despite failing to take their prize, the Red Devils won an enduring reputation for guts and courage. The legendary director wanted that

unfailing valour in an action doomed by the high command's arrogance to be authentically captured on film.

"The outrageous deceit of not declaring certain factors in the target area of the Arnhem drop was criminal. And to ignore that and therefore sacrifice all those men on the Arnhem Bridge was dreadful," the double Oscar-winner told *Soldier* in his Richmond home, which he shares with his wife of 63 years, Sheila Sim.

"The boys that were on the bridge were all actors but they trained as soldiers for six weeks in what was called the APA – Attenborough's Private Army. They were the right age and they knew how to hold a gun. They knew what sacrifice meant and they knew what bravery meant.

"So *A Bridge Too Far* was a salute to soldiers, a salute to their bravery, their discipline and their acceptance of duty."

The Baron of Richmond upon Thames's lifelong passion for taking action against injustice and inhumanity was instilled by parents "ever conscious of our own good fortune".

With the rise of Adolf Hitler, Attenborough's father offered refuge to

fleeing German Jews while his mother took off to northern Spain to rescue children orphaned by Italian and German bombing during the Spanish civil war.

After studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in 1941, the young Attenborough answered his country's call to arms and joined the Royal Air Force.

Interrupting his training to star alongside Hollywood great Edward G Robinson in *Journey Together*, the gifted actor was told on his return the RAF didn't want any more pilots. It looked like he was destined to end the Second World War as a foot soldier.

"They said I was to go in the infantry and, delighted though I would have been to be a soldier, I did not cherish the thought of having to do square-bashing for the next x-number of weeks or months. So I went to the CO of the RAF film unit and asked could I fly."

His request was granted on condition that he trained as an air-gunner cameraman, cueing the script for his future directorial career.

"I became air crew but I did bugger all. I went on a couple of raids when the war was virtually over but I did

meet and live with some wonderful crews."

The few weeks of parading endured during initial RAF training gave Attenborough the edge for his first acting award. From private to general, he played his Army characters with uncanny accuracy. But it was his role as spit-and-polish disciplinarian

RSM Lauderdale in *Guns At Batasi* that swept away the 1964 competition for the Best British Actor BAFTA.

"I spent time with an extraordinary RSM when I went to Chelsea Barracks. Although I didn't sleep there, I spent day after day after day just being with the men and understanding how they moved, how they talked, how they lit a cigarette, how they drank a beer," recalled the Cambridge-born thespian on how he prepared for his award-winning performance.

"I have cellars here in my house and against all the teaching of RADA in terms of voice production, I had to go down these cellars and mimic that RSM. So I shouted until my throat was raw commanding these troops on the square at Chelsea Barracks."

It was just the beginning of a career in which this true gentleman would command worldwide standing ovations for his work in front of and behind the camera. From *Oh! What A Lovely War* to *Gandhi*, the man affectionately known as Dickie broadened the scope and reach of film, and his epics detailing the Army's loyalty, discipline and valour still command the audiences they deserve. ■

**'A Bridge Too Far was a salute to soldiers – to their bravery, their discipline and acceptance of duty'**

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# TALKBACK

## Name game

YOUR letters and emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) **MUST** include your name and address (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). **Anonymous views go in the bin, so if you wrote to us from Catterick on the subject of unequal treatment for non-graduate officers, please tell us who you are.** The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit them. Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer from your own chain of command. Our postal address is on Page 5.

# I have to pay to use gym

**I** WAS posted from Andover to Abbey Wood and in my first week went to the gym for an induction lesson.

I was refused access and told I would have to pay up first to become a member.

After a small laugh I realised they were serious and explained that I was in the middle of a rehab programme. It made no difference. Abbey Wood MoD is a civilian site with a civilian gym – so, no membership fee, no access.

Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel are funded to use it, but Army people get nothing. We have to pay but can't claim it back.

I have been told that this has long

been the situation and that "someone is looking into it". I have contacted my local rehab unit and they tell me that, fit or not, I should have access to the gym.

Can someone please tell me why I should now pay to get fit? – **WO2, name and address supplied.**

## PRIZE LETTER

**Lt Col Ian Davidson, Land Forces Training, responds:** *Army personnel are expected to maintain fitness levels even when posted to non-military or isolated units, which may not have convenient gym facilities.*

*The level of fitness required in specific locations is set out in MATT 2, which states that personnel under 50 when attached or posted to a headquarters unit such as Abbey Wood are required to pass a PFT twice a year, subject to their medical category, which the WO does not make clear in his letter.*

*To achieve it, an individual needs only sports kit and a place to run and complete press-ups and sit-ups. Access to a full gym facility is not a requirement. While we*

*accept it would be preferable for everyone to have access to a gym, there is currently no funding for it across the Army.*

*The lack of a coherent gym franchise across the UK, and the number and isolation of MoD establishments, means the MoD cannot seek the best terms on a Service-wide basis. In most areas it would have to pay the market rate of £400 to £600 a year. Abbey Wood is already subsidised and membership fees are £40 a year or £3.30 a month.*

*The other Services have different schemes. The RAF funds membership in full while the Navy contributes up to £50 a head a year from non-public funds, providing the individual is a member of the Royal Navy Sports Lottery.*

*The WO says he is in a rehab programme to get him back to full fitness and this may place a different perspective on his need for gym facilities. He should speak to his medical officer to determine his exact needs and then to the Divisional SO2 physical trainer to seek further advice as to how this extra requirement may best be achieved.*

## PS...

**I'VE** had a letter from the Child Support Agency (CSA) telling me I owe arrears from 1999 even though it has been deducting directly from my pay since I split with my ex-wife that year. It was, however, unable to tell me what period the arrears relate to as its computers don't go back that far.

It only took the CSA nine years to let me know and it's apparently my fault for not contacting them. Even more hilarious is the fact that the JPA Centre has told me I have six weeks to sort it out with the CSA or the deductions will increase. Given the time it took them to let me know about these alleged arrears, I'm not sure six weeks is sufficient. – Sergeant, name and address supplied.

## Timed out on facial scar

IN January 2006 I had ten stitches put in my face after an incident. At the time I was not aware of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (Overseas) (CICS(O)). The person responsible pleaded guilty in the Standing Civilian Court in Germany and was punished.

I became aware of the scheme only much later and contacted HQ Army Legal Assistance. They sent me a form, which I completed and returned. Now I have been told my application was made more than two years after the incident

and so is "out of time". I wanted to submit the form to the Army Awards Panel, but it will not normally waive the time limit if a claimant was unaware of the scheme or the time limit.

I wasn't aware of either so can't claim even though I am haunted by the two-inch scar every time I look in a mirror. Please print this to make other soldiers aware of the scheme. Perhaps a pamphlet could be sent to all units.

I intend to seek legal advice in civvy street. – **Name and address supplied.**

Read many more of your letters at [www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)



# Sniff PAYD coffee

**A** SHORT letter headlined "Give PAYD a chance" (March) had the desired effect of getting me to reply. There have been many excellent letters recently on the subject of Pay As You Dine (PAYD) and as a sergeant major who eats in both cookhouses on our camp, I would like to set out what I think are the facts.

In general PAYD works for junior soldiers because those who provide the catering are doing so for the masses. They can produce excellent menus – core, enhanced and salad bars – with the luxury of food wastage being reduced by larger numbers of soldiers using the service.

This, however, does not work in the WO's and Sgts' Mess as fewer eat in and so do not get the variety, quantity or value offered to junior ranks.

At the weekend, a pre-cooked evening meal (enhanced menu) wrapped in

cling film and requiring two minutes in a microwave is unacceptable to anyone, let alone the WO's and Sgts' Mess.

If we are going to "give PAYD a chance" we need to have a radical rethink to iron out the gremlins.

The only way for PAYD to work fairly is to have a centralised cookhouse catering for all ranks.

Many will say that this would be to the detriment of the mess tradition, but having to pay extra for waiter service when the food on offer is not as freshly cooked or varied as that in the junior ranks' cookhouse is unacceptable.

Junior ranks can turn up and get a meal without booking in, which in the tempo of the modern army is a must. When a cooked breakfast in the mess at the weekend takes 50 minutes to prepare because there is only one chef on duty while the same meal in the junior ranks cookhouse takes ten

minutes, with bigger portions, you have to question where we are going.

I am forever hearing that PAYD is what we wanted and that in the past soldiers paid for meals they did not eat. This may have been so, however personnel are now reluctant to get a "hungry soldier chit" because it flags them up to the chain of command as having financial problems.

I would like to see all soldiers being charged for the core breakfast, which could be stopped and started on JPA if they submit a leave pass or deploy. I believe the Army has a duty to ensure our soldiers have at least one meal daily rather than assuming they are eating correctly when in many instances they are not. It wasn't that long ago that breakfast was a parade.

It's about time we all woke up and sniffed the PAYD coffee. – **WO2 A Bryne, 12 Regiment RA.**

# Charged for extra veg

THE main cookhouse at SEME Bordon charges soldiers if they take more than one helping of vegetables or potatoes. And only one slice of bread is allowed with the evening core meal, even though in the past it was two slices.

I was under the impression that the standard meal should not change under the new system but this ruling seems to go against that as we used to be able to increase our food portions with more vegetables and potatoes to supplement the main meal without an extra charge. – **Cpl J Corbett, SEME, Bordon.**



**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:**

*Carbohydrates (potatoes etc) and vegetables are to be available on a help-yourself basis as part of the core meal.*

*This should not mean that soldiers be allowed automatically to load up two places, which I understand is not uncommon (waste springs to mind if soldiers decide that they are not that hungry after all), but they must be allowed to go back for free second helpings of potatoes and vegetables if they are still hungry.*

*The provision of two slices of bread is a requirement with breakfast and lunch, but not in the evenings, when, instead a two-ounce bread roll or sliced French bread is to be provided if soup is taken. Your single slice of bread is understood to be a locally negotiated arrangement and you should take this up through your chain of command or messing representative.*

**PS...**

**I** WOULD like to say a big thank you to the compassionate cell people who moved very quickly to get me home to Australia following a family bereavement. I was woken at 0200 in the COB in Basra, Iraq with the bad news and touched down 24 hours later in Brisbane, where a hire car was waiting for me. The Burma Company lads who were woken up to help me de-kit, the RMPs who transferred me into Kuwait, and the liaison officer who met me at Mumbai airport were 100 per cent efficient. – **Cpl David Taylor, 4 Rifles.**

## Ill-fitting uniform? Talk to QM

AS an RQMS I find it difficult to believe that soldiers are complaining about our uniforms. The Defence Clothing Integrated Project Team (DC IPT) has carried out extensive trials with a mix of soldiers – male and female, large and small, tall and short.

If you are outside the normal clothing size ranges, then Special Measure is the process to follow. It is

explained in material regulations, in JSP 336 and JSP 886 and, if asked, any quartermaster or RQMS will be more than happy to help you.

Might I add that Service/No 2 dress is tailored to the individual while the CS95 combat uniform has been designed for use in all theatres. It is a combat utility dress, not a fashion item. – **RQMS, name and address supplied.**



## Recce force was given no credit

YOUR article "Taliban stronghold smashed by troops" (Jan) failed to mention a unit involved in the attack, namely 52 Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF), made up of 4/73 Special Operations Battery and soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

Not only did we set up the conditions for the American helicopter landing, we also guided the American scout vehicles into position and provided fire support to the advancing 82nd Airborne all the way to the drop zone, having spent a month previous to this probing and gaining intelligence.

It seems a smack in the face when we lost Tpr Jack Sadler, HAC, and Cpl Darryl "Daz" Gardiner, REME. To say the lads are happy with this article, which congratulates everybody but us, would be a lie. – **Members of 52 BRF.**

*Sincere apologies for not including 52 BRF in the news report. Regrettably, in the immediate aftermath of a major and multi-faceted military action it is often the case that elements of the story are missed for no other reason than it takes time for the whole picture to emerge. We are grateful to you for pointing out your crucial contribution to the operation and more than happy to give you the credit you obviously deserve. – **Editor.***

## Marriage costs me my foreign leave allowance

WHEN I enlisted I was registered as Domiciled Collective Overseas Leave (DOMCOL) as I am a South African. I was told that this is an entitlement to enable me to visit my family in South Africa for 45 days after every five years' service and that the Army would provide flights. But I got married in 2004 and was told that because I am now married I no longer qualify for DOMCOL. Do my relatives mean less to me because I got married? – **Spr J Hamman, 28 Engineer Regiment.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:**

DOMCOL is to allow single and married unaccompanied soldiers to visit their homes. When they marry and serve accompanied, the Army considers their home is where they live with their spouse, not the location of their extended family. Thus your entitlement to DOMCOL ceased when your spouse joined you on marriage. DOMCOL Substitute enables entitled personnel to accumulate annual leave to visit their extended family and relatives, but not at public expense.



"You reckon they'll make it to the opening?"



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## Rules on cohabiting are so out of touch

THE regulations state that under no circumstances may two serving soldiers cohabit in a married quarter. I believe, as do many people, that this rule is outdated and should be reviewed.

My partner, who has a young child from a previous relationship, is expecting our baby in the near future and so is entitled to a married quarter.

But we have been told that as we are not married we may not cohabit and I am only allowed to stay with her 28 nights in every 61.

As the father, surely it would provide more stability if I could live there permanently. Soldiers spend enough time away without antiquated rules that do not represent today's society.

As for paternity leave, does this mean that I can only be there for half the time to help with feeding at night, the most exhausting time for a new mother?

If my partner has to stay in hospital

for any reason our daughter would have to be placed into foster care because I'm not allowed to live in the quarter. Bizarrely, my partner could have a nanny living in, but not the father of the infant, which makes no sense.

We plan to marry but the priority is our baby. We understand that the Army has to set rules and regulations, but surely these are out of date. – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** Good letter. You expose an issue that is being wrestled with at the highest levels. In the meantime, the rules are clear, however unreasonable they might appear to you – no cohabitation, even if you are both soldiers. The same would apply if one of you were a civilian. The options open to you are: stay as you are with all the disadvantages you highlight; get married (have a blessing and celebration later); rent a flat/house on the open market.



# Why NRPS hasn't got the X-factor

FOLLOWING the excellent news that the X-factor will be increased, can I ask why non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) do not receive it?

The X-factor compensates for such things as, for example, being subject to military discipline, liability for duty at all times, the inability to resign at will, change jobs or negotiate pay, and the danger, turbulence and separation which are part of Service life.

Operational tours play only a part in the criteria (although those on ops deserve every penny and more).

However, not everyone in the Army

– Regular or not – deploys on ops, yet many receive the X-factor, or a percentage of it.

NRPS personnel meet most of the criteria but do not get it. – **Name and address supplied.**

**Mark Ryan, Sp Policy Pay and Charges, responds:** *It is not true that NRPS meet most of the criteria for X-factor. They are recruited to provide administrative support to the Territorial Army and are appointed to specified posts.*

*They may not be posted to a different location outside reasonable travelling*

*distance without their agreement.*

*An NRPS soldier may relinquish his appointment by giving 61 days' notice, although this period can be reduced by mutual consent. With the exception of those filling certain Royal Signals posts, NRPS can be mobilised only during periods of national danger or attack on the UK.*

*Further, when mobilised they can only be deployed in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.*

*In short, NRPS are not faced with the same level of turbulence and separation as their Regular counterparts and can only be deployed in limited circumstances.*

## TA uniform grant put me in wrong

**A**S a civil servant working in a Territorial Army regiment, I was instructed to process a uniform grant to a newly commissioned officer because JPA was unable to pay it.

After days of research I found a figure of £2,122 in the regulations, which state that the grant is for Regular officers but makes no mention of a different rate for the TA.

## On course to lose out

MY pay clerk has told me that I will lose my operational allowance (OA) for the time I was on a course in the United Kingdom that I did not ask for.

It was an operational requirement but through no fault of my own I will lose my allowance. – **Cpl Lough, Op Telic 11.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds:** *The aim of the operational allowance is to recognise the significantly increased and enduring nature of the danger in specified operational locations above that compensated for by X-factor.*

*If you are not in Iraq, you are not enduring the risk and rigour, therefore no OA. Unlucky, but it seems fair to me.*

My warrant officer and I both concluded that there could only be one figure. But after paying the officer, I was given a copy of a notice dated 1994 stating that the sum should have been £378 and the SPS chain of command confirmed that this was correct.

I had to tell the officer to repay the difference.

Why are the different rates not published together? Surely no one is expected to remember a figure first promulgated more than ten years ago? It's also a surprise to learn that it has not kept up with inflation. Please publish this to warn others new to the TA who may also fall into this hole. – **Name and address supplied.**



**Free ranger?**

**A DEFENCE Intranet article** entitled "Chickens given refuge at military farm" made me wonder if the MoD has a view on whether free-range chickens should be served in messes and soldiers' restaurants? Although I eat in them, I don't have a say in purchasing, but with all the coverage of animal welfare, perhaps we should start asking where our food comes from. – **LCpl G Whittaker, 10 Regiment QOGLR.**

## Room cheaper than garage

I FIND myself in the unbelievable position of paying more each month for my garage (more than £23) than I do for my accommodation.

That's bad enough, but I also find that as a single soldier living in, I pay £8 a month more than a married soldier. How fair is that?

The garages are exactly the same size, and the married quarter garages are in a block some distance from the house, the same location as my garage.

So why do living-in soldiers have to pay more for the same? – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** *Garage charges are set by the Armed Forces*

*Pay Review Board and reflect size and condition, not marital state.*

*A small garage or one which provides poor physical security, as designated by Defence Estates, will be charged at the sub-standard rate of 50p a day, which works out at about £8 a month less than the full charge of 75p a day.*

*Check your grading with Defence Estates if you think it is below spec, your regimental admin officer or quartermaster's department should be able to assist.*

*Your accommodation charge reflects the standard of your accommodation so you are presumably in grade four. I am sorry you are in poor accommodation, but at least the charge is low and you appear to have a good garage.*

More letters at **TALKBACK** online  
[www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)



# Older son has to share with baby

I AM approaching my 22-year point and have been selected for commissioning, so my family and I are preparing to move from our Type D (four-bedroom) house to new accommodation on an officers' patch.

We are having a nightmare with Defence Housing (DH) as they are fixated with JSP 464 and do not understand my family's needs.

JSP 464 states that for a family to qualify for four-bed Service families accommodation (SFA), all children must be over the age of ten. I imagine this was written assuming the children would be within a couple of years of each other and sharing a bedroom would be practical.

This is reasonable under normal

circumstances, although not every family fits into the "normal" bracket. I have three children, a 15-year-old girl, a 12-year-old boy and a baby boy of two, and I have been told I will only get a three-bedroom house as that's my entitlement according to JSP 464.

My older son will be expected to share with his baby brother, which will create problems, not least in his sleeping patterns (he has to go to school). There should be guidelines for allocation, but why does this tri-Service document not cater for families outside the norm?

RAF warrant officers are entitled to four-bedroom houses regardless of family size, which I have no doubt prevents those who have greater need of four bedrooms from getting them. The

rules should be rewritten. – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** *The rule DE is applying follows Government policy on house sizes issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It states that a pair of children of differing sexes under ten is expected to share a bedroom, as are pairs of children under 21 of the same sex.*

*Your 12- and two-year-old sons fall into the latter category. Only differing sex children over ten should not share. To resolve your problem, can I suggest that you get your chain of command to engage with the regional chain of command to engage with DE's Housing Information Centre. Also check out Para 0510b of JSP 464 Part 1 and talk to my staff on 94344 8220.*

# Civvies paying less council tax than us

I LIVE in a quarter in Tidworth Garrison and compared my contribution in lieu of council tax (CILOCT) to the council tax paid by civilians living in the area.

All homes in the UK were graded in 1991 on their value at that time. Who graded our quarters for CILOCT and why are they different from the civilian gradings? Where does the money go?

My quarter is graded band B (by Kennet council) and my CILOCT total for the year is £1,160. Yet civilians in the town in band B houses pay £1,046, a difference of £114. Why?

If some of the proceeds of CILOCT in the UK goes to the local council, where does the rest of it go? – **Name and address supplied.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** *Council tax (CT) is payable on all residential properties in Britain.*

*The MoD pays CILOCT to the Department of Communities and Local Government, which reflects a national average amount of CT that would be due for each type of property.*

*The MoD's CT contribution is calculated annually and the resultant average charge for each type of property, including soldiers living accommodation (SLA), is worked out. Personnel then pay a standard CILOCT rate for the same type of property, regardless of location.*

*Therefore, while you now may pay slightly more or less than civilians locally, there are other areas where you will be paying less.*

# Deepcut tribute

I AM not sure if the Piscator cartoon in the February issue was supposed to be funny, but I am sure I'm not the only reader sad to see Deepcut go.

As a 21-year-old RAOC TA recruit I did two weeks' basic training there in the late 1980s (as well as many training weekends) and have fond memories of the barracks. Our training staff were hard but fair and I made some great mates among fellow recruits.

I was sorry to hear of the deaths at the barracks, but this shouldn't detract from the fine work done there and the enjoyable experience for the vast majority of soldiers based there. Personally, I think the stigma is unfair. Perhaps we could have some recognition of this in *Soldier* before the barracks are demolished. – **David Strong, Belvedere, Kent.**

PS...

**I HAVE** been following the debate on bling medals. As an ex-Regular I am totally opposed to the wearing of them.

Medals are fought for and earned, although I can understand that a lot of men and women who served our country have nothing to show for it.

Maybe the solution to stop the wearing of souvenirs would be for the MoD to follow in the footsteps of Commonwealth countries such as Australia and to issue a Defence Medal to everyone who has served at least one year since the end of the Second World War. – **Tony Johnson, Liverpool.**

# JPA left me with no leave

HOW can anyone say that JPA has hit the ground running with only a few minor quirks and keep a straight face? Certainly no clerks I know think so.

My pay was messed up and I didn't go up an increment until I chased the problem. Then I had to sort out the back pay as a separate issue.

I didn't bother chasing the difference in pay for the month of March 2007, as it is just not worth the grey hairs to try to get details from the old system.

Then I tried to sign off. Even the HR specialists couldn't sort that out, so I signed off on the old system and nearly messed up my resettlement plans in the process.

Finally, I applied for four days' annual leave but was told that I had to fill out a leave pass as well, so what was the point? But wait, it gets better. This should have brought my total leave taken to 14 days. When I next checked, I had no days left. After many attempts to amend my entitlement, with no help from the JPAC help desk, I apparently still have no annual leave left. – **Name and address supplied.**



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# LOA runs hot and cold

**A** FEW weeks ago we had an informative visit from a local overseas allowance (LOA) review team who gave us a useful presentation on what LOA is made up of. I was surprised to learn that in a tropical country "domestic assistance" is included as one of the factors.

It is incredible that here in Canada, where summer temperatures reach 40C and in winter drop to -30C, the extra costs of cooling and heating a household, compared with the UK, are not taken into account for LOA.

The disparity of LOA between ranks is also incredible. When I was commissioned I found that despite receiving a major's rate, I was £150 (non-taxable) a month out of pocket. Today the gap between a WO1 and a major has increased to £300 a month – a nice non-taxable £3,600 a year.

This means that a WO1's take-home wages are more than a major's, especially when the major finds himself in the high tax bracket. Why is LOA not a flat rate for everyone? The new rates of disturbance allowance are the same



"At least we've convinced the LOA assessor that we need an increased sun cream element."

regardless of rank, so why not LOA? I still have to buy the same items. – **Capt E R Smith, HQ British Army Training Unit Suffield, Canada.**

**Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:** LOA is supposed to reflect a UK lifestyle but deviates from this where local cultural norms dictate a variation in lifestyle or behaviour. Domestic assistance is included in countries where it is the cultural norm to employ servants. LOA does not take utilities bills

into account. Having done some research I can tell you that, on average, utilities bills at Batus are cheaper than the UK and cheaper than the Fuel Subsidy Scheme.

The presentation you received explained the Factor Plan, which leads to the disparity in LOA on commissioning, and I know that it was discussed. You will recall that the marker ranks used when calculating LOA are corporal and captain.

From these, a married accompanied WO1 with one child will receive 1.6 times the LOA of a married accompanied corporal with one child, while a married accompanied major with one child will receive 1.3 times the LOA of a married accompanied captain with one child.

One of the disadvantages with the Factor Plan is that Late Entry (LE) officers are lumped in with their Direct Entry (DE) counterparts, so an LE captain's spending pattern is assumed to be the same as that of a DE captain. My staff recognise the problems this causes and, as part of the Strategic Remuneration Review, a more equitable system of calculating LOA is being explored, but I should warn you that finding a perfect system with no losers is difficult.

# Not being paid in the rank

IN August 2006 I was warned off for Op Oculus in the Balkans and told I would be given the acting rank of sergeant for the duration.

As Oculus was due to end two months after my end-of-tour date, I was asked to extend, which I did, returning to the UK last June.

I was not paid in the higher rank during the tour and eventually received an email from APC Glasgow informing me that they were aware of the problem and that I was on a spreadsheet waiting to be actioned.

I have now deployed on Op Herrick and am finding it very difficult to go on trying to sort this out.

I have been more than patient over the past 15 months but have now been told that my only option is to submit a formal complaint to my commanding officer, a difficult course of action due to me being on operations.

I have also been told that I would be within my rights to ask for interest on the

money owed. Both I and my admin staff have had more than enough of this problem. – **Cpl S James, 21 Signal Regiment, Op Herrick.**

**Lt Col Jamie Compston, R Signals Wing, responds:** Your acting rank is being sorted by SPVA and you will get the backdated pay for carrying out the duties of a sergeant while deployed.

The reason this unfortunate situation occurred is because your unit allowed you to deploy without first requesting acting rank of sergeant. On your return your parent MCM Division (as we were then) received a request to grant retrospective acting rank, which was agreed and signed off on July 11, 2007. This is when the clock started ticking.

A Royal Signals policy directive that acting rank will be backdated only in exceptional circumstances had not been complied with; had it been this situation would never have arisen. The application then entered into the era of JPA, which caused further delay.

I AM a Territorial Army officer on Op Telic 11. I was mobilised after being offered a job as an ADC to a brigadier. I was told I would be given the acting rank of captain and paid accordingly.

At Chilwell I was told this would be actioned by the unit I was deploying to, but in theatre I was told the authority came from the job description and that my pay would take a couple of months to sort out before I noticed the increase.

Now I have been told there is no record of my acting rank ever being implemented and that it is not a JPA issue. I am £4,000 or so out of pocket because no one is willing to take responsibility. – **A/Capt M Hall, Op Telic.**

**Col Gary Hearn, APC, TA and Reserves Manning and Career Management Div, responds:**

There appears to be a lack of understanding of a well-proven process at a number of stages of your case, so I will say what

should have happened before addressing your situation.

All Reservists are mobilised through the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre at Chilwell in their substantive rank, so you were correctly mobilised as a substantive lieutenant. It is then for the in-theatre admin unit to carry out the acting rank action on JPA. This appears not to have occurred in your case.

Your JPA record has now been updated with your acting rank shown as of your in-theatre date. This should allow you to be paid as a captain for the duration of your tour and to initiate any back payments.

While I can appreciate your frustrations, in line with all personnel in the Army, you have a Military Secretary Division (MS) to which you can turn for assistance.

Therefore, while I encourage you to use the chain of command, please also avail yourself of the services of MS Reserves Division if you are struggling to obtain appropriate career advice.



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# Insult on injury

These sums won't buy a properly equipped home for badly hurt soldiers

**A**N Iraqi teenager who was shot accidentally by a British soldier is to receive £2 million in compensation for his injuries.

The boy, who was 13 when the incident happened, had befriended the British guards at an outpost in southern Iraq. The soldier's weapon slipped and went off, shooting the boy in the spine. He was flown for treatment to England, where he has remained ever since.

His payment of £2 million dwarfs payouts to other Iraqi civilians injured by British Forces. This is because grievances by Iraqi nationals are normally settled in Iraq where the largest so far is thought to be about £24,000.

Yet the severely injured Bdr Ben Parkinson was initially offered just £152,150 for the wounds he sustained in combat, although this was later increased to the maximum award of £285,000 following a review by the MoD – a review prompted by the loud protestations of Ben's outraged parents and the media.

What about those soldiers who do not have such persuasive forces behind them? Many have had to content themselves with lesser amounts because they don't "meet the criteria". Another badly wounded soldier, LCpl Martin Edwards, was awarded just £115,000 after suffering brain damage in 2007. This despite his need for lifetime care and a wife and child to support.

There are two very different issues here that are connected but need to be looked at from different angles.

The first is that a child, crippled by a negligent discharge from the weapon of a British soldier, has been awarded compensation to cover the cost of his care during his lifetime.

It is no more than he deserves and the fact that he is an Iraqi citizen should not be relevant.

The second – and the one that really gets my goat – is the number of British Army soldiers who have suffered horrific injuries in the service of their country and who are offered a maximum lump sum payout of only £285,000.

The MoD will protest that payments made to civilians in a civilian court cannot be compared directly to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, which is complete rubbish.

Guaranteed Income Payments (GIPs) are being used as an excuse not to overhaul what is an unfair and seemingly arbitrary insult of a lump sum payment.

There are very few areas in Britain today where you could purchase a house for £285,000 and equip it adequately to cope with the special requirements of those who have suffered life-changing injuries.

Even if the family manages to buy a

home – and modify and equip it – they often need a permanent carer, medical assistance, an adapted vehicle and so on. The list goes on and I haven't even mentioned the financial and emotional pressures on the spouse, parents, children and family.

Of course soldiers know the risks when they go to war; they are putting themselves in the line of fire. But they should not be treated in such a shabby and penny-pinching way if they are debilitatingly injured.

Thanks to the amazing care by field hospitals and the staff at Selly Oak and Headley Court, many more now

survive their injuries and want to go on to lead happy and fulfilled lives. If the Government is spending all this money making people well again and willing them to recover, why do they then go on to insult them with a cheap offer of compensation?

The sum should be such that the soldier can establish a home with their family or carer(s). That home should be adapted and equipped as necessary and the soldier should be able to afford an appropriate level of professional care if it is necessary.

Maybe one solution would be to award the GIP as a lump sum and allow the soldier and his or her family to decide the most appropriate way for it to be invested. If this is good enough for a civilian compensation scheme then why not for our Armed Forces? ■



A personal view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation

**“GIPs are being used as an excuse not to overhaul an unfair and arbitrary insult of a lump sum”**

Want to know more about the Army Families Federation? Log on to [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

The column that offers you a confidential way to tackle debt – and it won't cost you a penny

## MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Credit Action Director Chris Tapp will be pleased to answer, in confidence, specific questions addressed to the Editor.



## Saving yourself

I'M no farmer, but I understand the concept of making hay while the sun shines. Many of us – the Prime Minister included – have not applied this truism to our money. Ten

years of economic sunshine have not persuaded us to save for rainy days. Thus 14 million adults in the UK – a third of us – have no savings and more than half of us have savings so scant they could survive for less than 17 days in a financial hurricane.

The storm warnings might have prompted us to spend less and save more, but it seems that the opposite is true. Fewer of us are saving today than a year ago.

Credit Action recommends having enough stashed away in a rainy-day fund to cope for at least three months in the event of a crisis.

Surprisingly, though, recent research at Credit Action suggests saving right now might be a bad idea because reducing debt rather than saving is the wiser financial

move. If you owe £10,000 on credit and pay the minimum while saving £250 a month, in two years you'd be more than £650 worse off than if you'd used the £250 to pay off the debt. But do get into a savings mentality rather than chasing instant gratification through credit. For many though, the debt weeds will need to be chopped before the savings barns can be restocked.

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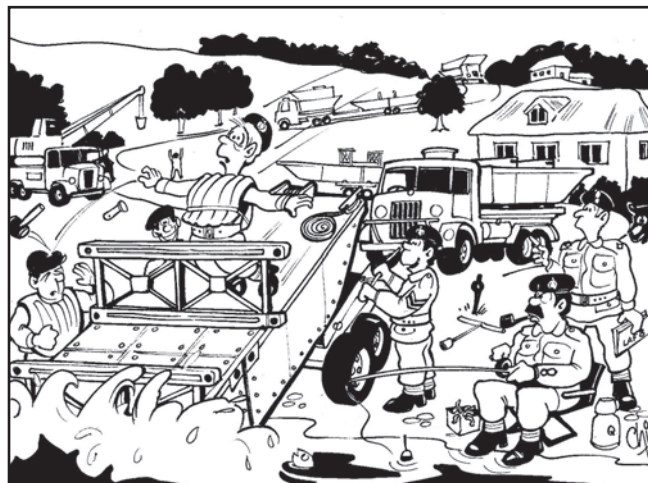
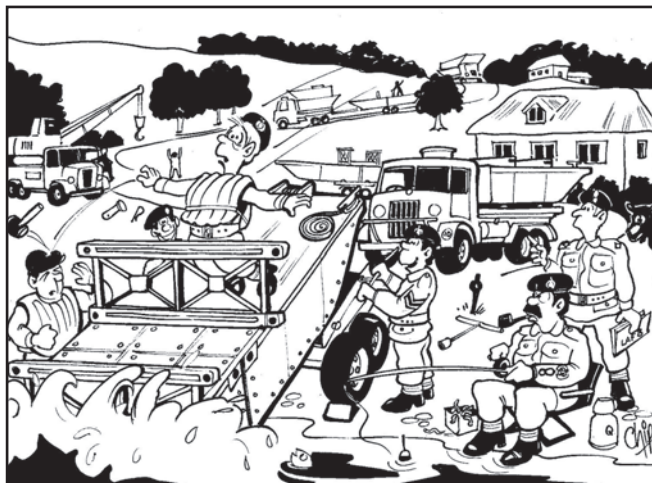
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NO. 798

# WIN £100 HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



**T**EN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 798, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by May 30.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the July issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

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**March competition (No 796):** First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Sgt K Pritchard**, 9/12 L, LAD REME, BFPO 30. Runners-up **Mrs R Lowe**, Dental Centre, Mansergh Barracks, BFPO 113 and **WO1 (FoS) P J Levick**, HQ 1 Signal Brigade, ARRC, BFPO 40, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: LCpl's stripe; nails in horseshoe; turban hackle; tunic button; crease on shorts; belt buckle; War Department 'arrow' on horse; rivet on gun mounting; strap on dismantled pack saddle; shell on ground.

## freeze frame

**Winner of our March competition (inset)** AGAINST strong opposition, SSgt Marie McChesney, HQ 11 Signal Brigade, wins the March prize for her caption: "Err, mate, don't want to burst your bubble, but are you sure the dimensions weren't in millimetres instead of inches for your new pinkie ring?"

It edged out "REME artificer sergeant majors discuss ways to make the Mk 2 issue wrist watch smaller" from Graham Paull of North Hinksey, Oxford; "Pete teaches Arthur the words to 'The Wheels on the Bus'" . . . sent in by Ms Sandra Shephard, Facilities Management Office, BFPO 40; and "It's bright, shiny and new – we need 20 of them. What's it for?" from Lt Col P A Simpson, 4 Yorks.

Others in the frame were the somewhat cynical Roger Williams at the British



Embassy, Rabat, with " . . . and this bit here replaces both of us" and SAC Gavin Hall, RAF Brampton, with "The REME were the first to pioneer the production of the compact disc with what they could find



**The section was compelled to take dramatic countermeasures to neutralise the lethal threat of Pte Smurthwaite's rancid socks**

**WIN A BOOK:** Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our April 1955 issue and send it to us by May 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Into the Jaws of Death: British Military Blunders, 1879-1900* by Lt Col Mike Snook (Frontline Books, £25), which was our lead review last month.

around the workshop". We also liked "Do not put your fingers in there – I did and I only have my thumb and little finger left", submitted by Ian Goodwin-Reeves, Admin Office, 150 Recovery Company REME.



# Web watch

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**[www.recoverynpn.niceboard.com](http://www.recoverynpn.niceboard.com)**

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

**[www.baff.org.uk](http://www.baff.org.uk)**

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

**[www.baor-locations.com](http://www.baor-locations.com)**

Website of the British Army of the Rhine and its locations.

**[www.forcesresources.co.uk](http://www.forcesresources.co.uk)**

Lists hundreds of BFPO-friendly companies, a forum, classifieds section and information on the EHIC and much more.

**[www.sftf.mod.uk](http://www.sftf.mod.uk)**

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

**[www.army.mod.uk/army\\_health](http://www.army.mod.uk/army_health)**

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**[www.armywivesunited.co.uk](http://www.armywivesunited.co.uk)**

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

## SINGING OUT FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS!

### 3 PEAKS CHALLENGE

Ex-Paratrooper **Keith Kingham** is completing a challenge of climbing Britain's three highest mountains and singing an appropriate song on reaching the summits. We are producing a CD of the three songs which will be on sale shortly. Further details are available on **[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)**. All donations will go to support BLESMA via **<http://justgiving.com/singoutforwoundedwarriors>**

**[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)**

## HELPING HANDS

**[www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk)**

Supporting thousands of young single soldiers in the British Army. Offering a listening ear and practical help 24 hours a day.

**[www.nivets.org.uk](http://www.nivets.org.uk)**

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

**[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)**

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows

**[www.erskine.org.uk](http://www.erskine.org.uk)**

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

**[www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/](http://www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/)**

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families.

## MARKET PLACE

**[www.ukms2000.com](http://www.ukms2000.com)**

UKMS2000 manage a series of Militaria, Arms and Armour Fairs in the UK – see you at the next event.

**[www.ukforces.co.uk](http://www.ukforces.co.uk)**

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### [www.dragonsupplies.co.uk](http://www.dragonsupplies.co.uk)

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### [www.shopagc.co.uk](http://www.shopagc.co.uk)

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### [www.cadetdirect.com](http://www.cadetdirect.com)

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### [www.armyandoutdoor.co.uk](http://www.armyandoutdoor.co.uk)

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### [www.Military247.co.uk](http://www.Military247.co.uk)

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### [www.ukkitmonster.com](http://www.ukkitmonster.com)

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### [www.feltons-uk.com](http://www.feltons-uk.com)

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### [www.combat-services-support.co.uk](http://www.combat-services-support.co.uk)

Combat Service Support. Specialists in clothing and equipment to the forces. Email: [combat-services-support@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:combat-services-support@hotmail.co.uk) Tel: 01673 857803.

### [www.hennessy-hammocks.co.uk](http://www.hennessy-hammocks.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-1.co.uk](http://www.rv-1.co.uk)

29 Commando Royal Artillery – Shop and Head Office. Quality without compromise. BFPO tax-free shopping online. Tel: 01752 236143 Mil: 937846143.

### [www.rv-2.co.uk](http://www.rv-2.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-3.co.uk](http://www.rv-3.co.uk)

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### [www.rv-4.co.uk](http://www.rv-4.co.uk)

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### [www.personalitybears.com](http://www.personalitybears.com)

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## MOD LINKS

### [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk)

Official website of the British Army.

### [www.armyaviation.co.uk](http://www.armyaviation.co.uk)

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

### [www.armysafety.mod.uk](http://www.armysafety.mod.uk)

Website of HQ Land Command's chief environment and safety officer.

### [www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk](http://www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk)

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## MUSEUMS

### [www.rememuseum.org.uk](http://www.rememuseum.org.uk)

REME Museum of Technology.

### [www.armymuseums.org.uk](http://www.armymuseums.org.uk)

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

### [www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com](http://www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com)

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster

Account problems: **94371 2101 ArmyNET**

Web issues email: [admin@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:admin@armymail.mod.uk)

**A HEROES WELCOME**

The Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo takes place from 8.30pm to 10.30pm on the evenings of Thursday 8th, Friday 9th and Saturday 10th May 2008.

For more information visit [www.windsortattoo.co.uk](http://www.windsortattoo.co.uk)



# Bulletin board

Also available at [www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)

## Defence directory

**Armed Forces Christian Union:** 01252 311221; [www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

**Army Benevolent Fund:** 0845 241 4820

**Army Welfare Information Service:** 01722 436569; [www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws](http://www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws)

**Army Families Federation:** 01980 615525

**British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association:** 020 8590 1124. [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

**Career Transition Partnership:** 0207 766 8020

**Children's Education Advisory Service:** 01980 618244; [enquiries.ceas@gtinet.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries.ceas@gtinet.gov.uk)

**Confidential support lines:** 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) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

**Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society:** 01372 841600; [www.combatstress.com](http://www.combatstress.com)

**Family Escort Service:** 020 74639249

**Forces Pension Society:** 020 78209988

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:** 01722 436575

**MoD Medal Office:** Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600

**Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group):** 07962 023654, 01803 311527, [www.mutualsupport.org.uk](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk) email [welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk](mailto:welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk)

**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:** (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; [www.ngvfa.org.uk](http://www.ngvfa.org.uk); fax 01482 808731

**Regular Forces' Employment Association:** 0121 2360058; [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)

**Royal British Legion:** 0845 7725 725

**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:** 01622 795900; [www.rbli.co.uk](http://www.rbli.co.uk)

**St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women:** 0207 7235021; [www.st-dunstans.org.uk](http://www.st-dunstans.org.uk)

**SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association) Falklands conflict veterans:** 01495 227577

**Services Cotswold Centre:** 01225 810358

**SSAFA Forces Help:** 020 7403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

**Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA):** 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas) Medical Assessment Programme: 0800 169 5401

**Victim Support:** Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900, [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)

**WRVS (24-hr answer service):** 02920 739016; general enquiries 02920 739016

MAY 2008

## Reunions

**Indefatigable Old Boys:** 25th anniversary reunion, June 7, at Llanfairpwll, Anglesey. Email Howard Trillo at [howardtrillo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:howardtrillo@yahoo.co.uk)

**251 (Sunderland) Medical Squadron:** Reunion on June 12 at TA Centre, Dykelands Road, Seaburn, Sunderland SR6 8DP. Ex-members welcome. Ring Graeme New on 07769 948685 or email [graemenew@btinternet.com](mailto:graemenew@btinternet.com)

**40th Regiment, Royal Artillery:** Lowland Gunners reunion on June 14 at Alanbrooke Barracks, Topcliffe, Yorks. All ex-members welcome. Ring Capt Mark Wilson on 01845 595262 or email [mark.wilson755@mod.uk](mailto:mark.wilson755@mod.uk)

**144 Para Med Sqn (V)/144 Fd Amb/23 Para Fd Amb (PFA):** Reunion past and present dinner will be held at the TA Centre Hornsey, London N8 7QT on June 21. Ring Capt Roy Hatch on 0208 3413664 or 07730 977989 or email [royhatchbem@fsmail.net](mailto:royhatchbem@fsmail.net)

**215 (Essex) Sqn RCT (V):** Reunion at the Tilbury Community Centre, Essex on June 28, starting 1930. Contact Mark Hull on 01375 673254 or email [info@sigmastudies.co.uk](mailto:info@sigmastudies.co.uk)

**Baghdad Support Unit:** Reunion to be held at the end of July or beginning of August for personnel who have served in the Support Unit from Aug 03 to the present day. Write to Andrew Bailes, 37 Wessex Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3LP.

**Royal West Kent Regt:** Reunion at Maidstone, Sept 14. Ring Brian Bartlett on 01322 346053.

**Harrogate Apprentices:** AGM and reunion to be held at the Army Foundation College, Uniacke Bks, Harrogate on Oct 3-4. Open to apprentices who served from 1948-95 and all permanent staff. Email [maurice@snook60.freemove.co.uk](mailto:maurice@snook60.freemove.co.uk)

**Queen's University OTC:** Centenary ball at La Mon House Hotel, Belfast, Oct 11. Email [uotcqueens-adj@mod.uk](mailto:uotcqueens-adj@mod.uk) or ring Dereck Wood on 02892 260464.

**5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Gds:** Southern area annual weekend at Falklands House UOTC, Oxford. Nov 14 – regimental curry evening. Nov 15 – local military visits followed by gathering in Oxford. Ring Steven Hunt on 07880 909050 or email [jwalker77@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jwalker77@hotmail.co.uk)

## WOs' seminar

**Joint Services WOs' Course seminar:** The Commandant of the Joint Services Command and Staff College will host the inaugural JSWOC Seminar on July 30-31 to update graduates on current and future service issues, followed by a formal mess dinner in the Victory Hall at which the keynote speaker will be Defence Secretary Des Browne. Attendance is open only to graduates of the JSWOC and is limited to 170 on a first-come, first-served basis. Ring JSWOC Admin on 96161 8854 or 01793 788854.

## Searchline

**Army Operating Theatre Technicians** sought for reunion. Regular, reserve, serving or retired welcome. Email [ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk) or call 01733 454462.

**Jeffrey Schaub** seeks news of **Maj (Retd) Tim Williams**, who was on a MSc course at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1981-82. Course reunion to be held in London in July. Email [sjeff75@yahoo.com](mailto:sjeff75@yahoo.com)

**Korean war veteran** seeks photos from families of those killed during the Korean War, 1950-1953. They will be displayed with dignity in a new memorial hall opened at the cemetery at Busann, South Korea. Send them to James Grundy, 102 College Croft, Eccles M30 0AN.

**Agnes McCormick (Adair)** seeks news of **John Finnie**, who was stationed at Ballykinler, Northern Ireland from 19640-1967. Email [agnesadair@btinternet.com](mailto:agnesadair@btinternet.com)

**St Omer Apprentices** from intakes 95-97 sought for a reunion to be held at the end of the year. Email Phil White at [whereschalky@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:whereschalky@hotmail.co.uk)

**The Royal Military Police Association, Cyprus** wants to expand its membership to former members of the corps who live in Cyprus and is keen to contact old comrades who are unable to attend meetings due to failing eye sight, poor health or invalidity, but who still wish to stay in touch. Email [ggroves@spidernet.com.cy](mailto:ggroves@spidernet.com.cy)

News sought of **LCpl Brian West RMP** by old school friend **Eric Whitehouse**. Brian attended Arnos School in Southgate, North London, before joining the RMP and being posted to Singapore in about 1957. Ring Eric on 01872 510859 or write to him at Trelasick House, near Ladock, Truro, Cornwall TR2 4NR.

The town of **Featherstone**, near Pontefract in West Yorkshire, is to unveil a new war memorial on June 15. The organisers would like to hear from any veterans, particularly from the **York and Lancaster Regiment** who recruited in the Sheffield area and trained at Pontefract, who would like to attend. For details, email Brian Clayton at [clayton.brian@googlemail.com](mailto:clayton.brian@googlemail.com) or ring him on 07903 227367.

## Competitions

**Beer for a year (Spitfire Ale):** Lt Col G Stibbe, RAF High Wycombe. **Answer:** Bryan Parry.

**Dog the Bounty Hunter DVD:** Maj A Fisher, Brunei Garrison; Mrs S Shephard, BFPO 40; Mrs S Frame, Swansea; Mrs L Freeman, 43 (W) Bde; Mrs R Plant, Clacton on Sea. **Answer:** Beth Chapman.

**Frontlines: Fuel of War.** R Williams, British Embassy Rabat; B Barton, Colchester; Cpl Medforth, BFPO 47; J Shaw, Birmingham; P Smith, 43 Signal Regiment. **Answer:** Oil

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## Chance to look Sharpe

FANS of one of television's most popular military dramas will be able to mix with its cast and crew during a special event at Firepower, The Royal Artillery Museum in Woolwich.

**Sharpe** – ITV's salute to one of literature's most famous soldiers – has drummed up a huge following since first appearing on the small screen in 1993 and will be the subject of a one-off weekend exhibition (May 31-June 1).

Based on the novels of the same name by Bernard Cornwell and starring Sean Bean, the series chronicles the career of a British soldier, loose cannon Richard Sharpe, during the Napoleonic wars.

Visitors to the exhibition are invited to come dressed in costumes of the time and will be able to watch their favourite **Sharpe** episodes in the museum's cinema.

The event, staged in association with the Sharpe Appreciation Society, will also feature re-enactors displaying uniforms of the period and exhibitions of Napoleonic weaponry.

Firepower is located in the Royal Arsenal where the Duke of Wellington, who also appeared in the **Sharpe** novels, once had an office. For more information visit [www.firepower.org.uk](http://www.firepower.org.uk), email [info@firepower.org.uk](mailto:info@firepower.org.uk) or call 020 8855 7755.

will take place at St Paul's Cathedral, London. The service will pay tribute to the 763 personnel killed in Northern Ireland, and the 300,000 who have served in the province since 1969. Ticketing details to be confirmed.

**September 12: Rhythm Force, Kneller Hall, Twickenham** – This year's Corps of Army Music open air concert, featuring bands to cater for every taste, bars, food and fireworks, is hoping to raise more than £100,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund. Visit [www.army.mod.uk/music/rhythm/\\_ii.htm](http://www.army.mod.uk/music/rhythm/_ii.htm) for more information and ticketing details.

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to [diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

## Roadshows

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and finishes with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to [apt.mod@btinternet.com](mailto:apt.mod@btinternet.com) with the event you are interested in attending.

**May:** 13, Llandudno; 14, Newport; 15, Merthyr; 27, Aylesbury; 28, Reading; 19, Southampton. **June:** 17, Anwick; 18, Hexham; 19, Hartlepool; 30, Tower Hamlets. **July:** 1, Southall; 2, Deptford; 15, Colchester; 16, Cambridge; 17, Loughborough.

## British Army Badges

By Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges

### Cap badge

THE Royal Logistic Corps cap badge was designed by Sgt R R MacNeilage RAOC. It combines the garter from the Royal Engineers, the star and wreath from the Royal Corps of Transport, the crossed axes from the Royal Pioneer Corps, the Arms of the Board of Ordnance from the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and the motto of the Army Catering Corps.



### Formation sign

THE 101 Logistic Brigade badge, known as Sammy, was chosen for the Combat Service Support Group (UK) on forming in 1997, and was retained when it was retitled as a brigade in 1999. The "Blackadder" design was chosen by Brig Martin White, commanding the Force Maintenance Area during the war to liberate Kuwait in 1991, after his daughter wrote hoping he "had a cunning plan".



### Specialist badge

THE Royal Logistic Corps has the unique appointment of Conductor. A Group 1 WO 1, the Conductor acts in place of a subaltern when required. The earliest record of the appointment of a Conductor is made in the Statute of Westminster, dated 1327, which refers to what seems to be an established post responsible for conducting, or guiding, soldiers from the shires to the Army's place of assembly. The modern appointment dates from 1879.



### Tactical recognition flash

FIELD identification signs were introduced during the Second World War to assist with reorganisation after a parachute descent, and soon became known as DZ flashes. 16 Air Assault Brigade's Pathfinder Platoon wears a flash similar to the Brigade HQ flash overprinted with an arrowhead.



THESE excerpts appear in **British Army Badges** by Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges, available from Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, tel 01380 723371. Email [robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk)



## Defence diary

**Until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story** – A free exhibition built, written and contributed to by soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade to tell the story of their experiences fighting in Afghanistan. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 7300717.

**May 8-10: Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo** – Featuring troops from regiments recently returned from operations and entitled "A Heroes Welcome", this not-for-profit event is being held in recognition of the selfless service of soldiers and the support of their families. Tickets for the tattoo, which will take place from 2030-2230, are priced at £15, £25, £35 and £45, and are available online at [www.windsortattoo.co.uk](http://www.windsortattoo.co.uk)

**May 22: Commemorative service** to honour the 55 personnel who lost their lives in Bosnia, those injured and the many thousands who served there throughout the 15-year deployment. National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Call the free ticket hotline on 0800 169 2277.

**June 7-8: The Chelsea Pageant** – This show chronicling the early years of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, from its founding by King Charles II through to the entry of the first pensioners in 1688, is being held to raise funds for the Chelsea Pensioners' Appeal. Tickets can be purchased from Ticketmaster on 0844 847 2309 or online at [www.ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

**September 10: A commemorative service** to mark the end of operations in Northern Ireland



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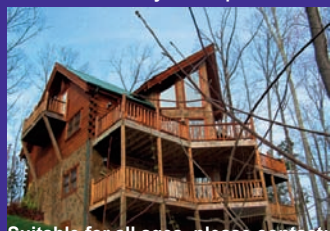
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# Movies

M A Y R E V I E W



Shouting the shots: "Old soldier" Aaron Sayers, above, felt at ease issuing orders to Eric Cantona, right, during the production of Brit flick *Jack Says*



## Directing play

**Former infantryman takes command of footballing enigma Eric Cantona**

Interview: Stephen Tyler

**H**E may have braved Sir Alex Ferguson's famous hairdryer treatment, but footballer-turned-actor Eric Cantona had to face up to a military dressing down on the set of his latest film *Jack Says*.

The Manchester United legend and fellow stars including Rula Lenska and the late Mike Reid were kept in check by the authoritative parade ground-style bollockings of producer and assistant director Aaron Sayers.

Taking the initiative among such illustrious company came as second nature to Sayers, who called on his experiences as a serving soldier in the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets to make sure his voice was heard.

"Being assistant director for me was a bit like being a lance corporal again," said Sayers. "I was walking around the set screaming at people and my Army background made that easy for me. I

didn't even have to use the megaphone."

During his four-and-a-half years in the Army, Sayers saw active service in Kosovo, Bosnia and Northern Ireland and achieved promotion to lance corporal aged just 18. It was during an Op Banner tour that the infantryman began reading up on screenwriting and studying film in his spare time and he decided to quit the Army and enrol at university to study media production.

But rather than cutting his ties to the military, Sayers continued to draw on his experiences and even returned to his battalion to make one of his first features.

"While I was at university I made a lot of short films, including one where I filmed the battalion shooting team," he explained. "I was given a free run to ask questions and film and it gave me a chance to record something that isn't really seen outside of the Army.

"I've been writing down my experiences from when I was serving and I want to make a feature based on

those. It's not just my time that I want to tap into; there's also a lot I can use from those who I served with."

Being drafted in to produce *Jack Says*, a British film noir set against the backdrop of Paris's seedier suburbs, came as just reward for Sayers and business partner Toby Meredith after the pair created from scratch their own company, Kalimasu Productions.

The business was originally started as an amateur theatre company and was responsible for a week-long run of 1960s rock musical, *A Slice of Saturday Night*. And with a second feature, *A Pathless Destiny*, scheduled to start production this August, it is obvious that Sayers's military discipline has rubbed off on his fledgling film career.

"If I hadn't served in the Army then there is no way I could have taken on and managed such a big project as *Jack Says*," he admitted. "Working on a film means you have to be able to manage everything from the food to the crew





and my military background means I have been able to slot straight in.

"It was hard when I left the military and my head was all over the place for the first three months. I was still getting up at six in the morning and going on runs, so getting used to civvy life was difficult. What I have tried to do is remember the experiences I had and use them in everyday life. I couldn't have done what I am doing now without the Army because I wouldn't have learnt to have the ambition and drive to keep pushing."

Wearing fashionable long hair and trendy attire gives Sayers a definite civilian look, but the former rifleman insists that he still feels close to his roots as an infantryman.

He has recently been back in touch with several of his Army friends and intends to use their skills to give him the edge in the world of film.

"I would definitely consider bringing some of my old friends on board for future projects," he added. "I'm hoping to bring in my best friend as production manager because he has the management skills and discipline you need in this industry."

"This career is a challenge in the same way the Army was. Becoming lance corporal at 18 was a daunting process, but I made it and I'm so passionate about this medium that I will keep chasing it until I achieve what I want to achieve." ■



### Why We Fight, out to own on DVD now

AN eloquently argued documentary about the self-serving relationship between the US government, its military and defence contractors, *Why We Fight* raises some disturbing issues. With its basis in President Eisenhower's 1961 farewell address, in which the former general warned of the dangers of the so-called military-industrial complex, director **Eugene Jarecki** states the case that a combination of political ambition, commercial interest and, ultimately, manipulation of a public thirst for revenge in the wake of 9/11 put America on a path to a morally dubious war in Iraq. He draws on interviews with politicians, soldiers and members of the public to portray a multi-layered argument. Whether you agree or not with the conclusions, this is compelling viewing.

● We have three copies of *Why We Fight*, released on DVD to buy by Axiom Films, to give away. To have a chance of winning one, tell us who was US Defence Secretary during the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Answers by postcard or email ([comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)) to reach us by May 30.

**SOLDIER is on the lookout for movie reviewers. If you fancy yourself as the next Barry Norman, Jonathan Ross or Mark Kermode (or just want to get your hands on some free DVDs) we want to hear from you. Just send an 80-word review of your favourite flick so we can judge if you have what it takes. Write or email: Movie Reviews, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU; [asimms@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:asimms@soldiermagazine.co.uk)**



### Where in the world is Osama Bin Laden?, in cinemas May 9

ON a mission to make the world a safer place in readiness for the impending arrival of his first child, **Morgan "Super Size Me" Spurlock** takes on a franchise even more powerful than McDonald's – al Qaeda. While the filmmaker's hunt for Bin Laden provides no shortage of laughs, and the film's interviews with the rational and radical faces of the Middle East are enlightening, Spurlock's conclusion – that parents the world over share the same hopes and fears – is disappointingly sentimental and unsensational.



### Joy Division, in cinemas May 2

NOT content with the **Ian Curtis** biopic *Control*, the seminal 70s punk band gets a second screen credit with this candid documentary. Surviving members – Curtis killed himself in 1980 – recall their pre-*New Order* lives against a backdrop of archive film and soundtracks. The esoteric offerings spouted by one contributor and scattering of dodgy visual effects do not detract from a surprisingly good film. *Joy Division* fans can immerse themselves in a production that serves as a superb introduction to a band that still influences today's music scene.



### Taxi to the Dark Side, in cinemas June 13

A DISTURBING journey into how the US extracts information from terror suspects, *Taxi to the Dark Side* raises questions over whether techniques used by interrogators in Iraq, Afghanistan and Cuba are justified. Using the tale of an Afghan taxi driver who died in US custody as a starting point, **Alex Gibney's** documentary draws on witness statements and testimonies to probe whether sleep deprivation, hooding and the use of stress positions could be classed as torture. The feature is, at times, uncomfortable viewing but the film is well put together and the case convincingly set out.



### Storm Warning, out to own on DVD/Blu-Ray now

DESPITE being a predictable and simplistic B-movie, *Storm Warning* is a visceral treat for 70s horror fans and has much to offer. It's well directed and although it languishes early on, once you get past the "day for night" lens and the apparent lack of cash for this little gem, it is unexpectedly good. Director **Jamie Blanks** has had to put his faith in a little-known cast, but there's an authenticity to the menacing roles and the lack of CGI is well-substituted with some good old fashioned blood and guts. Worth a watch but not for the squeamish. **WO2 Andy Draper, AGC**



# Games

M A Y R E V I E W



**Special forces:** *Call of Duty 4* has been further enhanced with four online multiplayer maps



## Returning to duty

Players mobilised again as *Modern Warfare* spreads to new online locations

Review: Cliff Caswell

**B**EING armed to the teeth and dressed in the feared uniform of an élite Russian Spetsnaz trooper should be enough to ward off any but the most foolish of opponents. But the enemy in this killing zone is not afraid to have a go.

For 20 minutes, *Soldier* has been sneaking around the ruins of a compound in a Helmand province-esque landscape in a desperate attempt to wipe out an invading force. In every contact, however, our opponents have managed to take us down. It doesn't help that they have the all-seeing top-cover of a helicopter gunship whirring around, spraying bullets like water in all directions.

Thankfully it does not take too long to regenerate and re-join the war in one of the most impressive multiplayer games of recent times. And with this new map – which is one of four available to play online – the action

in Activision's *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* is all the more intense and graphically impressive.

Players now have the opportunity to do battle in different environments. As well as the Afghanistan-like *Creek* map, they can storm a TV studio in *Broadcast*, fight on the streets in *Chinatown* or enter the world of hardened special forces training in a FIBUA (Fighting in Built-up Areas) facility, with the fittingly titled *Kill House* location.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, *Call of Duty 4* developers Infinity Ward refused to rule out further enhancements and online content for the game.

"It is possible that we could do add-ons although it is something that we would have to think through carefully," said Mark Rubin, who worked as the producer on the title. "But whatever we do in the future, I know we will always maintain a certain sense of realism in our products."

"The introduction of the new multiplayer maps was based heavily on the feedback we had from our customers, and we wanted to include the elements they wanted."

"We created four different styles of play and you can have any number of people getting involved and fighting online," he added.

There is certainly plenty of diversity to satisfy gamers' itchy trigger fingers. *Creek* provides a rich, verdant environment complete with buildings, trees and other cover while *Broadcast* is a huge close-combat experience with twisting corridors and banks of monitors to hide behind.

"*Kill House* is a training area set in an aircraft hangar while *Chinatown* was inspired by people who wanted to see the maps from *Call of Duty 1* and 2, both of which take place during the Second World War, reflected in a modern setting," said Rubin.

"In the new map the action takes place in San Francisco's Chinatown."





With *Call of Duty 4* now well-established, and with a strong online community, Rubin was confident that the latest maps would provide gamers with a further dimension to the title.

He was particularly pleased that the game had attracted a strong following in the British Armed Forces, especially as Infinity Ward had taken considerable time to make the kit and environments as accurate as possible.

"We always worked with a military adviser from the beginning of the project and had a soldier who taught our stunt actors how to move correctly," he said.

"In addition, we pretty much got to fire all the weapons you can use in the game and visited military bases all over the place. It was amazing to be driven around in vehicles such as the M1 Abrams main battle tank."

Rubin admitted: "While we knew that we had created a really fun game, it was actually a surprise that it received such acclaim.

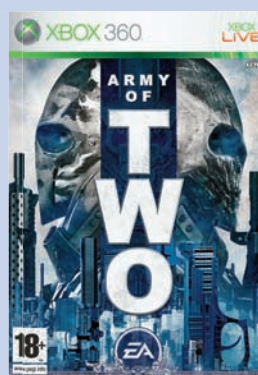
"We were extremely happy with the response, particularly the feedback from serving soldiers."

The acclaim is well deserved. The latest *Call of Duty* maps provide greater depth to an established title, cementing its position as the ultimate first-person shooter. ■



### Rainbow Six Vegas 2, Xbox 360

FRENCH publisher Ubisoft has taken the tactical first-person shooter to a new level in the latest instalment of this counter-terrorism actioner. Faced with more trouble in the world's gambling capital, players step into the boots of squad leader and are charged with stopping a chemical attack. You have the opportunity to direct shoot-outs in a variety of new environments, ranging from building sites to luxury penthouse apartments. *Vegas 2* represents the best of the tactical first-person genre and also offers plenty of multiplayer mayhem.



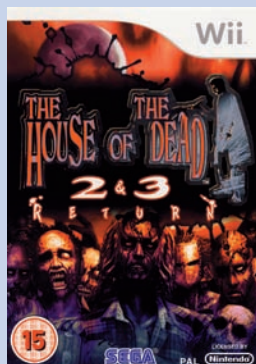
### Army of Two, Xbox 360

COOPERATIVE combat games are flavour of the month at the moment. This year we've already had *Conflict: Denied Ops* and now EA has entered the scene with *Army of Two*. And the latest offering does not disappoint in the slightest, with a heady mix of high-octane action and strategy. Best played with a friend, the game pits an elite military duo against an array of enemies in unsavoury locations. A keen tactical awareness is needed to take on a superior enemy force and keep the team from being obliterated by fire. Fans of the co-op shooter genre will not be disappointed.



### Viking: Battle for Asgard, Xbox 360

SEGA'S latest console offering immerses players in the world of Nordic mythology and tasks them with taking the lead in a battle against a legion of darkness. Make no mistake, *Viking* is a polished free-roaming hack-and-slash adventure set off with stunning graphics and action by the bucketload. There are puzzles and platform game elements plus some gritty combat sequences, which include the opportunity to get involved in battles on a cinematic scale. *Viking* is a winner on all fronts.



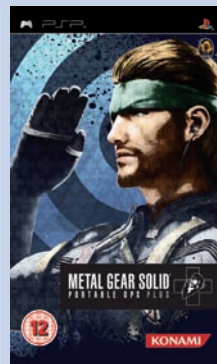
### House of the Dead 2 and 3, Nintendo Wii

HAVING spent many an hour playing *House of the Dead* while waiting for RAF flights, *Soldier* found these Wii conversions as entertaining and fast-paced as their arcade originals. Using the Wii Zapper gun attachment, players are forced on the defensive as they battle a legion of the undead in an attempt to survive for as long as possible. You can team up with a friend as you blast away at monsters including zombies, mutant frogs and giant owls. Graphics and sound are up to expectations and gameplay is simple but highly effective.



### Sega Bass Fishing, Nintendo Wii

FISHING has become a popular console sport. Armed with a special fishing rod attachment for the Wii controller, enthusiasts can get more involved in the action in *Sega Bass Fishing*. *Soldier* has a copy of the game plus a rod attachment to give away. Four runners-up will receive copies of the game. To reel in a prize answer this question. Which Peter Benchley novel featured a man-eating great white shark? Answers by post or email ([comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)). Closing date is May 30. Usual rules apply.



### Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops Plus, PSP

LEGENDARY Japanese video games maestro Hideo Kojima returns to work his magic on the latest instalment of the *Metal Gear* story. Following on from the original *Portable Ops*, gameplay on the new title has been expanded to offer a more comprehensive online experience as well as plenty of single player action with new missions and tutorial modes. *Metal Gear Solid* has always been an acquired taste, but fans of the series will not be disappointed. Kojima has produced another quality offering, which should attract more *Metal Gear* converts.



# Music

M A Y R E V I E W



**French flair:** Greek-born Dimitri from Paris celebrates more partying at the Playboy Mansion with a dash of down-tempo sensual loving



# Ooh, La! La!

Parisian dance DJ mixes *Sexytime* with *Partytime* on *Playboy* CD

**Interview:** Karen Thomas

**C**LUBBERS are partying into a slightly different mood from the usual frenzied electronica high when listening to the latest Dimitri from Paris smash compilation.

Double CD *Return to the Playboy Mansion* delivers the French DJ's up-tempo retro re-mix trend started by the first two volumes of his *Playboy* series. Opening with crowded dance floor-pleaser *Cosmic Girl* by Jamiroquai, the *Partytime* disc reflects Dim's finely tuned but eclectic taste in music.

*Sexytime* delves deeper into his leftfield tendencies. Inspired by the more raunchy antics of his global fan base, the debonair DJ stamped his smooth production style on 16 love tracks. What began as an "interesting idea" to include sensual slow melodies on the second CD spun into his all time favourite erotic *Playboy* set.

"A lot of people would come up and say, 'I met my girlfriend thanks to your CDs; we made out the first time to your CDs; I made love to my girlfriend to your music' and I thought it was funny because I didn't really mean the music to create that sensual mood," he told *Soldier*, adding that the re-mix market was dominated by fast house and dance with just a smattering of chillout.

"None of the CDs really feature love ballads and this is music that I really love. I never get a chance to play it in a club because it would not make the people dance but maybe do something else . . . I thought it was a great opportunity for me to showcase that music, which sort of made sense within the sort of *Playboy* sexual content."

King of sexy music Barry White creates the loving mood with favourites Marvin Gaye and Teddy Pendergrass setting the scene for some serious smooching sessions. London's Ministry

of Sound got the first UK kiss of *Sexytime* last month at the maestro's exclusive playback of *Return to the Playboy Mansion*.

"The MoS has got a really nice sound system and the better the sound system the more chances you have to sneak in music that is a little bit leftfield. My primary objective as a DJ is to make sure everyone is enjoying the night. So, I have contemporary music injected with a couple of older things here and there that I usually rework at home and can include without breaking the flow."

Born in Istanbul to Greek parents, the young Dimitris Yerasimos grew up in the French capital listening to his family's classical music collection. His exploration into soul, funk and house influenced his ear to a diversity of artists from the Frank Sinatra-led Rat Pack to Icelandic icon Björk.

Changing his name to Dimitri from Paris – not to be confused with Dimitri





from Dee Lite – the accomplished musician was recently honoured by his adopted country. He was one of the first artists in his field awarded the rank of Knight of the Arts and Letters – equivalent to the British OBE – for his musical labours of love.

It was a visit to the world famous Los Angeles pad that cast the lounging funk theme for Dim's infamous *A Night at the Playboy Mansion*. Fans around the world couldn't get enough so he treated them to *After the Playboy Mansion*.

But Dim stressed the honour was his when he found out *Soldier* music reviewer Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish, listened to the *Playboy* series as part of his rehabilitation from injuries sustained on Op Herrick. The young officer, who had his eye and brain pierced by shrapnel thrown from an explosion in Sangin, was invited to the exclusive MoS playback.

"I'm really honoured when I hear stories like Jim's because I believe music should help you to get better. My point of view is that music should make you feel happy and a lot of people put me down for that. I'm not necessarily a very happy person myself but I want my music to be happy because why would I depress myself more, if I'm not happy? So, I think it's great that music can heal people and I'm really happy I can do a tiny little bit towards that healing." ■



#### Dimitri from Paris exclusive playback at the Ministry of Sound

USHERED into the Lounge of the MoS, the handful of special invitees listened to the French ambassador of house music as he crafted a mix of the tracks from his latest release, *Return to the Playboy Mansion*. Monsieur **Dimitri** played for an hour as we drank in the suave elegance of the mix, the man himself and the 'Playboy' atmosphere. Many DJs get too drawn into getting the perfect mix – but not **Dimitri**. His headphones were off to hear his work being played on the truly superb sound system in the MoS Lounge.

**Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish**



#### This Story (Brandi Carlile)

AS one of *Rolling Stone* magazine's 'ones to watch', **Brandi Carlile's** second album has her touring the UK with **Newton Faulkner**. A sweet and soulful mix of blues, country and rock, this is music to listen to after a dinner date when you and your beloved want to relax and chill out. *Late Morning Lullaby* and *Have You Ever* stand out as music you can lose yourself in and just drift away. While it doesn't smack you in the face straight away, *This Story* will slowly grow on you and delivers all it promises.

**SSgt Mo Morrison, 3LSR Regt, RLC**



#### Brigade live at the Portsmouth Pyramids

YOU could be forgiven for thinking you were at a **Busted** gig, with the majority of the fans being too young to hold a provisional driving licence, but the night was far from tame. **Brigade** knew how to provoke a crowd with tracks from their second album, *Come Morning We Fight*. Every bit the showmen, they whipped the fans into a frenzy and left them baying for more. Their emo-style rock might not be avant garde but they are genuine originators and, with no queues at the bar, it proved to be an excellent night.

**Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU(B)**



#### We Leave At Dawn (Envy and Other Sins)

THIS group won the Mobile Act Unsigned talent competition, which was screened on Channel 4 last year. They claim to have influences ranging from music artists to authors to the Victorian age. One might describe them as an offbeat outfit. Their music however does not reflect this and is mediocre to good British pop. The album is not a bad debut, but it does not particularly stand out from all the other Brit Pop around at the minute. Only time will tell whether **Envy and Other Sins** have what it takes to hold onto the fame that they have won already.

**Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt, 5 Regt, RA**



#### Groovycide on MySpace

AFTER a four-year break, the British Forces Germany rockers have reformed with an energised set and fierce ambition. Building on their 2004 debut album *Eventually*, released on a leading UK indie label, the four lads have been busy with live gigs in Germany. What's more impressive is an appearance in *Q Magazine* and having been previously played by legendary late DJ **John Peel**. Of the band's free MP3 downloads, available on MySpace, the infectiously charged *Everybody Hurts* (REM), and *U2's Vertigo* stand out. Go to [www.myspace/groovycide.com](http://www.myspace/groovycide.com)

**Cpl Tom Robinson, 151 Tpt Regt, RLC**



#### Weathers Coming... (Phoebe Killdeer and the Short Straws)

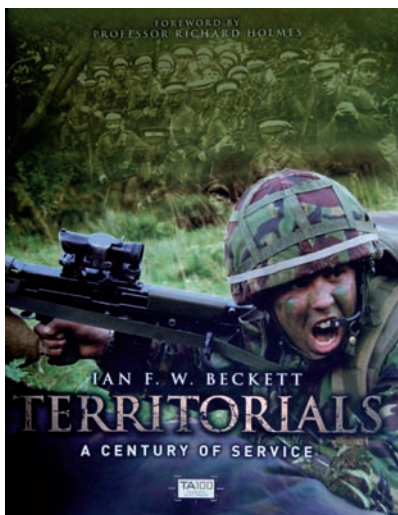
WHO? She is an Anglo-French singer who fronted **Nouvelle Vague** before her mischievous streak led to her sacking. Her debut solo album is by no means a chart-denting commercially viable release. If you wandered into a backstreet theatre in Paris and watched an obscure Gothic musical this would be the soundtrack. It's a precocious mix of haunting brass, rockabilly rhythms and ghostly vibes with **Phoebe's** storytelling vocals. It's a fine piece of innovative music, though hard to recommend due to its enigmatic nature.

**Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC**



# Books

M A Y R E V I E W



Main picture, *Early days*: From the pages of *Territorials*, Devon Royal Garrison Artillery Militia ham it up with a Nordenfolds three-barrel machine gun in Plymouth. Inset, *Take the plunge*: 1920 recruiting poster.



# First reserves

## Colourful history marks century of Territorial Army at war and peace

**Territorials** by Ian F W Beckett (DRA Publishing, 288pp, £30). See reader offer at foot of review.

**Review: John Elliott**

**I**N April we reported that Luke Cole, a 22-year-old Wolverhampton forklift truck driver, had been awarded the Military Cross for quite remarkable gallantry when a Taliban ambush erupted in southern Afghanistan.

Ignoring a broken leg and stomach wounds sustained when his patrol of Mercians was attacked in Helmand province, he declined morphine so that he could crawl across open ground to help injured colleagues and suppress the enemy with his rifle during a two-hour firefight. The young private's actions

were gobsmackingly heroic, but what makes them extra special is that Luke Cole is a part-time soldier, a member of the Territorial Army.

His richly deserved MC is the third to be won by a TA member in recent years.

Too late for a mention in Ian Beckett's wide-ranging history of the Territorial Army, published to mark its 100th anniversary, the stark facts of Cole's dedication to duty in the line of fire are a reminder, should we need one, of the wonderful achievements of the civilian soldiers who volunteer enthusiastically to support and reinforce the Regular Army in war and peace.

Did you know that TA soldiers have won 88 Victoria Crosses? Or that

the only one awarded on D-Day went to a Territorial, CSM Stan Hollis of The Green Howards? Neither did I until I read this richly illustrated, large format book. In fact, the

photographs and artwork are worth the cover price by themselves. Beckett's text draws together a fascinating collection of images that reward even a quick flick through the pages.

Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have given fresh direction to the role of the Territorial Army (more than 9,000 deployed in 2003 during the first Gulf War), but as this narrative suggests, its fortunes and standing have dipped and soared in the 100 years since Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane created the modern force. He did so as Britain's military leaders reflected on the lessons of the Boer War, during which "a handful of farmers" severely embarrassed Queen Victoria's mighty Empire army.

The TA made a huge contribution, and sacrifice, during the Great War, to be rewarded with political neglect and indifference in the years that followed. In 1940 the Army Council decreed that 55 per cent of Territorial COs should be replaced by Regulars because they were

### Soldier ordering service

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too “inexperienced or unfit to hold their commands”. It is surprising, perhaps, that in the closing stages of the Second World War there were only 36 TA officers, out of 15,067, in the rank of brigadier or above.

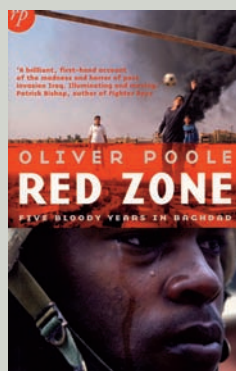
Barely 25 years ago a Lionheart exercise in Germany involved 35,000 TA soldiers in manoeuvres designed to deter the Soviet bear. Today the organisation has, discounting non-deployable members, about 31,000 officers and soldiers.

Perhaps this is how it will always be for a force which, when it matters most, routinely disproves the jibes about it being a Dad’s army of weekend warriors. Even today the letters pages of this magazine occasionally hint at lingering tensions on this score, particularly in terms of allowances and rewards.

But as Professor Beckett makes very clear, when our nation calls on them, men such as Luke Cole – and Yorkshire lorry driver Stanley Hollis before him – are more than willing, and able, to step forward. ■

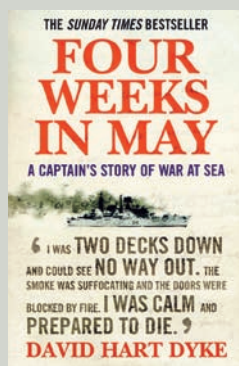
● **Save £5.** To mark the TA’s centenary, copies of *Territorials: A Century of Service* are available to *Soldier* readers at £25 from DRA Publishing, 14 Mary Seacole Road, Plymouth PL1 3JY or by calling DRA direct sales on 01752 671297.

For more reviews, go to  
[www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)



**Red Zone** by Oliver Poole  
BAGHDAD’S Red Zone, in which *Daily Telegraph* correspondent Poole spent “five bloody years”, was effectively all of the city beyond the fortified walls of the Green Zone in which the Iraqi government and its international sponsors went about their well-protected business. As frightening as Baghdad was, his observations on Basra, once the prosperous “Venice of the East”, make the most depressing reading. He found it riven by rival militias and corrupt officials, despite the British presence.

Reportage Press, 336pp,  
£12.99 (s), £18.99 (h)



**Four Weeks in May** by David Hart Dyke  
CAPTAIN Hart Dyke’s anti-aircraft destroyer was one of a thin grey “screen” deliberately placed in harm’s way to intercept enemy bombers intent on stopping the British landings on the Falkland Islands in May 1982. His ship, HMS *Coventry*, was sunk, but not before it had done its job. While the task force disembarked its land elements relatively unscathed, the Navy was fighting a desperate battle over the horizon.

Atlantic Books,  
272pp, £8.99

**NINE** titles have been short-listed for the British Army’s first *Military Book of the Year 2008* award. They are:

**Swords and Ploughshares**  
by Paddy Ashdown

**Absolute War** by  
Chris Bellamy

**3 Para, Afghanistan, Summer 2006** by  
Patrick Bishop

**Four Weeks in May** by  
David Hart Dyke (see below)

**Eight Lives Down**  
by Chris Hunter

**Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions that Changed the World, 1940-41**  
by Ian Kershaw

**Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa** by Edward Paice

**Napoleon as a General**  
by Jonathon Riley

**Washington’s War: From Independence to Iraq** by Michael Rose

The award, run by the Army Library and Information Service, celebrates the best



**The War with Indonesia 1962-1966**  
by Nick van der Bijl  
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Pen & Sword, 246pp,  
£19.99

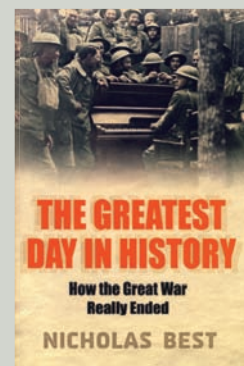
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**The Greatest Day in History** by Nicholas Best  
HENRY Gunther was the last US soldier to die in the First World War. He was killed charging a machine-gun post a minute before the Armistice. Best’s research, woven into a book subtitled “How The Great War Really Ended”, could surely fill a dozen volumes. While Australian troops were going wild in Paris, George Bernard Shaw wanted no part in his village celebrations because, as he put it, “every promising young man I know has been blown to bits”. Fascinating.

Weidenfeld & Nicolson,  
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# SOLDIER SPORT

## UNBEATABLE

### Reds stretch run to 25 years

**Golden gloves:** Strong showings from the all-conquering Army boxing team, including debutant Sig Niki Gittus (R Signals), pictured, sank the Royal Navy's Inter-Services challenge for the 25th successive year

Picture: Graeme Main





# Super seven

## Rampant Reds close in on Inter-Services record at Twickenham showdown

Report: Stephen Tyler  
Picture: Graeme Main

**A**LL thoughts of rewriting the rugby record books will be left in the Twickenham dressing room when the Army take on the Royal Navy this month, according to Welsh Guardsman WO2 Andy Price, the head coach.

The Reds go into the annual showdown with the chance to stretch the longest winning sequence in Inter-Services history to seven matches following their exhilarating 39-25 victory last year.

But while he admits that setting a new record will be the icing on the cake, Price insists that his squad will be focused solely on beating the Navy on the day.

"Records are things for journalists and commentators and history is something that you read about in books," the Welshman told *SoldierSport* from a training camp in South Africa.

"Winning the match in front of us is all that is on our minds before a game and if we break a record in doing that then it's just an added bonus."

Last year's Inter-Services campaign produced two inspired performances from the Army against the Navy and the Royal Air Force and the Reds were in South Africa to get themselves into top shape for the 2008 tournament.

Price's charges were put through their paces in training sessions three times a week and also secured an outstanding victory against the Rainbow Nation's Rugby Performance Centre in 30C temperatures in the Western Cape.

The opposition featured professional players brought together by former Saracens legend Alan Zondagh and Price said the match – won 44-33 – was excellent preparation for his men.

"The game was played right in the middle of nowhere against young professional players in really hot conditions," he said. "It was a good test for us and it helped the players to work on their conditioning."

"We decided that we would trim our squad down while we were over here and concentrate our efforts on the right people and it has been very worthwhile from everyone's point of view."

With a dependable backbone of

experienced faces including prop LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh), second row Cpl Ben Hughes (RE) and fullback SSgt Mal Roberts (RLC), Price has promoted 11 new faces to his senior squad for the Inter-Services tournament.

Lightning-quick loggie Pte Max Vave (RLC) adds more pace to a back line already overflowing with attacking talent, including the centre pairing of Leeds Carnegie's Pte Apolosi Satala (1 Scots) and

Spr Peceli Nacamavuto (RE).

Ever-reliable Gdsm Rob Sweeney (WG) faces

fresh competition at fly half from Capt Mark Honeybun (AFC Harrogate) and Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME), while 2nd Lt Ian Martin (3 Yorks) provides back-up for first-choice scrum half Sgt Gareth Slade-Jones.

All of the new talent has risen through the ranks of the Army Rugby Union's academy system and the wealth of options throughout the squad has left Price facing a pleasant problem.

"We have a good record of bringing players through and against the RAF there will be seven new caps. That is testament to the strength of our academy and development system and the staff and coaches working in it," he said.

"We keep producing players in abundance and that is putting me in the privileged position of having a major headache when it comes to picking my team."

Whichever 15 players take to the field on May 3, the Twickenham crowd is sure to see a feast of attacking rugby thanks to Price's positive philosophy.

Since attracting criticism following a dour 9-6 win over the Navy in 2006, the Reds have developed an expansive style that places a greater emphasis on scoring than not conceding.

And although the Army's attacking flair inevitably places greater pressure on the team's defensive line, Price insists that his side will always take the game





to their opponents. "Our style has been and will continue to be all-out attack because that's where our strength lies," he continued. "You could say it's also our weakness because when you play at a high tempo then there is always the risk that you are going to make mistakes that the opposition can capitalise on.

"That is a risk we are willing to take. We will not change how we play."

Part of the reason why last year's Babcock Trophy match will live long in the memory was the equally dramatic improvement in the Navy's play.

The blue half of Twickenham will be hoping the trend continues into this year's eagerly anticipated encounter and the experience of LAEM Dave Pascoe and trickery of Combined Services star AB Josh Drauninui are sure to keep the Army XV on their toes all afternoon.

But even with a clutch of new caps turning out for the Blues, Price said that he has done his homework on the opposition and knows exactly what to expect from them.

"I have watched the Royal Navy three times this year, including against the Irish Defence Force when they put out their strongest team," he said. "For us they are very much a known quantity because we have studied them.

"We know what they want to achieve at Twickenham and they won't spring any surprises on us." ■

## Army squad v Royal Air Force/Royal Navy

LCpl Melvyn Lewis  
**LCpl Jason Kemble**  
 LCpl Chris Budgen  
**Cpl Ben Hughes**  
 Cpl Darrell Ball  
**Capt Ben Salt \***  
 Capt Mark Lee (C)  
**Pte Joe Kava**  
 Sgt Gareth Slade-Jones  
**Gdsm Rob Sweeney**  
 LCpl Malaki Magnus  
**Capt Paul Gittins \***  
 Pte Apolosi Satala  
**SSgt Mal Roberts**  
 LCpl Matthew Dwyer \*

Capt Rob Sugden  
**LCpl Maku Koroiyadi**  
 Capt Ian Martin \*  
**Capt Mark Honeybun \***  
 Spr Peceli Nacamavuto  
**ATpr Warren Ross-Allen \***  
 LSgt Chris Scarf  
**Cpl Dave Bates \***  
 Pte Taniela Delitimana  
**2nd Lt Ian Martin \***  
 Cpl Ceri Cummings  
**LCpl Dan Coates \***  
 Spr Ben Seru  
**Pte Max Vave \***  
 Spr Rick Reeves \*

\* Denotes uncapped player

**Red revolution:** With six straight wins in the bag, Army coach Andy Price will be hoping his blend of new caps and experienced players including (from left) LCpl Jason Kemble, LCpl Chris Budgen and LCpl Melvyn Lewis will stretch the Red's unbeaten run to seven games





# Quarter masters

## Boxers batter Royal Navy to extend record Inter-Services run to 25 years

Report: Andy Simms  
Picture: Graeme Main

**B**OBGING the blows of an ever-improving Royal Navy squad and parrying pre-tournament predictions of defeat, the Army stretched their rule of the Inter-Services ring to a quarter of a century at Aldershot's Maida Gymnasium.

While four walkovers undoubtedly helped the Army cause, it was some clinical finishing inside the ropes that secured the defending champions a landmark victory in a historic unbeaten run, which began back in 1984 under the tutelage of current England coach Mick Gannon.

Needing two wins to retain the Noble Statuette for a record 25th successive year, WO2 Chris Bessey's squad held their nerve after an early setback – bantamweight Spr Scott Southey (25 Engr Regt) being KO'd by MEM Gareth Smith in round three of the opening bout – to record a 7-5 victory.

It was light welterweight Cpl Steve Turner (3 UK ADSR), who first silenced the Navy's travelling supporters, edging the Army to within one bout of the silverware by out-boxing Mne Paul Ferguson.

Putting his clear height and reach

advantage to good effect, Turner made light work of his stocky opponent's fight plan – head down, step forward – with his unerringly accurate jab and deservedly finished on the right side of a 22-8 victory.

The Army, however, were made to wait for their champagne moment by AB Mark Flowers who, after sharing three evenly-contested rounds with welterweight LCpl Gav McGee (5 Rifles), managed to step up and find an extra gear in the fourth.

A thunderous left hook sent McGee stumbling to the canvas midway through the final round of the clash, and although the 2007 ABA novice champion returned to his feet, seconds later he was again the subject of the referee's count and was promptly saved from further punishment by the arrival in the ring of Bessey's white towel.

And so it fell to Inter-Services debutant Sig Niki Gittus (30 Sig Regt) to notch up the all-important win, and the junior ABA champion revelled in his starring role in the Army's 25-year success story.

In a completely one-sided encounter, the Army middleweight's one flaw in a

18-12 points decision was to allow an element of showboating to creep into his performance.

With the team trophy once again secure, light heavyweight Cpl Tony Richardson (LD) underlined the Army's championship credentials by marching into an unassailable points lead against Mne Nick McGarry.

The Navy fought back fiercely and claimed three back-to-back wins in the cruiser, heavy and super heavyweight contests – a hat-trick which gave them a 5-3 lead on the night – but the war had already been lost.

However, suggestions from some at ringside that the Army – who had the luxury of a 4-0 lead before a single punch was thrown – were lucky not to have been dethroned were unjust.

The Navy's inability to field fighters in four of the lighter weight categories meant that Bessey was unable to deploy the prodigious talents of junior England international and reigning Combined Services flyweight champion Spr Adam Whitfield, England international and junior Olympic gold medallist Pte Martin Stead, and former England schoolboy Cpl James Allen, who was an ABA semi-finalist in 2006.

Celebrating his third consecutive Inter-Services championship title as coach, Bessey told *SoldierSport*: "Although we lost on the evening as far as bouts go, they didn't have the lads to put in against us, which is unlucky for them and lucky for us, but I'm confident we would have won at least three of those walkovers.

"I was on the team as a boxer when the Army won the title for the tenth year running and it is amazing that 15 years later I'm here as coach," added Bessey, who finished his career in the ring with a haul of six ABA titles, a Commonwealth Games gold and European Championships bronze. "Victory has not really sunk in yet but this is a big thing for the Army.

"Mick [Gannon] was coach when I first came on to the Army team and we've been friends ever since.

"He has always said that I would be one of the best Army coaches to lose the Noble [Statuette].

"While I don't like hearing that I can understand what he means – it is getting harder every year." ■

**‘Victory has not really sunk in yet but this is a big thing for the Army’**

## Pugilists' progress

**ELEVEN** Combined Services boxers qualified for the Amateur Boxing Association of England (ABAE) quarter-finals after a comprehensive performance against Southern Counties.

The squad got off to a good start at Aldershot's Maida Gymnasium when four team members – including the Army's Cpl Kibria Subhan (REME) and Spr Adam Whitfield (RE) – went straight through to the penultimate round with walkovers.

Featherweight Cpl James Allen opened the Combined Services account in earnest when his bout with Jonathan Fernandes was stopped in the fourth round, while ever-reliable lightweight Pte Martin Stead knocked Nabil Yahyouai out in the first.

LCpl Steve Turner was on the

right side of a 23-16 points decision in his light welterweight match-up with Woking Amateur Boxing Club's Adam Battle, and Sig Niki Gittus joined him in the semi-finals after also winning his middleweight contest on points.

Cpl Tony Richardson completed a clean sweep of wins for the squad's Army boxers with a deserved 23-10 points triumph over Waterlooville's Ryan Moore.

Further victories for the Royal Navy's ET Paul Ormston and Mne Mick O'Connell ensured that 11 of the Combined Service's 12 boxers qualified for the semi-finals which were scheduled to take place in Sheffield as this issue went to press.

● The ABAE finals will be held at York Hall, Bethnal Green on Friday, May 16. ■





Solid start: Debutant Sig Niki Gittus (R Signals) lands a right hook on AB Andy Neylon on his way to an 18-12 points win in the pair's middleweight bout

# Air Corps flying high

**A** BRILLIANT brace from SSgt Wally Wallbrook propelled 9 Regiments AAC to victory over 3 Yorks in the Army Challenge Cup Final.

Wallbrook's goals and a strike from ATpr Barry O'Neil wrapped up a 3-0 victory as 9 Regt became the first Army Air Corps side to win the trophy in the competition's 107-year history.

The scoreline failed to reflect an evenly contested game which might have swung the other way had the Yorkshiremen been more clinical in front of goal.

A packed house at Aldershot Military Stadium was treated to a fast-paced start to the match, with 3 Yorks enjoying the lion's share of possession and crafting a couple of half chances in the opening 20 minutes.

Where 9 Regt's defence excelled,

however, 3 Yorks's struggled and it was an horrendous mistake that led to the first goal after half an hour.

A high ball down the 3 Yorks right flank should have been easily dealt with, but an attempted clearance was sliced and O'Neil showed great composure to control the dropping ball, take a touch and fire low into the bottom corner from just inside the box.

An industrious performance from Wallbrook got its reward five minutes before the break. The 9 Regt striker ran on to a perfectly weighted pass through the middle and shrugged off two defenders before rounding the keeper and slotting the ball home.

With 45 minutes to turn the game around, 3 Yorks started the second half with purpose but again suffered from poor decision-making in the final third.

And with more men committed to attacking in search of a goal, the Yorkies were left exposed at the back and Wallbrook killed the game off with a close-range finish following a swift counter-attack.

Wallbrook left the pitch to a standing ovation and the airmen played out the remaining minutes in relative comfort to claim their first Challenge Cup title.

Team manager Capt Dave Sharples told *SoldierSport* that the victory was achieved despite the AAC side losing several key players to operational deployments throughout the season.

"We were an unknown entity going into this competition because we have been knocked out in the first round every other year," he added. "But we have stood up to the test this time around and done ourselves proud." ■





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International ambition: Wheelchair fencing was one of nine disciplines available to try at the British Paralympic Association taster day held at Aldershot

# Sporting chance

Innovative scheme provides Paralympic possibilities to injured soldiers

**Report: Stephen Tyler**  
**Picture: Graeme Main**

**W**OUNDED soldiers are being given the chance to discover their Paralympic potential at a series of disabled sports taster days.

Visitors to the sessions, which are being run by the British Paralympic Association (BPA) and Army Sports Control Board, can try their hands at disciplines ranging from shooting and basketball to tennis and cycling.

And although it may be too late for any newcomers to make the Beijing Paralympics, BPA performance manager Justine Willmott is confident that the Armed Forces will be well represented by the time the Games come to London in 2012.

"This is an opportunity for injured Service personnel to participate in

a good range of Paralympic sports," Willmott told *SoldierSport* during the latest talent-spotting session at Aldershot. "We are looking towards 2012 and identifying the talent out there, but these sessions are also important because taking part in sport is a good rehabilitation tool.

"We could have tried to push people through for this year, but it's a lot of pressure. This is high-level sport and it requires a lot of commitment.

"Paralympic sport has come a long way since it was founded and you are now looking at world-class athletes who are often training full-time. It is also attracting more funding and coverage."

Soldiers attending the talent identification events are given expert coaching in each event and advice on what to do if they want to make progress in the discipline.

National bodies from each sport, including the Disability Target Shooting Club and British Volleyball Federation, are also involved to help coordinate future participation.

With the first two taster days successfully completed, Willmott said she is happy to be able to tap into the sporting talent available from within the Armed Forces.

"It's certainly true that athletes from the Services are used to being in a controlled, disciplined environment and are able to put themselves out of their comfort zones," she said. "They are already good physical specimens and are used to training, so you immediately have that base level to build on.

"When you already have a disposition where you want to train and achieve then you are immediately going to hold a significant advantage." ■



## SPORTS SHORTS

● **CRICKETERS** from the Army and Royal Navy are marking the 100th anniversary of their teams' first encounter by playing at Lord's, the world's most famous ground.

Dignitaries including the Princess Royal will be in attendance at Marylebone Cricket Club for the match, which gets underway at 1100 on Tuesday, July 29.

Tickets cost £10 for adults and £5 for under 16s and over 65s and can be purchased from Col (Retd) Peter Sharland on **01252 348570** or **aca@ascb.uk.com**, or Lt Cdr David Cooke RN on **02392 723741** or **rns04@a.dii.mod.uk**

● **FEMALE** ice hockey players are being invited to sign up for a fledgling tri-Service team.

**Sgt Sarah Caswell** wants to hear from new players regardless of their skill level ahead of a potential training camp later this year.

For more information, contact **Sgt Caswell** on 94329 4260.

● **ARMY** basketballers netted an on-court double after winning the men's and women's Warrior Weekend tournament titles at Aldershot.

**SSgt Bev Bates** (AGC (SPS)) starred as the women defeated Wessex 60-48 and Solent 64-48 to come out on top.

A 91-58 victory for the men over Wessex was followed by a 85-73 reverse against Solent, but the Army Warriors took the title on points difference.

Aldershot also hosted the Army championships, which saw 6 Sp Regt edge out 1 RSME 75-69 in a closely-fought major units final.

The women's title went to 25 Trg Sp Regt thanks to a 44-23 win over 11 Lt Bde, while 1 AAC defeated 33 Fld Hosp in the minor units competition.

● **WHILE** thousands of runners pounded the streets of London during last month's marathon, a British soldier was completing his own 26-mile race in Afghanistan.

**Undeterred by the heat and dust, paratrooper and commando-trained Maj Al Jarvis**, of 23 Engineer Regiment, completed 38 laps of Lashkar Gah military base wearing his Osprey body armour to raise money for the Army Benevolent Fund.

Speaking after completing the event, Jarvis said: "It was quite tough going at times but I pushed through."

To make a donation to his fund, visit [www.justgiving.com/bodyarmourmarathon](http://www.justgiving.com/bodyarmourmarathon)

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# Double dragons

## Welsh win after rousing recovery against loggies

**R**EIGNING champions 2 RWelsh battled back from a ten-point deficit to retain Rugby Union's Army Premiership Cup in a thrilling rain-soaked final at Aldershot, **writes Roger Thompson.**

Like opponents 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, the Welshmen only returned from operations at the turn of the year and had to play catch-up at a furious pace simply to make it into the competition.

But qualify they did and an effective display propelled the holders to a 17-10 victory that few in the capacity crowd would have predicted at half time.

The loggies sprang out of the traps the fastest as they looked to avenge last season's 22-12 defeat and although number eight Pte Joe Kava loomed large, the Fijian was too often isolated.

With the forwards failing to make an impact, 23 Pioneer found inspiration

through Pte Max Vave, whose two tries gave his side a double-figure lead going into the second half.

With their grasp on the trophy loosening, the champions introduced LCpl Chris Budgen from the bench and the prop led a series of short charges to dent his opponent's confidence.

As the Welsh forwards turned the screw, 23 Pioneer lost their composure to give away five cheap penalties, four of which full back LCpl James Balfrey slotted home to put his side into the lead for the first time.

Trailing 12-10, the Pioneers responded well, but a Welsh counter attack ended with scrum half LCpl Marc Jones delicately lobbing into the corner for wing Cpl Tavis Rees to score.

Balfrey missed the conversion, but his side held on to ensure their name remains on the Premiership trophy. ■

# Makalu masters

**TRI-SERVICE** mountaineers are making good progress in their mission to become the first group to traverse the world's fifth highest peak.

Two teams made up of Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy specialists are currently in Nepal attempting to climb the north-east and south-east ridges of 8,462m Makalu.

The mountain is regarded as one of the world's most difficult climbs and has been summited fewer than 250 times since it was first scaled in 1955.

If they manage to complete their mission, the south-east team, which includes the Army's Capt Sundeeep Dhillon (RAMC), Lt Toby Haughey (1 RHA) and WO1 Dick Gale (RE), will become just the third group to successfully climb the ridge and the first to do so for 35 years.

The main team features Germany-based Lt Angela Laycock (RE) and Maj Matt Hing (RLC).

Both sets of climbers had to complete a 12-day, 150km trek from Tumlingtar just to reach Makalu's base camp, but favourable weather has left them approximately two weeks ahead of schedule as this issue went to press.

Expedition leader Sqn Ldr Dave Tait (RAF) said that the extra time may prove useful if the weather closes in ahead of the group's planned finish at the end of May.

Money raised from the Makalu expedition is being donated to Nepali charities, including children's villages and education projects.

● For daily progress reports from Makalu, visit [www.makalu2008.org](http://www.makalu2008.org) ■





Royal retention: LCpl Bati Bativagone leads the charge as 2 R Welsh recover a 12-point deficit to beat 23 Pioneer Regiment in the Premiership Cup final

# Reds' reverse

**D**EFEAT against the full-time players of Oldham finally ended the Army Rugby League team's record-equalling Carnegie Challenge Cup run.

The Reds booked their place in the competition's third round with wins over Thatto Heath and Ince Rose Bridge, but Oldham's experience proved too much as the home team slipped to a 56-10 loss at Aldershot.

The gulf in class between the two teams was evident from the start, but Reds' manager Capt Rich Naivalurua (REME) was proud of his team's efforts in this year's competition.

"Oldham outgunned us with their pace, lines of running and domination

in the collision, as you would expect from professional players who have played in the Super League," he said. "We were hammered by the penalty count in the first half and that effectively took us out of the game."

"Even so, we achieved one of my key objectives for the season in reaching the third round and meeting professional opposition. We can only learn from the experience, particularly in the area of personal conditioning and preparation."

"We kept going to the very end but we were beaten by the better side."

Any hopes of making the Challenge Cup's fourth round were extinguished in the opening 30 minutes as a rampant Oldham ran in six unanswered tries.

Spr Ben Seru (RE) scored the Army's two tries, including a contender for score of the season as the left winger picked the ball up on his own line and outpaced two defenders. The speedy sapper was denied a hat-trick by the touch judge and also weighed in with two try-saving tackles.

Although Oldham managed to stretch their lead, Army heads remained high and the home team's discipline left a lasting impression on the players and staff from Oldham.

"We did not take the Army lightly," said chief executive Chris Hamilton. "We saw them show controlled defence, guts, determination and character." ■



# Info cells

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

**We asked British troops in Germany whether they would be willing to provide a DNA sample to aid the casualty identification process**

## Sjt Stuart Morris, 5 Rifles

I'm sure we will be well briefed on this scheme before it comes in, and I will make my decision based on the facts. As with anything new, people don't like change. Providing a sample is a good idea, but there are security issues. These need to be looked at and the troops informed. I don't think most people would have a drama with giving a DNA sample.



## LCpl Karl Thompson, 5 Rifles

Remembering what happened when the Lynx helicopter went down during Op Telic 8, providing a DNA sample is a good idea. I'm not concerned about security – the scheme would enable families to be informed more quickly in the event of a death. I've been on three tours in Iraq and would be willing to give a sample before deploying on operations again.



## Sgt Anthony Boocock, RLC

Speaking as someone who is soon to deploy, I think giving a sample would ease the process of identification. The only concern for some is who would have access to the DNA bank. It needs to be made clear who could get to the data. I wouldn't mind if the whole population had to give a sample to assist any police inquiries.



## Rfn Shane McFadden, 5 Rifles

I haven't got a problem with this at all. If you have an issue, why not give a sample before you go away and then have it destroyed when you get home? There are security issues, just the same as there are with everything else in life. But I don't have any reservations. I would want my wife to know sharpish if anything happened to me.



## Cpl Scott Wallace, R Signals

If giving your DNA will help speed up identification should the worst happen, then it can only be a good thing and on that basis I would probably volunteer to provide a sample. It needs to be made clear what the sample is for. Will it be for identification or could the police use it? There are privacy issues and I have not seen the full details of this latest scheme.



## 2nd Lt Rhi Middleditch, AGC (ETS)

I think I would volunteer to provide my DNA before going away on operations. It would give me peace of mind for my family should the worst happen. If the scheme had been made compulsory, there would be issues over an individual's rights. But it is voluntary, and the sample can resolve any issues over identification.



## Sgt Matthew Gough, PWRR

I would certainly volunteer to give a DNA sample before deploying. In the current climate of operations, there is always the potential for the worst to happen. I was in Iraq in 2006 when a helicopter crashed. It took some time to identify those involved. For those with reservations, they should know that they can have their sample withdrawn at any time they choose.



## Cpl Iain Sanderson, REME

As long as your DNA is used just for identification, providing a sample is a good idea. The problem arises if it is used for other purposes. When you have identification issues, having access to a soldier's DNA is a bonus. But there must be more info about the scheme, and I want assurances the sample would only be for the stated purposes.



## Maj Stuart Barltrop, AGC (ETS)

The scheme makes sense as it avoids mistakes. You hope the situation where identification is an issue won't happen but you can never tell. There must be safeguards to protect your info – I can see that being an issue for some people. I have not seen the detail of the DNA scheme, but I can't see it being a problem.



Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Steve Dock

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