

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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infaneers
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readiness

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War footing



NEW Army boss Gen Sir Patrick Sanders has wasted no time in making clear what soldiers must prepare for over the coming weeks and months.

Op Mobilise – which you can read more about on page 7 – is described by our top officer as the Service's "singular focus". So if you get up on anything in this issue, it should probably be that.

Put bluntly, this is about ensuring the Army is ready for high-intensity war fighting in Europe if required.

On page 17, Army Sergeant Major Paul Carney explains what that means at an individual level. From maintaining good personal fitness to laying the groundwork at home. Everyone has a part to play.

Meanwhile, training on home soil is already adapting to ensure troops are equipped with the right combat skills.

From the sappers rehearsing subterranean moves beneath the busy streets of Leeds (page 26), to the armoured infantry pushing through fatigue and confusion in complex battle scenarios, the mission to ensure UK personnel are the smartest and most resilient they can be is under way.

Summer leave may be happening this month, but there will be no let-up for British soldiers anytime soon.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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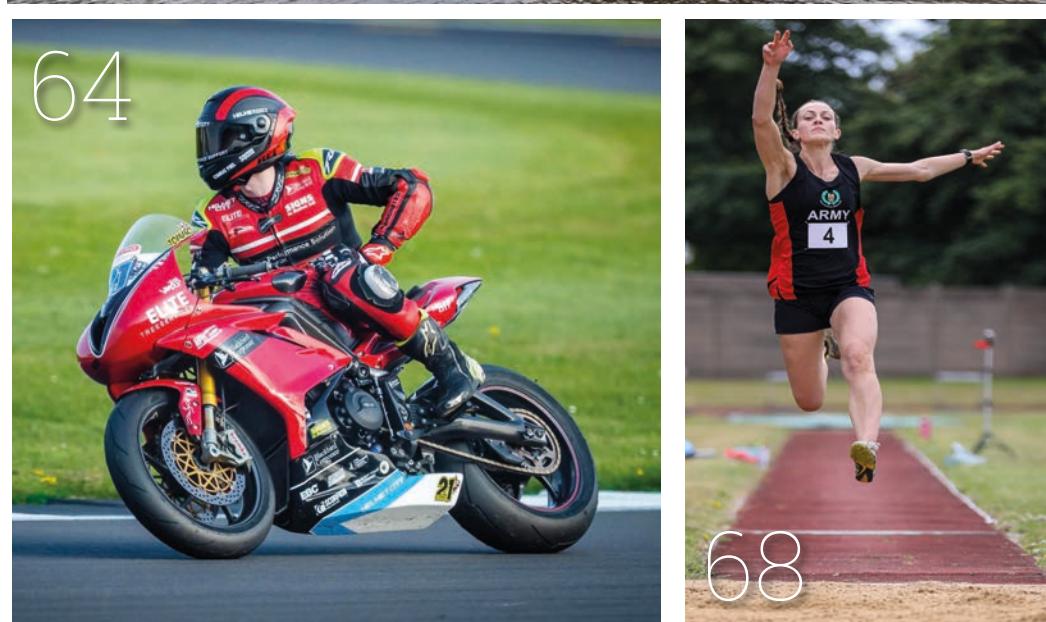
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Pictures: Graeme Main and Sgt Jimmy Wise, RAF



'Every leader must step up'

Army chief's message to personnel at all levels

COMMANDERS at every level must step up as the Army mobilises in response to Russian aggression, the chief of the general staff has said.

Setting the tone during his first speech in role, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders emphasised that all leaders – from top brass down to the most junior NCO – would be required to play their part in putting the Service on a conflict footing.

And he warned that a heavy price could be paid if the UK and others failed to prepare for battle amid Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

He stressed: "We are mobilising the Army to help prevent war in Europe by being ready to fight and win alongside our Nato allies and partners.

"I expect this change to be command-led, from the major general in Main Building to the lance corporal in the barrack room – and from the Reservist officer on a weekend exercise to the civil servant in Army Headquarters.

"This is the moment to defend the democratic values that define us; to help our brave Ukrainian allies in their gallant struggle – and stand with our friends and partners to help maintain peace throughout the rest of Europe."

Gen Sanders was speaking during the Land Warfare Conference at the Royal United Services Institute in London (pictured right). And he said

the Army had to raise its game if it was to meet the Russian threat head-on.

Known as Op Mobilise, the ramp-up would mean keeping a close eye on the size and shape of the Service as well as a rethink of current combat techniques.

More troops would need to be ready for a high-intensity conflict in Europe – able to deploy rapidly and fight alongside Nato allies, he said.

With this in mind, the Future Soldier modernisation programme would be accelerated to put next-generation kit in the hands of troops quickly.

"The time has come to be frank about our ability to fight if called upon," Gen Sanders added. "The threat has changed and we will change with it

"We will pick up the pace of combined-arms training and major on urban combat; rebuild our stockpiles and review the deployability of our vehicle fleet."

Gen Sanders compared the threat faced in Europe to the rise and expansion of fascist powers in the period before the Second World War.

A failure to prepare properly could lead to greater problems later on.

The top officer concluded: "I will do everything in my power to ensure that the British Army plays its part in averting war.

"These are extraordinary times...and I expect all ranks to get ready, train hard and engage."

SOLDIER

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I expect all ranks to train hard

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GLOBAL SITREP



Pictures: Cpl Danny Houghton, RLC

HURRICANE TEST



AIRBORNE medics have been testing the skills that may be required to help in the Caribbean islands during the region's hurricane season.

Exercise Winged Serpent saw personnel from 16 Medical Regiment deploy to the Stanford Training Area in Norfolk, which posed as a mock island that had been battered by severe storms.

Along with distributing aid supplies and establishing camps for displaced people, the unit tested its full patient care pathway.

Simulated casualties were treated from the point of wounding to consultant-led damage control resuscitation and surgery to save life, limb and eyesight, as well as primary healthcare.

"The exercise was designed to put our medics under pressure in a different scenario to what they're used to, and they dealt with it very well," said Maj Sean Mason.

16 Med Regt is being held at very high readiness to cover the course of the hurricane season, which runs until November.

“
It put our
medics
under
pressure
”

1. POLAND

STARSTREAK TAKES AIM

NEARLY 100 troops from the Army's 7th Defence Air Group joined Nato partners in one of the largest ever exercises to test air and missile defence systems.

Ramstein Legacy saw British personnel operate the Starstreak high velocity anti-aircraft missile from Stormer vehicles and Col Graham Taylor, the group's commander, said the drills were the culmination of a series of training packages over the past five or six years.

"The more you can train and operate with your Nato partners the better," he added. "It heightens everybody's focus and strengthens the importance of this activity at this stage and in this part of the world."



2. MOROCCO

THE LION'S SHARE

A BUSY programme of multinational exercises has been continuing to ramp up after Brits joined a dozen allies for a training package in north Africa.

Troops from 4 Light Brigade Combat Team – the Black Rats – waged a mock campaign alongside the host country during the command post outing.

They integrated Moroccan personnel into their Agadir headquarters as they helped provide robust support for an American combined joint task force.

In all, some 7,000 personnel from 13 nations took part in Exercise African Lion – which also involved troops on the ground – in serials simulating a divisional-sized battle across a large



part of the continent.

Black Rats commander Brig Marcus Mudd said the two weeks of training – which takes place every year – had again been a useful experience.

He described the package as "a fantastic opportunity" to train alongside other nations, adding: "It means we are able to coordinate with each other and exercise in a really complex scenario so we can work together more effectively."

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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1. POLAND
 5. BELGIUM

3. GIBRALTAR

2. MOROCCO

4. MALI



● Harz National Park opens its doors to adventurous training – pages 42-47



3. GIBRALTAR TRAINING TOUR

PERSONNEL from 85 (Herring VC) Squadron of the Defence School of Logistics and Administration deployed to The Rock to deliver the Army leadership development programme to their Service counterparts.

Colleagues from The Royal Gibraltar Regiment, Brigade of Gurkhas and Royal Engineers benefitted from the visit, which was the first time a sub-unit from the school had travelled overseas to offer training.

The squadron also made use of the territory's resources, with adventurous training, subterranean warfare drills and a battlefield study all covered.

4. MALI MISSION COMPLETE

WITH two Op Newcombe tours now complete, troops from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards have been able to reflect on a job well done.

The Welsh Cavalry marked its return from the peacekeeping mission with a parade through Cardiff, where families, friends, veterans, and well-wishers gathered outside City Hall to watch the pageantry.

Prince Charles, the regiment's colonel-in-chief, was guest of honour and presented four soldiers with their United Nations medals, among them LCpl Matthew Rees. "It was a great honour and was made more special by being in the capital city of Wales," he said.

More than 70 soldiers from C Squadron deployed in June 2021, with a further 130 from A Squadron and the regimental headquarters following in December. They provided reconnaissance and deterrence, conducting patrols to gather intelligence and engage with the local population.

Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, Brig (Retd) Alan Richmond, said: "You brought UN presence and influence to areas that others could not reach, with professionalism and compassion."



Pictures: Cpl Paul Watson, RIC



IN NUMBERS

20

veterans involved in the project – including 11 from the UK



5. BELGIUM WATERLOO WONDERS

A HUMAN skull was among the discoveries made as veteran support charity Waterloo Uncovered returned to Belgium in its first archaeological excavation for three years.

Focusing on two sites, the team probed areas that saw some of the most brutal fighting in the 1815 battle. The remains of at least three horses were discovered during the visit, along with human bones including a skull – which is considered a scarce finding on a Napoleonic battlefield.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Professor Tony Pollard, one of the project's archaeological directors.

"We won't get any closer to the harsh reality of Waterloo than this."



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Picture: Graeme Main

Red tape holds back drone training

BRITISH troops need better preparation to meet the threat posed by drones if they are to counter them effectively in combat, a leading academic has claimed.

Jack Watling, senior research fellow for land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute (Rusi), said unmanned aerial vehicles posed a serious threat across the modern battlespace.

But he pointed out that training with the devices in the UK was being hindered by the complex civilian and military regulations needed to put them up in the sky.

As a result, some personnel did not know the correct protocols, or which actions to take, if they saw drones flying over their positions.

And aircrews – including those piloting the new Apache AH-64E attack helicopter – needed to train to operate seamlessly in the same space as the robots.

Speaking at the Land Warfare Conference in London, Watling said paperwork was at the root of the issue – and hitting the training programme.

He later told *Soldier*: "Using drones on exercise requires clearance from both the civil and military aviation authorities and this presents difficulties, particularly when you're also using electronic warfare capabilities.

"The deconfliction process can be

burdensome – as a result, the way drones are employed on exercise is not necessarily the same as how they are going to be used operationally.

"Some units are getting themselves up to speed with things when they have relevant pre-deployment training but this is not the case across the wider training programme."

Watling went on to point out that the conflict in Ukraine had shown the potency of UAVs in the battlespace. A Russian drone observing a target meant artillery could fire in five minutes – as opposed to 30 without the kit.

Elsewhere, the analyst said honesty was needed about other operational problems. Some Nato systems had different maintenance and training requirements, which could present problems for nations working together.

Keeping British troops topped up with rounds was another area of concern. If they deployed the same rates of fire as the Russians in Ukraine, their ammunition stocks would be depleted in two days, he added.

A number of issues were debated during the two-day Land Warfare Conference at Rusi – with the conflict in the east a key focus for speakers. Topics discussed included procurement as well as strategy, with speakers including senior military officers, politicians and captains of industry. ■

“The process can be burdensome”

IN MEMORIAM



2Lt Max George

DIED JUNE 21, 2022

SALISBURY PLAIN TRAINING AREA

FELLOW personnel have paid tribute to a "highly competent young officer" who was killed in a training incident on Salisbury Plain.

2Lt Max George of 5th Battalion, The Rifles died after suffering significant head injuries in a collision with a Warrior armoured fighting vehicle.

The 26-year-old commissioned into 5 Rifles in December as the Queen's Medal winner and had a background of Reserve service with the University Officer Training Corps and 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Despite only being in his unit for a few months, he had shown an effortless leadership quality as commander of 13 Platoon, D Company and was noted for being humble and grounded.

"Max was a star that burned bright," said Lt Col Jim Hadfield, commanding officer 5 Rifles. "Effortlessly impressive, he was a natural commander, who exuded fierce determination matched by selfless compassion.

"We loved him for it."

Close friend Lt Joe Hayes (Rifles) added: "He was an exceptional man.

"Max was a diligent individual whose attention to detail was remarkable. Anything he set his mind to he excelled at, and this is only further testament to his tenacious character.

"He was not only adored by his peers but also the riflemen within his command. Max loved his job, and this was clear to see by all."

In a joint statement, the personnel of 13 Platoon said: "He had only been with us for a few months, but he made a lasting and profound impression on everyone he worked with.

"His rare talent was his interest and dedication to us; the riflemen he commanded. He knew that he worked for us and not the other way round. This instantly inspired us as a platoon to want to constantly improve and grow, as soldiers and individuals."



A PROMISING young infantryman has scooped a major prize at the Great Yorkshire Show. Catterick-based Pte Joe Kelsall, of 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, lifted the Agricultural Society Trophy "for exemplifying the grit and determination" of the outfit during his first year of service.

The 23-year-old has been selected for the Cambrian Patrol team and excelled in both rugby and boxing during his short tenure in post.



POWER OF PRIDE

■ TROOPS marched through central London as part of this year's Pride celebrations.

The annual event, which celebrates the freedom, dignity and equality of the LGBT+ community, involved 250 defence personnel. Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, also attended.

WHEN MONEY ISN'T FUNNY

■ CASH flow is under the microscope in a study by the Army Families Federation and Forces in Mind Trust.

The organisations want to find out how the finances of troops and their families are affected by military life.

Visit aff.org.uk for more details.

BEREAVEMENT CALL

■ BOSSES at Forces charity Scotty's Little Soldiers are calling on troops to help them identify any children who have lost a parent serving in the military and may need extra support. Find out more about the campaign at scottylittlesoldiers.co.uk



IN NUMBERS
20,000

Visitors who attended this year's Tankfest – a colourful three-day event at The Tank Museum, Dorset featuring a host of world-class tank displays, demos and games. Visit tankmuseum.org for passes to the 2023 showcase.



COOLING OFF

■ AS UK temperatures reached their hottest ever last month, members of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment helped their loyal horses to stay cool with a cold sponge and hose off. The animals are carefully monitored during heatwaves, ensuring they stay hydrated with the correct nutrition. Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

People with HIV can now enlist

Rule change will reflect fact today's patients are as healthy as anyone

SOLDIERS with HIV can now deploy fully on operations following a change in policy.

Those taking suppressive treatment for the virus and whose blood tests show no detectable traces will be recognised as medically fit for all types of service.

Previously, anyone diagnosed as HIV positive was barred from enlisting and those who developed the disease during service were subject to restrictions over roles.

Lt Col Ollie Quantick (RAMC) from the Army Personnel Directorate's health team said the new rules reflected advances in the management, treatment and prevention of the virus.

"A disease that was a certain death sentence has evolved into something where people can have an entirely normal life," he explained.

"On just one tablet a day they can be as healthy as any other person and be unable to infect anyone else, which was one of the big fears from 20 to 30 years ago.

"The policy change recognises if they are on medication there is no

reason why they can't deploy and do jobs that everyone else can do, which is only right – they should not be prevented from having a full career.

"This puts defence on the same level as any other progressive organisation and ensures we don't discriminate against people with HIV."

The number of HIV positive personnel in the UK Armed Forces is thought to be around 90, although others may not have disclosed or be aware of their status.

As well as being more inclusive, Lt Col Quantick said the updated rules would also reduce the knock-on effect of troops avoiding testing or treatment – and potentially becoming unwell – for fear of damaging their promotion prospects.

The latest announcement follows on from policy changes made on World Aids Day last year which lifted the ban on those taking pre-exposure prophylaxis medication – also known as Prep – to prevent HIV infection from joining the Armed Forces. ■

Myth-busting – page 24



Picture: Graeme Main

Burning bright in a digital Army

Soldiers tested on patterns, codes and data to adapt for future operations

MEMBERS of The Royal Lancers have become the first troops to take part in special training to identify hidden digital talent.

It sees personnel undergo psychometric testing to assess their natural aptitude for tech-based roles.

Those shown to have the knack – usually around ten per cent of participants – then complete 200 hours of accredited online tuition and coursework to develop the know-how that could one day see them thrive in fields such as cyber, computer sciences and data analytics.

The scheme will boost individuals' skill sets and help the regiment develop its Perseus Troop, which focuses on achieving efficiencies through digitisation.

Among those to progress to the training stage was Tpr Avi Kaul (pictured above), who said he enjoyed expanding his knowledge.

"The testing was a series of verbal and non-verbal reasoning questions and deciphering patterns or codes," explained the 24-year-old.

"Then the training was all about data analytics – mostly number crunching on Microsoft Excel and



learning the more advanced functions of the software.

"It's a qualification you can use in civilian life, so it's given me an extra option for when I leave the Army, which is never a bad thing."

Officer Commanding Perseus Troop, Capt Guy Parker, said the scheme would equip troops for the future battlefield.

"Modern technologies including artificial intelligence, cyber and augmented reality are inevitably becoming more prevalent in training and in war," he said.

"The army that adjusts fastest will ultimately have the fighting edge over its adversaries.

"There is lots of untapped potential – as seen with The Royal Lancers.

"The challenge for us now is harnessing it." ■

The Royal Lancers, shown here training in Sennelager, are hoping to unearth talent

“
The army that adjusts fastest will have the fighting edge
”

SoldierSport

POLE POSITION

Athletes seal Inter-Services double, pages 68-69



WIN

£200-worth of Resilient Nutrition!

LAST month's spine line clues may have been recognised by any Ironman athletes or enthusiasts.

Inspired by our history-making cover star Kat Matthews, (Natascha) Badmann, (Mirinda) Carfrae, (Jan) Frodeno and (Daniela) Ryf are all the names of other notable Ironman triathletes.

This month, we have teamed up with Resilient Nutrition (resilientnutrition.com) to offer one reader a bundle of goodies from the sustainable performance nutrition supplier's military range.

Worth more than £200, the prize includes the Switch On dark chocolate drink, long range fuel, emergency survival packs, rations pouch, jungle hat and more.

As our readers well know, the nature of this kind of work is highly unpredictable. So with that in mind, Resilient Nutrition's solutions in this range are designed to meet the needs of the individual, the environment and the mission.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply tell us what links the clues on the spine of this magazine. Answers, including phone number, to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by August 31. Good luck!



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Picture: Sgt Robert Wedderburn, RLC

UK training mission ramps up

British troops help Ukrainian counterparts prep for front line

THE British Army training programme for Ukrainian forces is continuing at pace across various sites in the UK.

Up to 10,000 troops will undergo instruction in the coming months as part of the UK's support package to the country, which also comprises £2.3 billion in military aid.

Overseen by 11 Security Force Assistance Brigade, the programme includes intensive courses for new recruits on basic soldiering skills such as marksmanship, urban combat, battlefield first aid and patrol tactics.

The multi-cap badge effort involves more than 1,000 soldiers, among them members of The Rifles and the Scots Guards, while the Welsh Guards tested more than 2,400 AK variant assault rifles to enable the Ukrainians to train with the weapons they will use on the front line.

Meanwhile, on Salisbury Plain, Royal Artillery and New Zealand Defence Force experts delivered familiarisation training on some of the hardware donated by the UK, including the multiple launch rocket system and the L119 light gun (shown).

Technical gunnery instructor Capt

Jim Olliphant (RA) said the troops had coped well with the accelerated programme thanks to their experience on similar systems.

"It has allowed us to tailor the training to reflect their skill level," the officer explained. "They have learnt very quickly and proved in a short space of time that they are extremely competent artillerymen.

"We're very aware of what's going on in Ukraine, so we understand their appetite to work fast and get back."

One Ukrainian officer, who first deployed to the front line when

Russia invaded Donbas in 2014 – and whom for security reasons we can only name as Roman – told *Soldier* via an interpreter:

"We understand the importance of the assistance we get. Everything brings us closer to victory."

And in a concept familiar to British troops, he added: "If it's difficult while we train, it will be easier in battle."

On a visit to a range in Kent, Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders (pictured), praised the "courage, morale and fighting spirit" of the Ukrainians as well as the commitment of the instructors. ■



“
Everything
brings us
closer to
victory
”



19TH BRIGADE IS BACK

A FORMATION that saw some of the most intense fighting during the Op Herrick years has been reformed to oversee the management of part-time troops.

Defence chiefs have confirmed that 19th Light Brigade – which was disbanded in 2013 – is operational again and has responsibility for ten Reserve combat units across the UK (see below) under 1st (UK) Division.

The reboot was announced last year as part of the Future Soldier restructuring, with the outfit taking on some 5,000 troops operating in 80 locations.

Responsible for two light cavalry plus eight light infantry units, the formation is tasked with providing personnel to backfill Regular outfits while supplying boots on the ground for tasks in Oman and Kenya.

Commanded by Brig Owen Lyttle, the formation also holds an additional responsibility for supporting the Reserve's role in offering home-front resilience.

The brigade badge, shown below, depicts the character Bagheera from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*. The animal is said to epitomise the character of the brigade – a trusted friend, supportive mentor and strong protector.



19th Light Brigade includes:

- Queen's Own Yeomanry (pictured top)
- Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry
- 6th and 7th Battalions, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
- 4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment
- 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment
- 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment
- 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment
- 6th and 8th Battalions, The Rifles

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Hot trotters

HARDENED soldiers at the Defence School of Transport in Yorkshire braved the summer sunshine to pound out the miles in a punishing charity feat. The 11 Leconfield-based troops donned their PT kit for a demanding test of endurance – running four miles, every four hours for two days. The team rose to the test of the so-called 4x4x48 challenge with support

from Hull University students, who provided much-needed sports massages.

Organiser Cpl Callum Townsend (RLC) said:

"Our goal was to raise as much money as we could for SSAFA's East Yorkshire branch – we chose the charity for the support it delivers to all Services."

Amount raised
£1,100
For SSAFA

FRINGE FOR THOUGHT

THE extraordinary tale of a gay soldier who used his drag act as cover for a Second World War spy mission is among the highlights of this month's Army at the Fringe showcase.

Featuring in a strong line-up of military-themed shows at the famous Edinburgh Festival, *For Queen and Country* (shown) tells the story of actor Maj Denis Rake, who gleaned information on German troops while performing at a Paris nightclub.

Other shows include *I am Gavrilo Princip*, based on the events surrounding the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914,

and *Heroin to Hero*, which tells the true story of Paul Boggie, who overcame drug addiction to join the Service.



Picture: Graeme Main

More location changes for adventurous training

A FAR-REACHING shake up of the Army's adventurous training estate is continuing apace with the opening of a new wing in the heart of Wales.

Staff have now relocated from an old base at Castlemartin to a venue in Brecon – close to the Sennybridge Training Area and Infantry Battle School.

The move follows the closure of a Yorkshire hub in Ripon and unveiling of a new £9 million complex in Halton, Lancaster, offering state-of-the-art facilities. An overseas site in Harz, Germany, has also seen a major uplift (page 42).

Located in a key exercise heartland, Army AT Wing Brecon will help soldiers hone their resilience skills while being pushed to their limits in a controlled environment.

It will also see an increase in activity. While the old Castlemartin base offered taster sessions in four disciplines – mountain biking, climbing, mountaineering and canoeing – the

new venue is set to provide caving too.

Some 1,200 Service personnel are expected to pass through the doors this summer after the ribbon was cut by Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty.

Senior officers are delighted with the opportunities on offer.

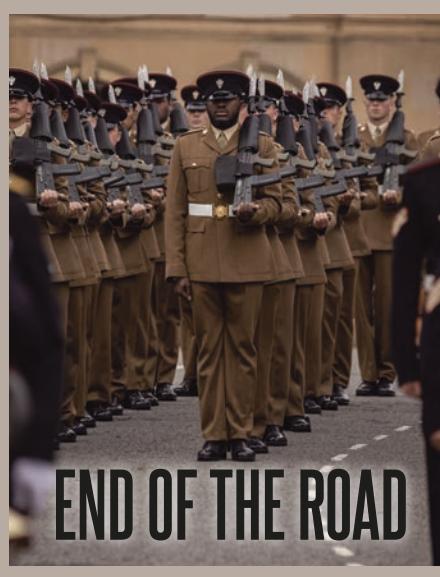
Commander 160th (Welsh) Brigade, Brig Andrew Davies, told reporters the new centre would bring an array of benefits to troops.

"This wing is now where it needs to be – in the home of the Army in Wales and optimised to support our people in adventurous training," he added.

Lt Col Matt Forde (Rifles) – CO Army Adventurous Training Centre – added: "As a result of our move from Castlemartin, travelling times to activity areas have been cut.

"This has allowed us to expand our portfolio for soldiers.

"We are really excited about the future. The Brecon Beacons is a great location and this is a step forward."



END OF THE ROAD



Picture: (c) Adam Wakefield, RLC

HUNDREDS of people lined the streets of Derby and Worcester to applaud a much-loved infantry cohort marching into the history books. Troops from **2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment** stepped out for a final time ahead of the outfit's merger with Bulford-based 1st Battalion next month. The shake-up follows the Army's reorganisation under Future Soldier. Crowds showed their appreciation as personnel exercised the freedoms of both cities, led by Swaledale ram mascot LCpl Derby XXXII. They were later visited by Colonel-in-Chief, the Prince of Wales. Commanding Officer Lt Col Richard Grover said the parades had been emotional. "The people have been a constant support," he added.



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, offers his take on Service life...

IT IS HARD to believe the extent to which the world has changed since I took on this role exactly a year ago, when the country was emerging from the pandemic.

Back then, the Army had still been helping civilian colleagues – notably those in the NHS – with activities including the vaccine roll-out. And we were working with Covid precautionary measures in place.

Nobody could have predicted how a Russian invasion of Ukraine a few months later would transform our lives.

The attack was met with a united response across Nato countries and British personnel, along with our allies, now stand ready to counter any aggression.

The ongoing conflict has prompted our new Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, to confirm Op Mobilise (page 7).

Under these plans, the Army is shaping itself to meet the threat from Russia. We will be ready, with the right equipment, to play our part in deterring a future war in Europe.

Gen Sanders has also set out expectations that commanders at all levels, including our most junior NCOs, must play their part

in making his vision a reality. And in the weeks to come I will be ensuring that we are meeting this challenge in the same way as we rose to the coronavirus crisis.

In practical terms, Op Mobilise means exercising a degree of personal responsibility.

I want us all to check that – as far as possible – we are physically and medically fit for operations.

And it is also important that we prepare our loved ones and families, who often have the hardest role in our absence.

My ask is that you have your discussions about a potential future deployment with them now.

Find the contact numbers for support networks and the relevant people who can help them – such as the unit welfare officer and padre.

This is key as we could be out of contact for extended periods on tour because of the security risk with mobile comms.

Making sure our loved ones have the support they need is vital for us too, as we're not going to give 100 per cent on tour if we are worried about life at home.

The world has changed and we must be prepared for new realities.

“

Have your discussions about a potential future deployment now

”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q Have you eaten out lately?

A Yes – fish and chips on HMS Victory with Royal Navy colleagues



A member of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles chats to a Ukrainian soldier at a UK training base

Picture: Sgt Ben Maher, RLC

Eastern promise

THE Chief of the General Staff has set us a new challenge with Op Mobilise – but there is no doubt in my mind that we have the soldiers to make it happen.

Our NCOs are a case in point – most recently I have seen their leadership qualities come to the fore in leading the training of Ukrainian counterparts.

Drawn from across the Infantry cap badges, the British troops have been

imparting their skills to soldiers from Eastern Europe at locations in the UK (shown above).

Their efforts will eventually see some 10,000 students learn the skills they need.

We have long assisted with training Ukrainian personnel in their own country on Op Orbital, using experience forged from decades of deployments.

Our versatility is truly our strength.

ONE DOWN...

■ AS I REFLECT on finishing the first of three years as Army sergeant major, I wanted to thank everyone who has given me such strong backing in the role.

You quickly find in this job that the people around you are crucial. The regimental, corps and command sergeant majors, in particular, bring great insight as well as a wealth of experience – as do our international counterparts.

This is very much a team effort – and the most important element is the soldiers we represent.

Thank you for keeping me informed about Army life.



THE BIG PICTURE

Armed Forces Day 2022,
London, Scarborough and Wrexham

SHOW OF SUPPORT

MEMBERS of the public were out en masse to show their appreciation for Service personnel across the UK on Armed Forces Day. The Yorkshire town of Scarborough was at the centre of the celebrations, where visitors were treated to parades and spectacular military displays at sea, on land and in the air – including a flypast from the Red Arrows. The Armed Forces Day flag was proudly raised at the Houses of Parliament, while the Regimental Band and Corps of Drums of The Royal Welsh led a parade through Wrexham.

Pictures: LPhot Stevie Burke, LPhot Bill Spur and LPhot Finn Hutchins, all RN; SAC Britney Leather and Sgt Jimmy Wise, both RAF; Cpl Paul Watson, Cpl Beth Roberts and Sgt Ben Maher, all RLC





WEED TO



Vanishing

Infanteer shares the dos and don'ts of popping smoke

► BACK in the mists of time – when swords and bows were tools of the battlespace – commanders had already established the need to move undetected by the enemy.

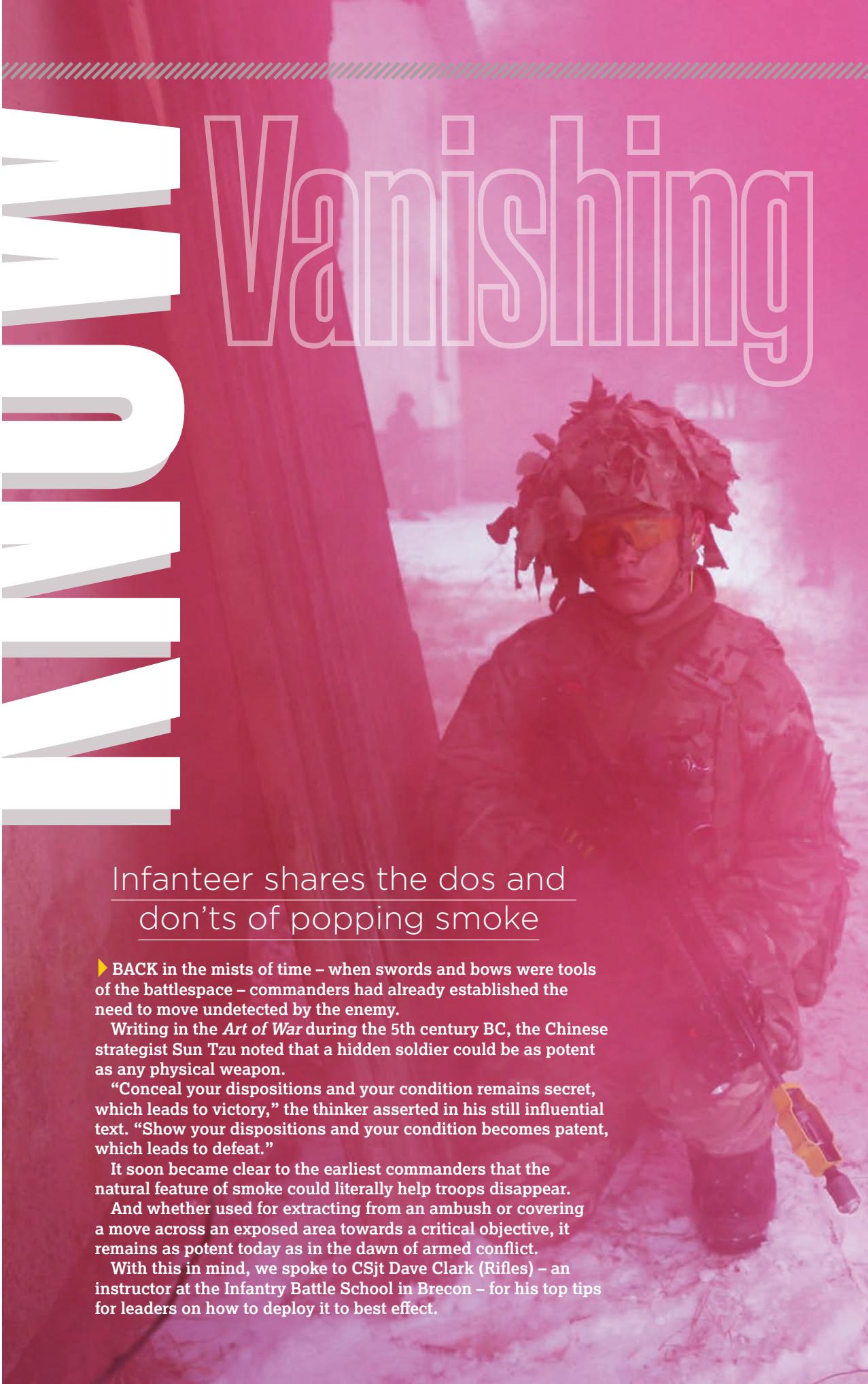
Writing in the *Art of War* during the 5th century BC, the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu noted that a hidden soldier could be as potent as any physical weapon.

“Conceal your dispositions and your condition remains secret, which leads to victory,” the thinker asserted in his still influential text. “Show your dispositions and your condition becomes patent, which leads to defeat.”

It soon became clear to the earliest commanders that the natural feature of smoke could literally help troops disappear.

And whether used for extracting from an ambush or covering a move across an exposed area towards a critical objective, it remains as potent today as in the dawn of armed conflict.

With this in mind, we spoke to CSjt Dave Clark (Rifles) – an instructor at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon – for his top tips for leaders on how to deploy it to best effect.



act

01

Think quickly

When doing your hasty assessment, **consider your intentions for using smoke and the best location for it**. Will it have an adverse effect on any of your fire support groupings?



02

Know your environment

Think about your location and the conditions – the wind direction and speed will play a part in how quickly the smoke disperses. It will also hang around for longer in an urban area than it will in an open setting.

03

Deliver in force

Make sure troops deploying the smoke have adequate training and are up to the task of throwing it to where it is needed. Ensure you use enough to be effective. Ideally you need four cannisters to cover big movements and remember it will take several seconds for the screen to build.

04

Don't hang around

Move rapidly to carry out your task once the cloud is in place, and give orders clearly. You will not have a vast amount of time – and remember that smoke is also a double-edged sword. The enemy can't see you, but you cannot see them, either.

05

Dark arts can pay

Using smoke at night will blind night vision image intensifier devices. But an enemy's thermal imaging capability might still be able to identify your intentions.



06

And finally...

There are some places where smoke should definitely not be used – don't throw it into buildings, for example, as it is a choking hazard and **could cause you and other troops to become completely combat ineffective**. Training is essential to give the soldier confidence to use smoke effectively.

CV: CSjt Dave Clark

Age: 36

Years of service: 17

Operational experience:

Includes Telic, Herrick and Cabrit

Current role: Senior instructor,

Junior Division, Infantry

Battle School



See YOU in court?

Why soldiers could make great magistrates

► DISHING out AGAIs is one thing, but did you know that soldiers can dispense justice in the civilian world too?

Magistrates are volunteers who decide the outcome of criminal cases in courts across the UK every day – and without any formal legal qualifications.

If you've got a decent sense of fairness, can make rational judgements, and talk to people from different backgrounds, you could be ideal for the role.

Here, former Army musician Nick Barratt, 44, explains more about the job and how it could boost the CV of Service personnel...



AS A magistrate you can make huge differences in people's lives.

It's a real community role, knowing that you are making decisions for the benefit of everyone.

You are also helping the people who come into court. It's not a case of blanket rules – you are there to listen to both sides of the argument.

The role gives me a real focus as well as a valuable perspective on other people.

But it's a huge responsibility, when to deprive someone of their liberty. So when you become a magistrate you have to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen – something that sits very well with the military background.

I started the role after Army colleagues told me about it. Historically, the bench tends to be made up of people who are older.

But there is a desire for more



magistrates to better represent the ages and ethnicities of the people they are serving.

It's all about following a clear process to get to a result – structured decision making.

And there is a lot of team working.

It felt natural to come into the judicial system while serving. It's a good fit.

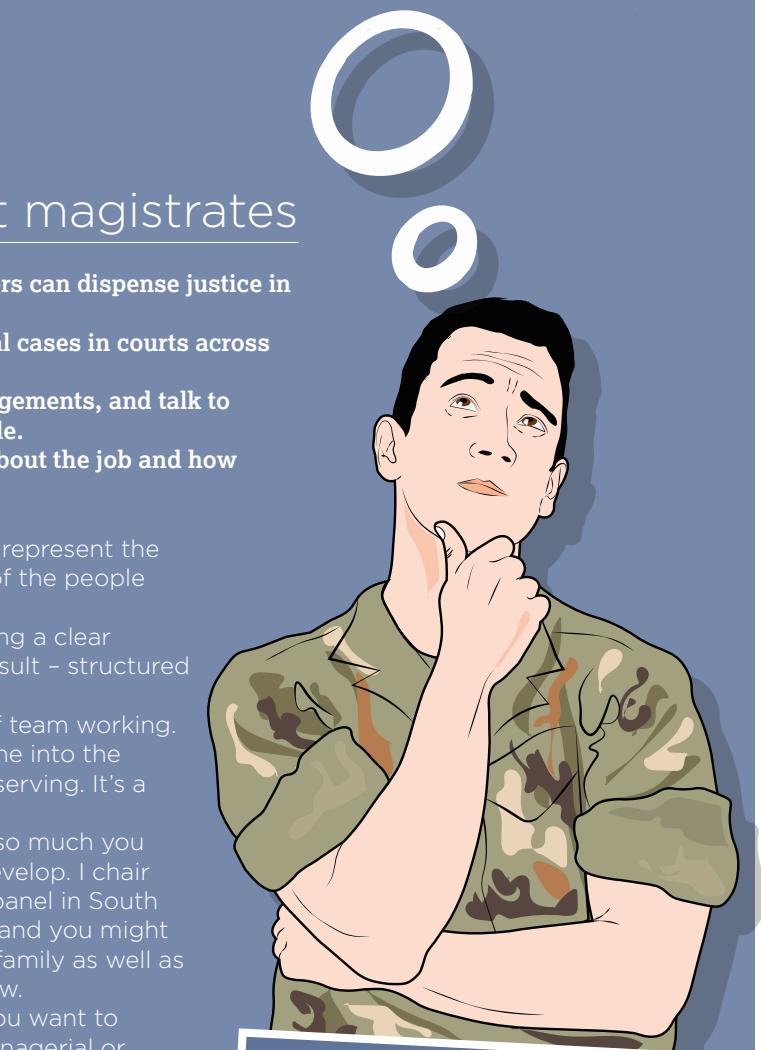
And there's so much you can do to develop. I chair the youth panel in South Yorkshire, and you might deal with family as well as criminal law.

And if you want to take on managerial or more senior roles, being a magistrate can help you develop for work in other sectors.

There are so many great people to connect with from different walks of life, too – it's great for contacts.

You get to talk with people you otherwise wouldn't.

I enjoy the change.



COULD IT BE YOU?

The Ministry of Justice has launched a drive to appoint thousands of new magistrates to help tackle the backlog of criminal cases caused by the pandemic. Many are ex-Armed Forces, and no formal training is needed to apply. Employers are legally obliged to give you time off to do it, too. Volunteers just need to be able to commit to at least 13 days a year for five years. Visit icanbeamagistrate.co.uk for more

Model Mindfulness

How this niche hobby could boost mental health

► WHETHER it is marshalling Wellington's infaneers on the Portuguese peninsula or gaming with Montgomery's troops on replica Second World War battlefields, crafting and painting miniature soldiers has timeless appeal.

But the hobby has increasingly been showing some real-life benefits, with veterans reporting that it helps with their mental well-being.

And clubs dedicated to the pastime across the UK are also proving popular with ex-personnel.

"There is evidence to suggest this type of activity – in the same way as art therapy – can be helpful," said Richard Dorney (ex-Gren Gds), a former lieutenant colonel who helped introduce new trauma management techniques in the Army and now runs civvy mental health consultancy Strongmind Resilience and Training.

"Anything that promotes an atmosphere of calm – as well as a social scene that allows people to come together and talk – has a positive effect."

With that in mind, *Soldier* asked Lars Edman – owner of Prince August, which manufactures moulds and other equipment for making metal soldiers – for his top tips to aspiring model generals...



5

Have fun

Model soldiers are enjoyable to make and paint and people have constantly told me how relaxing they find the hobby. Do not be disheartened if you make mistakes – the joy of making your own troops means they can always go back into the melting pot if it goes wrong



WIN
a modelling starter pack, worth £85

We have teamed up with Prince August to offer one lucky reader a deluxe casting moulds for 54mm Napoleonic troops. To be in with a chance of winning, tell us who commanded the British forces at the Battle of Waterloo. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by August 31. Good luck.

► MENTAL HEALTH

Pick a period

Find a historical era that interests you. In addition, think about your goal for your end product – for example, whether the soldiers will be just for display, used as toys or deployed on a diorama for wargaming and tabletop battles

1



2



Keep the heat on

If you are casting your own troops, choose a good quality metal and keep experimenting. You need to have the right heat to achieve the best results

3



Patience is a virtue

Creating a new model army takes time – wargamers say that five hours of play requires 30 of preparation. Keep focused and be prepared to put in the effort



4

Be colourful

Perfecting your painting skills can take time, particularly with an object as small as a 25mm rifleman. The best results with metal troops are achieved with a high-pigment product. Another good tip is to secure the soldier to an old wine bottle cork, which you can then hold and work your way around with a brush

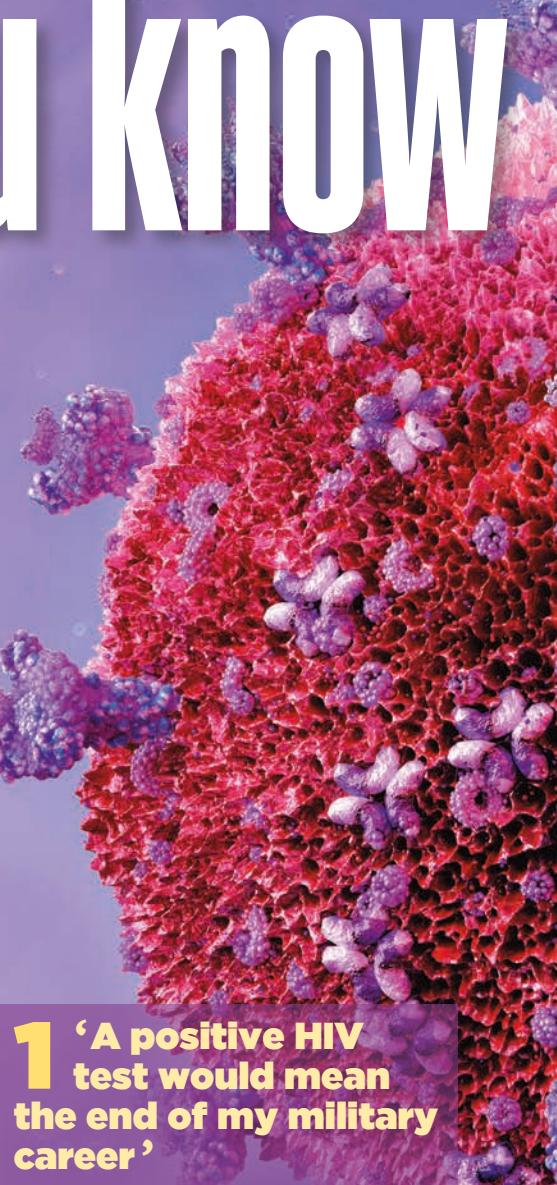
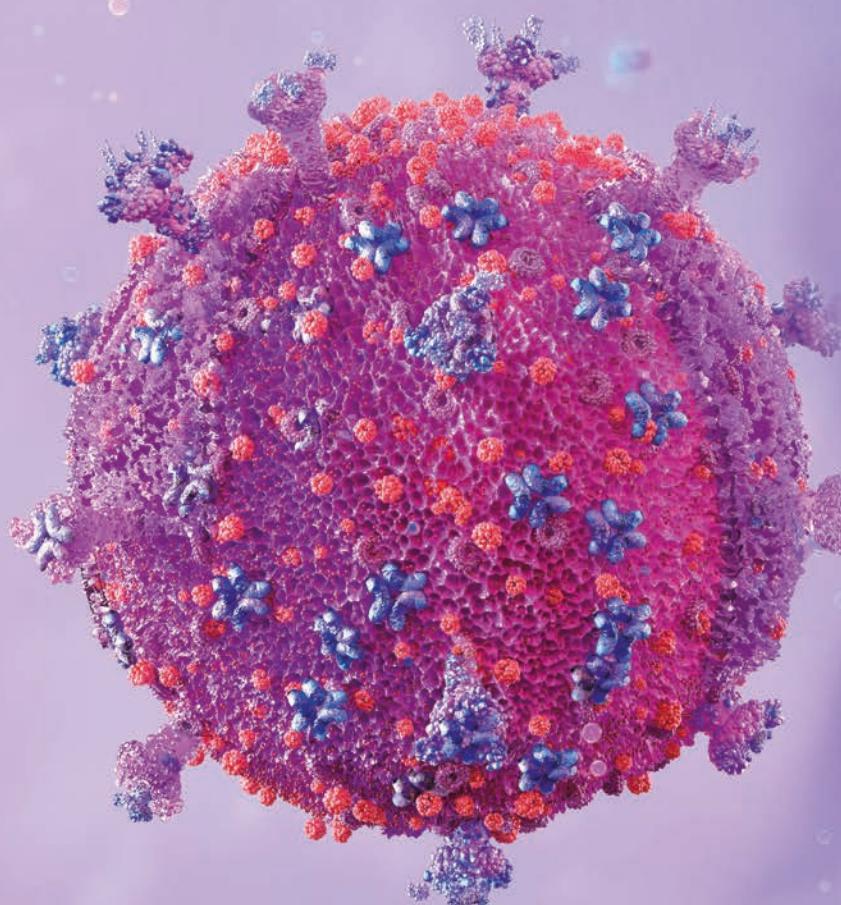
HIV Do you know

Army nurse busts **5** myths as Service policy changes

► TROOPS living with HIV will no longer be classed as medically non-deployable thanks to a change in policy that also lifts the ban on recruits diagnosed with the condition joining up (page 12).

But while treatment and prevention of the virus have improved vastly since it first emerged in the early 80s, stigma still lingers.

Here, Cpl Dawda Jawneh (QARANC), a military adviser in sexual health and HIV medicine at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, sets out common misconceptions he encounters when talking to troops...



1 'A positive HIV test would mean the end of my military career'

HIV is a manageable condition, just like diabetes and others. Most patients are on one tablet per day with minimal side effects.

The new policy states that 12 months after diagnosis those on treatment, with an undetectable viral load and normal immune system markers for six months, are fully fit to deploy.

2 'I could catch it if someone is undergoing treatment'

Having an undetectable viral load means that **there is not enough of the virus in their bodily fluids to pass on during sex. They are not infectious.**

the facts?

I'm passionate about this role and combatting stigma. Especially in the foreign and Commonwealth community - of which I'm a part - ideas persist of the 'gay plague', as it was called in the 80s. Science and treatment have improved so much and yet there are people out there who don't know the facts.

Cpl Dawda Jawneh, QARANC



3 'I don't have to worry about HIV because I'm straight'

Again, **this is a common misconception among heterosexuals** – probably stemming from early public health campaigns geared towards gay men. But in fact, **everyone should get tested once a year or when starting a new relationship**. Even those with long-term partners should get tested because it is possible to live with HIV for years and not know it.

4 'Condoms are the only way of protecting yourself'

It's always a good idea to wear condoms to protect against STDs. But pre-exposure prophylactic – known as Prep – is a pill that can be taken daily which prevents transmission around 96 per cent of the time. There is also post-exposure prophylactic, which can be taken over 28 days after exposure to prevent infection.

5 'Having HIV means you get sick and die'

This is no longer the case. People think you will get various infections, suffer nasty side effects from the medication and die young. But in reality **you can live a normal, long life**. Studies actually suggest that HIV patients have increased life expectancy because they see their doctor regularly, so other conditions are picked up more quickly.



Q&A: Testing and disclosure

Where should people go to get tested?

You can go to your medical centre or if you prefer, a civilian sexual health clinic (visit nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health to find your nearest one). In some areas you can order testing kits to your home. However, if you think you have come into contact with HIV you should visit your local A&E within 72 hours, where you will be assessed and potentially given post-exposure prophylaxis.

How long do test results take?

Usually ten to 14 days. Some test kits offer early results in 15 minutes, which are a quick way of finding out your status, although you will still need to wait for blood test results to confirm.

Do troops have to tell the Army if they are HIV positive?

Not outside the medical system, which will support you confidentially. Troops can choose whether to tell their colleagues and chain of command. Some patients I see worry about Army banter and inappropriate jokes about Aids/HIV. It's the same with forming relationships – there is no wrong or right time to tell a new partner, but in general earlier is better once they trust the person.

Need advice?

The Military Advice and Sexual Health/HIV Service can be contacted 24 hours via the duty mobile number 07929 788873. Non-urgent queries can be emailed to mod.sh@nhs.net

OVERGROUND,



Sappers hone urban capabilities on the streets of Leeds

Words: Becky Clark Pictures: Sgt Ben Maher, RLC

WITH global populations gravitating increasingly to urban areas, military planners have long warned that the wars of the future will be waged in cities. But the conflict currently raging in Ukraine has turned theory into frightening reality not too far from home – making the race to understand this operating environment a matter of even greater urgency.

It's a challenge facing specialist support troops as much as combat arms, and against this backdrop the Royal Engineers are pressing ahead with efforts to develop their tactics and procedures – an initiative known as Project Croker.

Led by 8 Engineer Brigade, the latest phase saw members of 21 Engineer Regiment team up with Infantry colleagues and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service for an ambitious series

of drills above and below ground in Leeds.

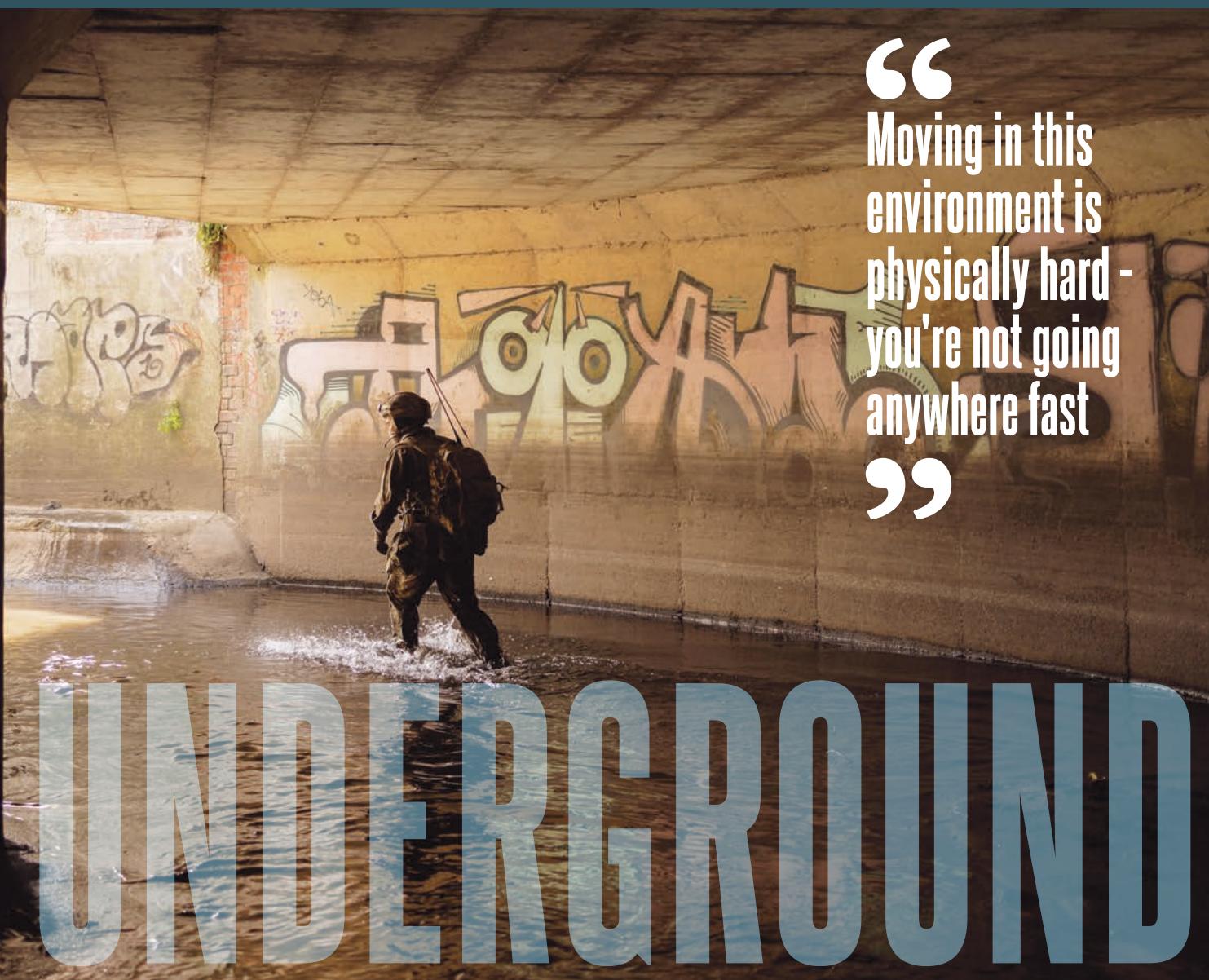
The first stage – which was dubbed Exercise Hypogeal Bear – took the form of a two-kilometre subterranean move through a drainage system from a location near the Royal Armouries Museum to Harewood Barracks.

Then troops from B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment mounted an assault on a disused tower block during Exercise Highrise Poacher.

Sgt Dale Mottley (RE), one of the masterminds behind the packages, explained the aim was to trial techniques in a real-world environment.

"We were testing the concept of an underground move by repurposing an existing system that isn't designed for moving troops," he said of the first serial.

"So we were looking at the feasibility of getting personnel in there and opening up a manoeuvre corridor as well as working out how we would make it safe.



“Moving in this environment is physically hard - you're not going anywhere fast”

UNDERGROUND

“It opened peoples' eyes to how physically hard fighting and moving in the urban environment is.

“You're not going anywhere quickly – you're battling darkness, the ground, the heat.

“On a normal training area you have mock realism, which works to a certain extent, but you don't get that real feel, the real smell of doing it in an actual city. The authenticity was so high.”

Of course, in a conflict scenario, there may not be a convenient subterranean option for inserting personnel, so Sgt Mottley's team got creative at street level too.

Calling on methods last used in Northern Ireland, they moved the infantry into position in civilian vans to simulate how they would remain under the radar in an urban op.

“I was wearing boots, jeans, a hoody, baseball cap and sunglasses,” said Spr Charlie Benson (pictured right).

“It was something quite interesting as I'd never deployed on exercise in civvy clothes.

“Usually, I'm driving around in green fleet wearing military kit, but it was quite fun to go round the centre of a city dressed as a normal workman and realise how much we actually blended in.

“It was also the first time we've ever done convoy drills through built-up areas, especially with the focus on trying to stick close together, which isn't always easy.”

The venue for the next stage in proceedings was a nine-storey former residential block.

Earmarked for demolition later this year, the flats had only recently been vacated, providing the perfect setting for some ultra-realistic training in which the emphasis was on how sapper breaching teams would work side-by-side with the Infantry to gain entry to a well-defended structure.

Ahead of the assault, troops practised using fire service ladders to climb to the second floor, as well as receiving instruction from Army medics on how best ▶





9

STOREYS CLEARED
BY TROOPS
FROM 2 ROYAL
ANGLIAN DURING
EXERCISE HIGHRISE
POACHER

» to extract casualties from a high building.

Company commander, Maj Simon Cox (R Anglian), described some of the complexities his soldiers encountered taking on an enemy in a cramped, cluttered space.

"A block of flats that was occupied by people up until about six weeks ago is a very different proposition to the relatively sterile facilities we have in places like Copehill Down and Imber Village," he said.

"You're in a reasonably small flat, where the doorways actually have doors in them and the corridors and stairwells are narrow too.

"There is stuff everywhere – furniture, curtains, people's post on the floor. It is an interesting realisation that when or if we have to fight in that sort of environment, it's not all clean lines and wide open spaces."

With an opposing force played by members of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment holed up in the maze of dwellings, the

attackers had to fight their way through using the toolkit at the sappers' disposal – from police-style battering rams to a brute force technique known as "walking through walls".

"If you run hard enough at a plasterboard wall, you can run through it," continued Maj Cox.

"So we had people literally shouldering their way through walls, which they had fun doing because Infantry soldiers tend to enjoy breaking things."

Section commander Cpl Jack Cerveno (R Anglian) agreed the serial had been a memorable one.

"It was good to see what the Royal Engineers can deliver, as well as the kit and equipment they bring along," said the 27-year-old.

"Speaking to all my private soldiers, everyone was absolutely buzzing. It's as realistic as you are going to get and we've all said if anything comes up like this again we'd jump at the opportunity to do some more training."



2

DISTANCE IN
KILOMETRES OF THE
SUBTERRANEAN
INSERTION AS PART OF
EXERCISE HYPGEAL
BEAR



155

TOTAL NUMBER OF TROOPS
INVOLVED IN BOTH SERIALS

The groundwork for the two exercises was laid during a workshop in Ilford in March, which focused on the visualisation of urban terrain.

In the process of assessing various mapping and data capture techniques, the serial identified the versatility of drones and the value of urban planning schematics as a source of information – both of which came into play in Leeds.

“While we were in Ilford, we recce’d St Paul’s underground station and found out there is all this mapping that you can tap into if you know where to find it,” explained Sgt Mottley (pictured right).

“We asked West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue if they had any similar documents and they gave us some maps which even had a shadow overlay of the ground above.

“A drone was also used to survey the high-rise in advance so we knew its size and dimensions, and while we couldn’t use it in the tunnels, we worked out

we could throw it up and fly it to where we were going to come out to give us eyes-on in advance.

“We’ll now take the data and break it down, work out what went well and how we can amplify that, as well as what went wrong and simple things like what kit we might need and so on. There is a lot to think about.”

Once lessons from Leeds have been taken on board, the next stage of Project Croker will examine command and control factors in a similar urban package – most likely in the autumn.

Despite its sheer complexity, Sgt Mottley said he was relishing the problem-solving nature of the challenge.

“Looking at the way the world is going at the moment it’s possible we’ll be in another European theatre of operations – so we need to understand how we fit in,” he concluded.

“It’s got so many axes of development and learning – it’s literally one gigantic puzzle to get after. As an engineer that’s mega.” ■







RANGERS UNITE

Hopefuls get
soldiering
skills tested
in their bid for
a place in the
Army's newest
regiment

THE sun has just risen above the arid ground surrounding a fortified encampment.

The eerie stillness of the early morning air is broken by the whine of diesel engines and the slamming of vehicle doors.

Men with their AK-47s pointed at the sky emerge from a ramshackle collection of tents and huts inside the settlement's perimeter.

Short, sharp commands in Arabic bounce from one side of the compound to the other.

A handful of troops in camouflage are walking into the camp and although they've adopted a soft posture – removing body »

“

They may be called upon to work in isolation

”



» armour and helmets and with weapons slung over their shoulders – their presence has clearly agitated the local chief and four of his militia who are moving rapidly towards them.

There is a brief standoff and one of the soldiers pulls a piece of paper from his pocket.

A short exchange of words follows.

In a matter of seconds the tension between the two groups has evaporated, with smiles and handshakes now being exchanged freely.

These troops are not here for a confrontation, but to talk. They want to help the militia track down a common enemy; an anti-government insurgent group that's been carrying out massacres in the region.

Both sides sit down together in the shade and over a pot of hibiscus tea they pool information about the atmospherics of the region – where different factions are located and which ones can and cannot be trusted.

It's hardly the stuff of fireball-laden, adrenalin-fuelled Hollywood blockbusters that are so often used to portray the US Army's unit of the same name. But as the commander of the Specialised Operations Training Centre, which oversees the regiment's training programme, points out, these troops have a very different role.

"They are not Special Forces, or similar to the US Army's Rangers or Delta Force," Lt Col Ben Redshaw (Ranger) says.

"Neither are they a replica of the now-defunct Specialised Infantry, despite many of those troops making up the first cohort of Rangers when it was stood up last December.

"Being all-arms, The Rangers will be able to undertake a greater breadth of tasks than those units," adds the officer.

"They are similar to the old Spec Inf in that they deploy alongside other militaries around the world to help develop capability and also counter extremist organisations and hostile state threats.

"But The Rangers' teams are much more flexible, with multiple specialists in each one, from signals and comms technicians to medics, intelligence and engineers.

"There is no set formula – the balance can be adjusted for each assignment – but all of them are highly qualified in their specialisms, as well as having the right personal qualities to conduct missions.

"For example, we recently had a team operating in Cameroon and most of the time they were more than 400 kilometres away

from the next British call sign.

"In those circumstances we need to have deep levels of trust in them as people, and their abilities."

Finding special soldiers, even if they're not Special Forces, requires a rigorous selection process that tests candidates both psychologically and physically.

The above scenario was played out as part of the two-week Ranger assessment cadre in Sennybridge.

The militia were role-players supplied by a specialist defence contractor, and the stand itself was one of ten that the 50 or so candidates had to negotiate during a challenging two-day, 45-kilometre patrol.

Observer-mentors accompanied them, intervening as little as possible and noting how the troops – who must have served for at least 18 months from completion of basic training before applying to join – handled various situations and provided constructive feedback when required.

Those candidates who make the grade progress to the six-week Ranger course, before facing a further eight months of in-depth training at their battalion.

It's a lot of work for an already highly qualified soldier to take on, but very necessary, explains Sgt Mike King (Ranger), one of the observer-mentors.

"There are lots of great soldiers who can follow orders but we need something extra, people who can quickly appraise exactly what's going on and change tactics if necessary," he says.

"As a result, we present complex scenarios during the patrol involving multiple groups and interests, and participants have to quickly unpick all that, understand the situation, identify who they should be supporting and how they could do that.

"It's vital we assess them like this because a primary part of the job is to cooperate with and enable partner forces – and they may be called upon to work in isolation alongside foreign personnel who are at least one or two ranks above them, so they cannot be daunted by high levels of responsibility.

"We need to find out what their personalities are like and we do a lot of cultural, behavioural and self-awareness training too.

"One of the most important qualities they require, in my opinion, is humility. Partnering foreign forces is about being open to learning from them as much as it is about them learning from you.

"Rangers need to be aware of how to change the way they communicate to adapt to the local culture." »



FACTFILE: THE RANGER REGIMENT

HEADQUARTERS Aldershot

FORMED December 2021

STRENGTH Around 1,000 when fully manned

STRUCTURE The regiment sits in the British Army's Special Operations Brigade, which is part of 6 (UK) Division, responsible for information and partnered operations

REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1ST BATTALION for West Africa

2ND BATTALION for East Africa

3RD BATTALION for Europe

4TH BATTALION for the Middle East

INSPIRATION

The cap badge was inspired by the peregrine falcon, due to its speed, agility and ability to operate in multiple environments. Regimental beret and stable belt are gun-metal grey



ASSESSMENT CADRE

During a two-week course candidates are tested on:

- Aptitude and ability to work with partner forces
- Ability to cope under pressure
- Patrol skills and navigation
- Logical and verbal reasoning
- Cultural awareness and current affairs
- Military knowledge
- Military planning
- Physical robustness

ROLES

- Weapons and tactics
- Fires
- Manoeuvre support
- Intelligence
- Medic
- Communications
- Logistics

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Rangers draw their name from an elite unit that fought using irregular tactics in 18th century North America



“

This assessment
is much more
in-depth

”

» Working closely with other forces who may have very different values is a potential minefield for any soldier. And it is the reason so much emphasis is placed on the individual's personality during selection.

"This assessment is much more in-depth and more aligned to assessing your character than it ever was for the Specialised Infantry," says WO2 Nick Fowler (Ranger), of the Special Operations Training Centre.

"It's all well and good being fastest in the two-miler and grade A on your green Army skills but you must be trusted to work at reach as a single point of focus.

"In some cultures it's quite easy to seriously damage national relations with just a couple of clumsy sentences.

"That's why the observer-mentors on this assessment cadre are taking a more passive role than, say, directing staff on an exercise. We want to find out as much as we possibly can about the individual's self-reliance, teamwork, character and problem-solving skills."

Being a Ranger isn't just about having the gift of the gab or great negotiating skills, though.

"They still need to be excellent soldiers, too, which is what we're also testing on this course," notes Sgt King.

"That means when you come here you'll soon find out you're not having a nice walk around Brecon – it's arduous and it needs to be.

"Many of the all-arms personnel experience a bit of a shock to the system but even some of the infantry can struggle."

One of those on the course (who, incidentally, didn't struggle), was CSgt Pratap Tamang (RGR), who told *Soldier* he applied to be a Ranger because he wanted to spend the last five years of his career doing something challenging and unusual.

He believes many applicants will need to get over the major mental hurdle of operating with little or no support close by.

"The more experienced soldiers among us who were on Op Telic or Herrick are used to having lots of back-up, but they will need to shift their mindset for this job," he says.

"Rangers operate very differently and we need to be ready to deploy abroad at reach and on many occasions operate while very isolated.

"That's why they don't only test soldiering ability, but your confidence, attitude and how you perform in a small team.

"You need to be prepared mentally and physically, and able to think on your feet.

"I'm really looking forward to the opportunities that being a Ranger will provide; the travel, the challenges, and working with lots of different cap badges as well as different personnel from abroad."

The British Army has been conducting missions to build partner capacity and counter hostile states and organisations in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine for decades.

But while it's still early days for The Ranger Regiment, the high-quality selection system and calibre of people they are attracting means the Service can expect to be involved in many more of these complex operations in future.

That will create a wide range of opportunities for personnel who have the appetite for a role that is, without doubt, different to any other. ■



Calling all troops

The Ranger Regiment is recruiting. Each of its battalions is in the process of growing from three to four companies and in future the unit will look to develop specialist-to-role training modules to support operations for the likes of 77 Brigade. Assessment cadres are scheduled for September and October this year. To find out more read **ABN 018/2022** or search for the regiment on Defence Connect

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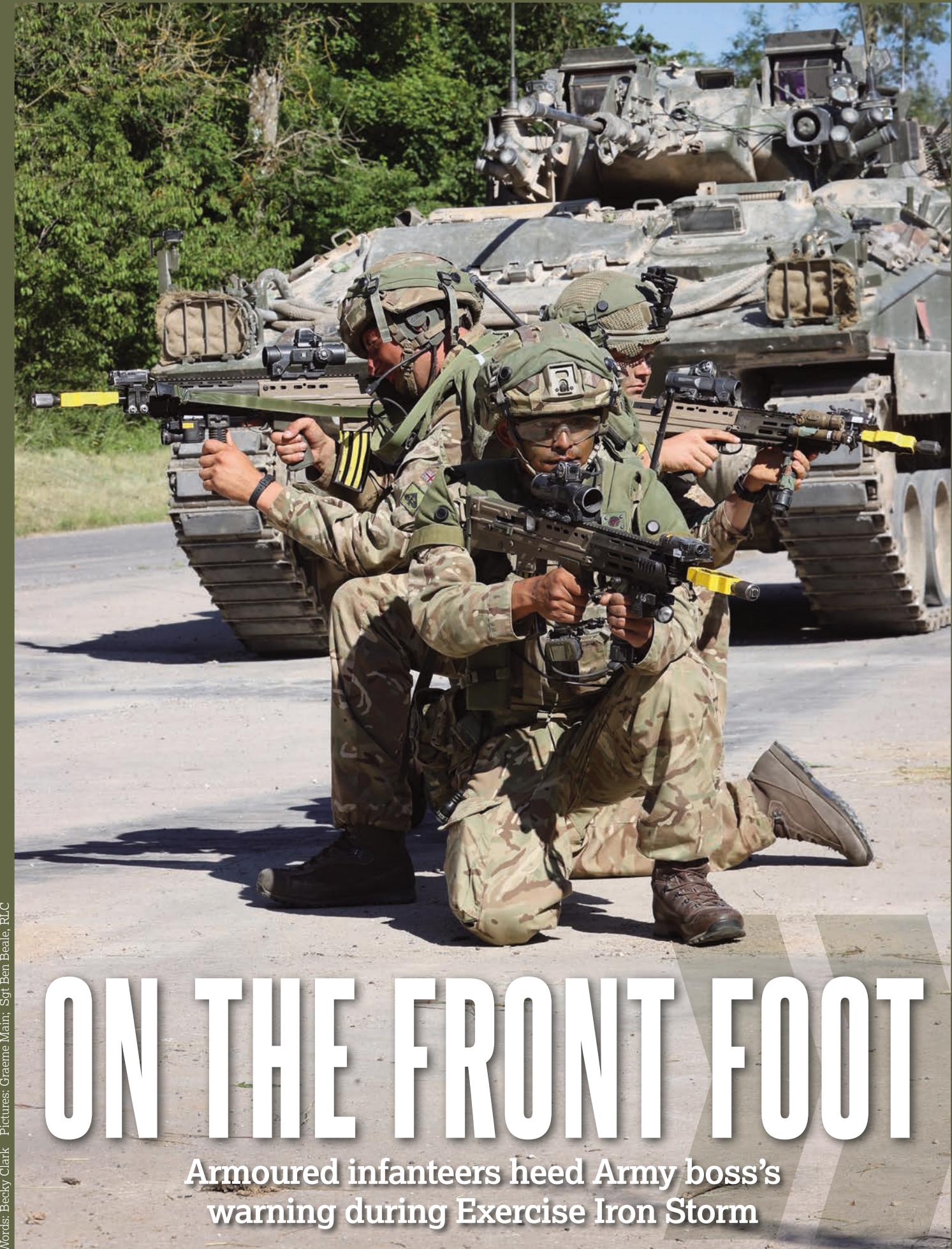


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ON THE FRONT FOOT

Armoured infantry heed Army boss's warning during Exercise Iron Storm



»

WITH the conflict in Ukraine entering its sixth month, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Patrick Sanders has been clear what British troops must do to meet the threat posed by Russia.

Speaking at Rusi's Land Warfare Conference last month (page 7), the senior officer said commanders at all levels, from the top brass down to the most junior NCO, must engage in a "generational effort" to put the Service on a war-footing and be ready to defend democratic values.

And it was with those words echoing that members of the 1 Mercian Battlegroup embarked on the final stage of Exercise Iron Storm – a three-month journey that took them from Germany to Wales and finally Salisbury Plain in preparation for a stint on the UK's Lead Armoured Task Force.

As of now they are held at 40 days' notice to deploy anywhere in the world, and the package was their chance to demonstrate their combat readiness ahead of the assignment.

As Maj Tony Bryant (pictured above), Company Commander Zulu Company, First Fusiliers, explained, two live-firing phases at Castlemartin and virtual drills on Sennelager's combined arms tactical trainer had upped in complexity until the formation reconverged in Wiltshire to show its progress.

"Fatigue does set in but that is realistic of the combat environment," the officer said.

"But whilst it's hard, it's a phenomenal opportunity to do combined arms manoeuvre.

"As we've been working, we've seen gains in our fitness





and ability to stay on task longer, which is exactly what we train for.

“We all heard what CGS said, so I think we’re precisely where we need to be to try and achieve his aims. Everyone needs to be ready for the next challenge.”

That mantra applies to each and every one of the battlegroup’s constituent parts, from the Warrior-mounted Mercians and Fusiliers to the fire support elements, Challenger 2 crews from D Squadron, The King’s Royal Hussars, gunners, engineers, medics and logisticians.

And while the process of getting kit and personnel to the right place at the right time, across three different training areas, was a challenge in itself, the toughest test came during the field training phase, which pitched the formation against a free-thinking enemy over five missions.

Soldier looked on during an assault on Imber Village urban complex as the opposing forces threw in a host of curve balls to thwart the attackers – including lone gunmen and using civilians as human shields.

In a further complication, the thump of battle simulations rang out to signify a hit from indirect fire, resulting in military and civilian casualties.

The learning objective was clear – keeping a calm head in the most confusing of situations must become second nature at all levels of command.

“It opens your mind to what it is you’re going to be going up against in a war,” said Cpl Shane Thorp (RRF).

“We’re used to the ‘Afghan-isms’ of under-educated individual and guerrilla forces, but now the battle we would go into would be against doctrinally trained personnel.

“And we need to adapt our tactics so we understand what »



“
Everyone needs
to be ready
for the next
challenge
”

» we're doing in that kind of zone."

Speaking after falling foul of an enemy ambush, the 26-year-old section commander continued: "We got dropped off at the edge of a wood block and they had left a man out that we were supposed to spot, so we were tunnel-visioned into that firefight – and as we dismounted the rest of their manpower came out.

"It was a clever tactic and something we weren't anticipating. They used the trees to their advantage and the density made it really hard to identify them."

Spr John Silvester (RE) from 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron had been called away from obstacle crossing tasks to help out with the assault.

Fortunately, the 32-year-old Serviceman had completed his team medic course the day before the exercise because right away, he found himself in the middle of a casualty evacuation simulation.

"In less than 24 hours I was using what I'd learnt, helping the medic with breathing rate, pulse and checking the injured person's body," he said.

"I've done a bit of Fibua (fighting in built-up areas) but I haven't been as highly trained as the Infantry, so it's a case of following the marksmanship principles and listening to the section commander and 2iC.

"As you keep practising your skills get slicker – the most important thing is concentrating on what you need to be doing next and making sure you have the right kit for the task. The more you do it the quicker you get."

Taking responsibility for individual drills in this way was one of the key factors that directing staff like WO2 Peter Campbell-King (PWRR) was on the look-out for.

“
The opposition
can attack from
360-degrees
”



WHO'S WHO

The 1 Mercian Battlegroup is made up of A and Fire Support Companies from 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment; Zulu Company, First Fusiliers; D Squadron, The King's Royal Hussars; and members of 26 Engineer Regiment; 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery plus attached arms. The Brigade Support Group is led by 4 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps

TOOLED UP

Among its assets are Warrior armoured vehicles, Challenger 2 main battle tanks, engineering platforms including Titan, Trojan and Terrier, and AS90 guns



Along with colleagues from the Combat Ready Training Centre – which delivers battlegroup validation exercises in Sennelager and Salisbury Plain – the warrant officer was watching with a keen eye to make sure soldiers of all ranks were on point.

“It’s everything from the most basic skills right up to leadership,” he explained.

“In a Fibua situation like this they need to identify where the enemy is going to be defending from and go into every structure thinking they are going to be in there.

“People tend to fixate on one direction, but the opposition can attack from 360-degrees.

“You want them to have that wider perspective and visualisation of ‘what do I need to be doing now?’.

“Once you get the private soldiers doing that, then the corporals, the platoon sergeant and commander can think about the things they need to think about.

“It’s what makes the British Army elite – train as hard as possible and try and get every single ounce of energy from the junior NCOs all the way up.

“If everyone does their job correctly it makes everyone else’s job easy – and we fight easy.”

The 1 Mercian Battlegroup may have been in the right place at the right time when CGS made his hard-hitting comments, but it’s clear the message has been well received and understood by these personnel. And if that approach is replicated across the Service, those at the top of defence can feel reassured that this generation of soldiers will be up for the fight. ■

ADVENTUROUS

THIS TIME IT'S



TRAINING PERSONAL

Hub in central Germany puts its own stamp on AT »



Words: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN the Harz National Park replaced Canada's Rocky Mountains as the main hub of overseas AT earlier this year, soldiers could have been forgiven for feeling rather underwhelmed.

Waving goodbye to a spectacular, bucket-list destination – one that has created cherished memories for generations of troops – was denounced by many as yet more Army cost-cutting.

But with British battlegroup training now relocated to Germany – and increasing numbers of exercises focused on Eastern Europe – this is a shake-up that makes more sense by the day.

And for units looking to lose themselves in the great outdoors, Germany's beech and spruce covered hills are certainly no shoddy replacement.

Housed in a quaint old hunting lodge in the back of beyond (see page 46), the Army AT Wing Harz is located three hours east of Sennelager Training Area and 800m above sea level.

But what this small and unassuming building might lack in kerb appeal, it makes up for with a highly personalised version of adventurous training.

Adorned with old wooden furniture inside, and able to accommodate just 18 troops, this is a far cry from the mass-produced thrills offered up to 100-odd troops at a time in Trails End Camp.

And the homely feel continues inside, with home-cooked food and all other necessities provided by a tiny team of live-in permanent staff and locally employed civilians.

Week-long foundation courses are delivered to a maximum of three groups of six a time. Nordic skiing during the winter months and a choice of kayaking, open canoeing, mountain biking or rock climbing in the summer.

With a host of trails, reservoirs, climbing areas and an established biathlon route on the doorstep, daily travel is kept to minimum for those who check in.

According to the personnel that *Soldier* spoke to on a recent visit to Harz, this combination of tranquillity and low headcounts creates some refreshing breathing space away from the Army's institutionalised establishments, where troops can really throw themselves into improving their coping strategies and skills.

"We don't have brilliant Wi-Fi here, which sometimes shocks the guys and girls turning up," explained Maj Dougie Douglas (RAPTC), OC of the centre.

"But then they come downstairs, talk with each other and play a game of Uno instead.

"That sort of thing is usually great for getting some team-building going."

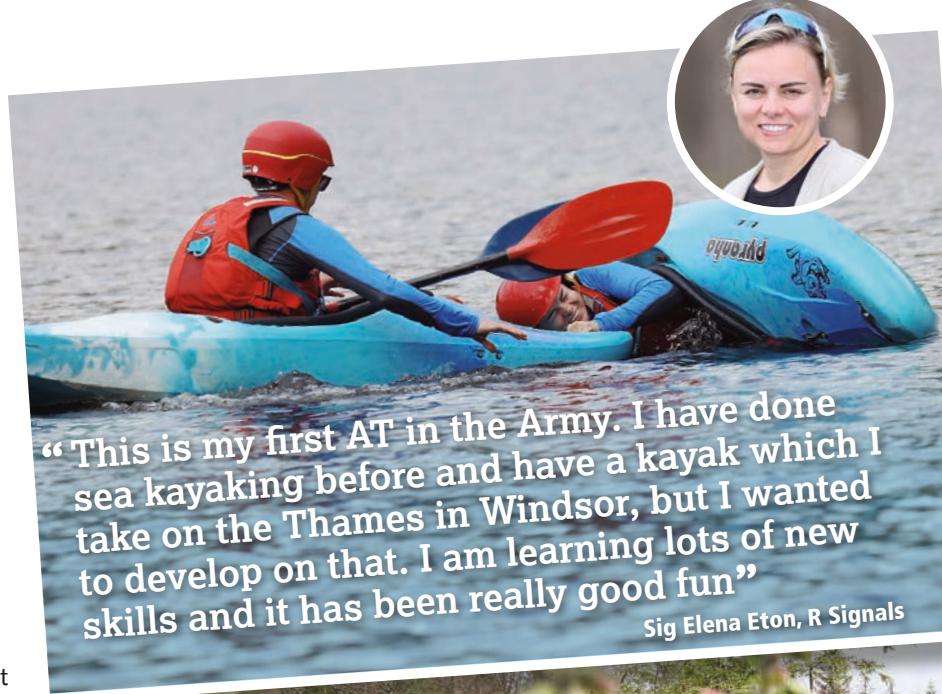
The officer continued: "At the start of the week soldiers write down on a Post-it their personal aims for the package.

"They then use that as their guide.

"Each course is given 40 hours of delivery, but it's up to the instructors to then tailor that time as they see fit."

This laid-back environment creates the ideal setting in which to introduce troops to the mental resilience techniques of "relaxation" and "positive self-talk" – just two of the coping tools that can spell the difference between success and failure, not just on AT but on future operations too.

Instructor Mike Llewellyn (ex-RAPTC) is one of those charged with imparting these lessons. ▶

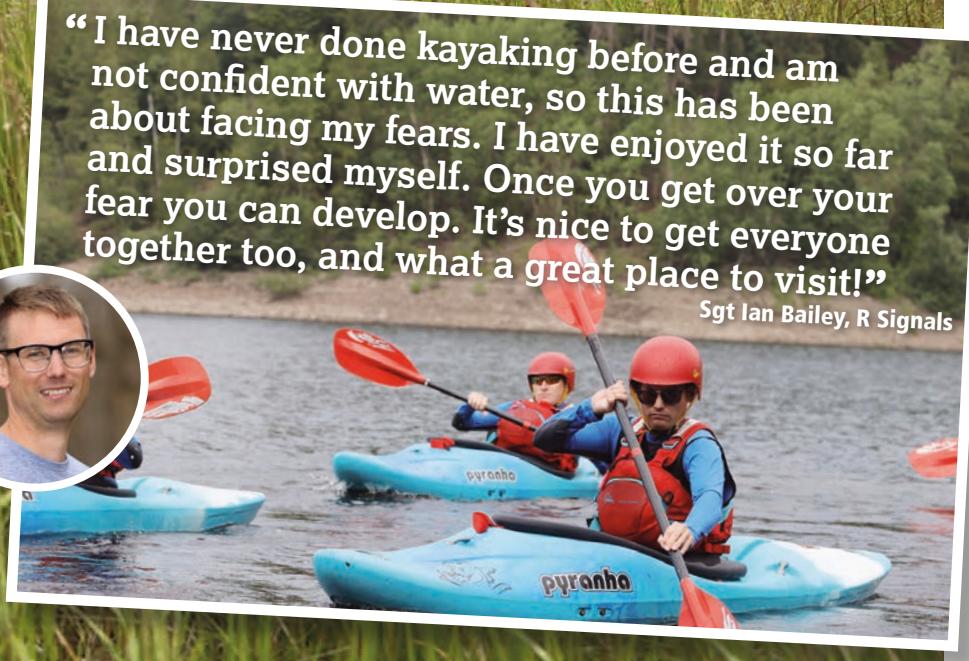


Sig Chris Capewell



“I have never done kayaking before and am not confident with water, so this has been about facing my fears. I have enjoyed it so far and surprised myself. Once you get over your fear you can develop. It’s nice to get everyone together too, and what a great place to visit!”

Sgt Ian Bailey, R Signals



“It’s definitely more of a personal experience than in other AT locations,” he explained.

“Even in Inverness there’s more of a classic military set-up. But it’s different here in our old hunting lodge.

“The syllabus is the same as elsewhere, but we tailor it to individuals. We are called instructors, but I prefer to use the term ‘coach’.

“An instructor might ask troops to do something but as a coach you have to break things down and tailor it.”

A fitting example of this approach – and the fruits it can bear – came recently when a corporal turned up on the mountain biking course unable to ride.

“He got on the bike, started to pedal and then fell off,” recalled Maj Douglas.

“We took him to one side and asked if he knew how to do it, and he said ‘no’.

“He had come on the package because he had taught his kids to ride a bike, but couldn’t do it himself. He wanted to learn.

“So we adapted the frame into a balance bike by taking the pedals off and making the seat lower.

“And by the end of the week he had pedalled six kilometres with his group.

“After that he went home, told his kids and bought himself a bike.

“We couldn’t give him the foundation qualification but how great is that!

“It brings a lump to my throat every time I tell that story.”

Regardless of any ambition in their chosen discipline, the common factor between all participants at Harz is that they get to learn more about their strengths and weaknesses – as



“I’ve been a Reservist for 35 years or so, and am a big fan of AT. It’s brilliant for doing things you have never done before – a great retention tool. But as I have gone higher up in rank I have come to appreciate what these activities show. It reveals strengths and weaknesses and puts soldiers out of their comfort zone into that ‘stretch’ zone. When you put people in a fight or flight situation, how do they react? It’s a quick and controlled way to understand how someone would respond in an operational scenario.”

Maj Paul Rodenhurst, R Signals

the Reservists we visited from 39 Signal Regiment revealed.

“I’m more of a follower than a leader so this is going to be a good chance for me to try and develop some leadership skills,” 42-year-old Sig Chris Plater said on day one of the mountain biking course.

“I should get a chance to lead a ride here, which will be good. The older you get, the harder things like that can become.”

Civil servant Sig Chris Capewell (shown page 45), who was on the kayaking course, agreed the visit had been an important opportunity to push himself further.

“I joined the military to get out of my comfort zone,” he said. “I have been waiting for two or three years to have this sort of experience – I think it’s one of the hallmarks of being in the Army Reserve.”

For ex-Regular forty-something SSgt Cath Charnley a week of kayaking gave her chance to keep pace with younger colleagues.

“It’s been really good,” she said.

“Obviously I’m double the age of some of the guys in the team, so this trip is all about making sure I don’t get old before my time.

“Ladies of a certain age don’t tend to put themselves under pressure. Stretching that comfort zone keeps you young.”

With Harz foundation packages almost booked up to the end of the summer, demand already seems to be outstripping supply.

But when they do get out here, troops will find the personal touch pays dividends later.

By taking risks and pushing themselves in peacetime, these soldiers will be able to dig deep and find new levels of strength in war.

In that way, the possibilities beyond Harz are endless. ■



IN NUMBERS

426

NUMBER OF
COURSE-TRAINED PERSONNEL
CURRENTLY GOING THROUGH
HARZ PER YEAR



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'Time to ration food waste'

ONA RECENT visit to a well-known training area, I happened to make use of a wheelie bin.

Upon opening it, I was staggered to find a whole bin-bag's worth of completely unused and in-date 24-hour ration packs.

I know they were edible as, so far, I've not died from eating some of them.

On chatting to training area staff across the UK, as I do in my duties, such waste seems to be widespread. I'm also led to believe that even if a ration pack is in-date and reusable, if it is discarded it must go to landfill.

Aside from the astonishing waste of money and the need to pay for its removal into the waste stream, there is the moral question of wasting food, especially the meat from animals which have died to go into our rations.

Not that long ago it was unheard of for rations to be disposed of; they were either swapped or kept for adventurous training or other low-level exercises – or ended up in various kitchen cupboards. They certainly weren't wasted.

What is being done to educate our officers and soldiers about waste and the moral unacceptability of discarding food?

Also, what efforts are being made to ensure that any packs not required can be centralised and given to those needing it, such as other users, cadets or even the homeless, rather than buried?

The waste of small-arms ammunition is equally staggering but that's for next time. – **Maj Nigel Prescott, RLC**

Nina Veremalua, SO2 Food Services, Field Army Headquarters, replies:

Operational ration packs are constrained by the same rules as all other foodstuffs.

They must be stored within correct temperature parameters and consumed prior to the use-by date. The latter is dictated by data embossed on each box.

Within the MoD these conditions are managed and monitored by defence and Army supply chain staff. Once the contents are decanted from the box, they effectively lose supply chain surety.

As a result, the MoD cannot donate or gift these items because there is no longer any guarantee the food is fit for consumption.

Doing so could open the organisation to legal challenge if something were to go amiss.

The correct action, therefore, is to place unwanted, decanted items in an appropriate bin for disposal.

You might be interested to know the ration pack range will be updated in the near future, with an emphasis on sustainability, choice, and configuration matched to both high and low tempo activity.

This will hopefully reduce the volume, weight and number of items discarded from the current packs, while maintaining or even broadening that all-important individual choice.

“
There is a moral question
”

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

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RAC 22-6	2 Oct - 13 Oct 22	Application deadline: 2 Sep 22
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SENDING THE WRONG SIGNAL?

● WITH all Army jobs being made available to everyone, why do the Royal Signals feel they can still turn down applications for 299 Signal Squadron (Special Communications)?

They only accept Royal Signals applicants and there are nationality restrictions on who can apply.

This is discrimination, surely. Why is this still in place?

I understand why you should have security clearance to join, but I already have developed vetting and still can't get in. I feel they are just being lazy by rejecting soldiers not born in the UK.

They are also cutting out a massive part of the Army who could bring a lot to this unit and even blend in better in certain places because they have language and cultural awareness skills that are hard to teach.

In the current Army no job should be out of reach to any soldier. — Name and address supplied

Lt Col Richard Eaton, Chief of Staff, Campaigns and Internal Communications, Army Headquarters, replies: Due to the sensitive nature of 299 Signal Squadron's work, the Royal Signals have replied to the author of this letter personally with a detailed explanation of the unit's recruitment situation.

Anyone wishing to join the outfit has to transfer into the Royal Signals first, although the squadron is well recruited and, currently, does not need to look outside the corps for additional staff or talent.

“How can this be justified”



‘Allowances need a shove’

I HAVE just seen new allowance rates detailed in JSP 752 and cannot believe my eyes.

In the middle of a cost of living crisis it seems the Army has decided to increase hardly any of them at all – and the stagnation of get you home (GYH) rates, in particular, will really put a dent in all of our pockets.

I put around 160 litres of fuel into my car every month for my commute to and from work.

The cost of diesel has risen, on average, 50 pence per litre in the last few months alone.

The allowance means I am eligible for about £217 a month but my monthly fuel bill has risen from £208 to £288 in the past year.

That means I'm more than £700 per year worse off, but there's been no increase in the allowance to reflect that.

How can this be justified? — Sgt Stephen Davies, RA

Col Louise Green, Army Pay Colonel, replies: The Armed Forces pay review body report for 2022 was published last month.

All soldiers and officers up to brigadier will get a pay rise of 3.75 per cent, backdated to 1 April. The increases will be in August's pay packets, including the back pay.

At the same time, a number of allowances have been increased.

From the start of this month, the GYH (travel) and home to duty travel (HDT) rates will be increased by seven per cent.

The HDT (pedal cycle) allowance rate was increased from 15p

to 20p per mile from April 25 and, additionally, the personal contribution, whether from public or private accommodation, was reduced to one mile.

Finally, from 1 July, HDT manual rates were adjusted to allow 25 pence per mile to be claimed up to 10,000 miles per annum.

This is expected to support Regulars and Reserves travelling greater distances less frequently while commuting.

Full details of the pay increase and the rises in allowances were published in Army briefing notes through July.

Full details are available in the Armed Forces Remuneration group on Defence Connect.

Please use this QR code to link to more information.



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CAREERS

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The Open University's Disabled Veterans' Scholarship Fund is again open for applications this year. The initiative offers 50 free study places at the academic body to former personnel that have a disability or injury resulting from their military service – including mental health conditions. See www.open.ac.uk



COMPETITIONS

June 2022 HOAY winner: Sgt Adam Gee, Cawdor Barracks, Pembrokeshire.

Spinelines winner: Wendy Sparrow, Marlborough Lines, Andover.



SEARCHLINE

2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment will be amalgamated and removed from the line in September 2022, under the Integrated Review. Past and present mess members are requested to contact regimental HQ ASAP to arrange collection of leaving presentation items. Contact QM Maj Jase Peach on 07500 065898.



WELFARE

Your one-stop-shop for calling in support

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

Army HIVE

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

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families. 0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 783 0334

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes alternative working arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in

the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regular personnel can find out how flexible service impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

forcessensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

A charity that can help talk through your options and give you clear advice on how to take back control 0808 808 4000

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111

stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK 0808 8020 133

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

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

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and

their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120
rc-pers-jshao-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797
spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

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

INJURY/SICKNESS

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

Samaritans

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

samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080

britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

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

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393
mind.org

NHS
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Samaritans
116 123
samaritans.org

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

Togetherall
A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to

improve mental health
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn
Safety and support for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking
02394 216 816
aurorand.org.uk

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

Relate
UK provider of relationship support
relate.org.uk



DIARY

August 5-7: Gloucestershire Vintage and Country Extravaganza, South Cerney Airfield, Cirencester. Free admission for Second World War veterans. Adult tickets £7-£10, under fives free. Visit glosvintageextravaganza.co.uk

August 13-14: Combined Ops

Military and Air Show at Headcorn Aerodrome, Kent. All Service personnel and veterans with a valid ID can attend free. Visit headcornevents.co.uk



REUNIONS

Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies, The Wessex Regiment's 75th reunion lunch on September 24 at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Contact Jim Cooper on 023 9281 6165.

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 964



TEN details have been changed in this picture of the Armed Forces in Scotland taking part in an Act of Loyalty parade for the Queen at Holyrood Palace to mark her Platinum Jubilee. Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 964, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your contact details, including email address, by August 31.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first four correct entries drawn after the closing date will each win a



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The winner's name will appear in the October issue. All the usual competition rules apply.



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CONTACT US

ARMY SPORTS LOTTERY
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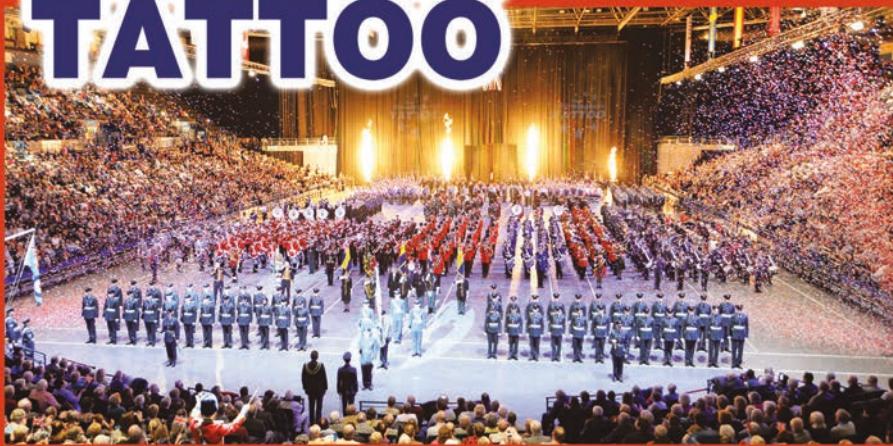

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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

Sniper Elite V

Fight against the Nazis continues, round by round

➤ SNIPING has found something of a special place among the video game community in the decades since the first-person shooter appeared on our screens.

The early PlayStation generation – in the *Medal of Honor* titles – were among the first to engage with the discipline in the boots of OSS special agent Jimmy Patterson.

There was always a deeply satisfying feeling at squatting beyond the range of a pixelated Nazi henchman and squeezing off rounds.

Then online gaming further popularised sharpshooting, with internet addicts becoming the scourge of opponents in PC titles such as *Viet Cong II*. More casual opponents found themselves cut down by veteran gunmen.

Now on the latest consoles, console digital marksmanship has been refreshed



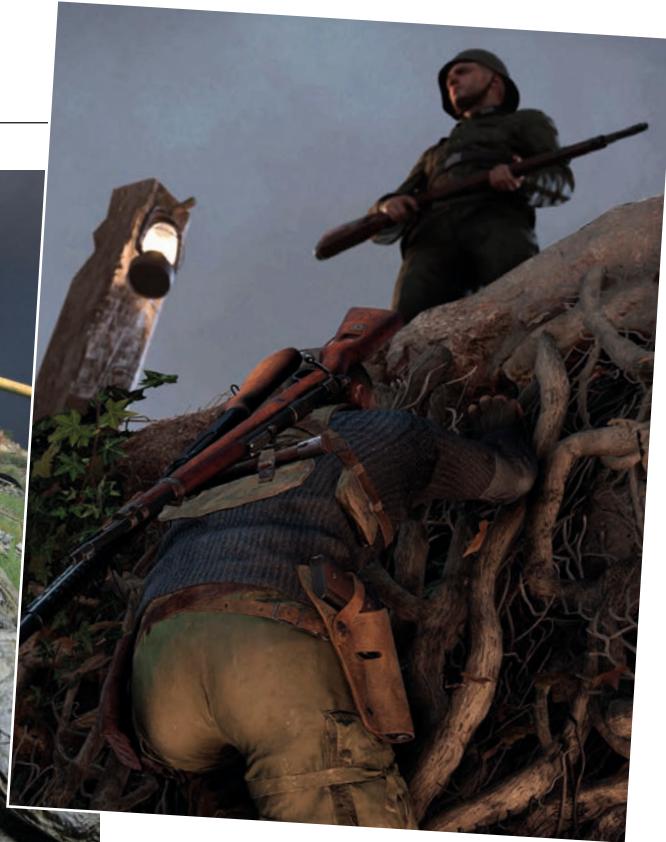
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BOOKS

P60

MOVIES

GAMES



digital marksmanship has been refreshed again in the latest instalment of the *Sniper Elite* series – the fifth iteration of which plunges players into the late stages of the Second World War.

After the most recent outings set against the backdrop of North Africa and the Mediterranean, the new chapter opens closer to home – with a US Ranger op to weaken German coastal fortifications in Brittany.

The covert mission requires players – as they reassert the role of legendary Allied sharpshooter Karl Fairburne – to rendezvous with the French underground, where a devastating secret Nazi project comes to light.

Dealing with the threat, and ultimately paving the way for the D-Day invasion, requires planning and manoeuvre acumen as well as marksmanship skills.

The four previous titles in the line-up have proved unfailingly popular with gamers – and *Sniper Elite V* squarely maintains the integrity of the series.

Missions are non-linear, allowing them to be attempted in a number of different ways to suit a player's style – whether it is all guns blazing or extreme stealth.

Period weapons are also detailed and customisable as the levels progress, with plenty of useful kit and collectibles throughout.

There are some varied tactical options, too – objects in the virtual world can be booby trapped while noise distractions such as vehicle

engines are a useful way of moving around without being detected by the opposition.

As in previous titles, the game mechanics continue to feature slow-motion sequences of successful shots on the enemy.

It gives the gameplay a cinematic feel as well as encouraging players to act with greater finesse in their shooting rather than going out spraying and praying.

But it is the highly original multiplayer arena in which the game excels in originality. A feature called "Axis Invasion" allows protagonists to assume the role of a sniper hunter – a la the movie *Enemy at the Gates* – tracking down rivals in their solo missions.

It provides an added edge, as the quarry does not know if their opposite number has them in the crosshairs.

Decent graphics and slick gameplay – plus rapid loading times on the Xbox Series S version *Soldier* sampled – are the icing on the cake, meaning *Sniper Elite V* delivers on every front.

Well paced, visually pleasing and with action aplenty, it has again taken the genre forward. ■

VERDICT:

Set your sights on this one



REVIEW: SGT BEN MAHER, RLC

GAMES RELEASES

Zorro – The Chronicles For Switch



WHEN television was confined to four channels, ageing reruns of *Zorro* episodes used to be a staple filler of the children's school holiday line-up. And this video game incarnation of the Latin bandit, launched in time for the summer break, squarely has youngsters in mind. A cartoonish, third-person outing, the title is broadly similar to *Assassin's Creed* without the adult content and casts players as either the outlaw or his sister in a battle against the corrupt establishment. It's good – and very clean – fun for its target market.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

Tour de France 2022 For PC and consoles



WITH competitors hitting the road for Europe's most celebrated cycle race as this issue was in production, the latest incarnation of the virtual event dropped on *Soldier's* desk. And it is a familiar offering – the package is broadly similar to last year's version although new features such as greater bike damage and rider injury in the event of mishaps add enhanced realism. A mode called "Race of the Moment" also allows players to take part in weekly challenges for a world ranking. With all stages of the race to ride, *Tour de France* is fun and will no doubt please fans.

Sgt Ben Maher, RLC



● *God's Vindictive Wrath* by Charles Cordell is out now, published by Myrmidon Books and priced £8.99. Two per cent of royalties will be donated to Armed Forces charities

For more info visit charlescordell.com

PICK OF THE MONTH:

God's Vindictive Wrath

Soldier-turned-author reveals inspiration behind debut offering

MODERN themes of tribalism, culture wars and extremism combine against the backdrop of the English Civil War in this historical novel from a former Royal Artillery officer.

Writing under the pen name Charles Cordell, he told *Soldier* all about it.

Q&A:

What's the book about?

It is set in the first three weeks of the English Civil War, opening with the carnage of the Battle of Edgehill and ending at the Battle of Turnham

Green on the outskirts of London. Ultimately, it is about how and why we fight. There are no real heroes and no complete villains. Its voices are those of ordinary men and women facing each other in the chaos of conflict.

What inspired you to write the book?

I've always loved history. I think good historical fiction can be a great way to reflect on our own situation, as well as being a good way to learn. I started to write in a period of frustration – after almost back-to-back operational tours and as my Army career hit a speed bump. I looked for something else I could do, something different. It was good to have an alternative, creative focus.

How much research did you have to do?

I felt I had to do justice to the period, so the book is as accurate and authentic as I could make it. So yes, this involved a lot of research, but I loved it. I also got up from the desk and walked the battlefields. Matching first-hand

accounts to the ground was one of the best bits. More recently, I had fun firing a cannon – absolutely brilliant.

How has your military career influenced the novel?

Much of the writing draws on my own experiences, particularly operational deployments and time spent in overseas posts tackling extremism. It is realistic – I don't believe in trivialising violence. The more I studied the 17th century, the more I realised I was seeing the same issues and situations driving conflict today. Rapid population growth coupled with climate change led to collapsing living standards and decreased life expectancy. People turned to more extreme political and religious ideas for answers. Conflicts raged across the globe from Japan, through China and Eurasia to the Americas.

Soldier to novelist – has it been an easy move?

It has been a steep learning curve. For an outsider, the literary industry is frustratingly opaque – filled with joy and



BOOKS

➤ bitter disappointment. I would implore anyone thinking of entering it to do their research first. The average author earns surprisingly little. Huge numbers of very good writers don't get published. Many good books receive no marketing support and go unread. Ultimately, there is a great deal of luck involved, so I feel very fortunate.

Will there be a sequel?

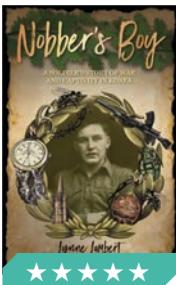
I am busy writing book two of the *Divided Kingdom* series. If this one goes well, it should be published early in 2023. ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



Picture: NAM

BOOK RELEASES



Nobber's Boy
By Lynne Lambert

FAMILY histories often throw up fascinating, previously untold tales of war, as this account demonstrates with aplomb. Based on the author's interviews with her uncle, Pte Davy Gardiner, it describes the harrowing experiences of

"The Glosters" during and after the Battle of the Imjin River. Facing 50,000 Chinese troops, the young National Serviceman and his colleagues fought a desperate last stand to prevent the city of Seoul falling into Communist hands, only to endure two years as prisoners of war. Through Gardiner's recollections, and his niece's painstaking research, the book brings the horror of conflict and deprivations of captivity vividly to life, acting as a fitting tribute to the men who served in a war that is largely forgotten in this country, but who are remembered as heroes to this day in South Korea. An under-the-radar gem that is well worth getting hold of.

Becky Clark, Soldier

★★★★★

PICK OF THE MONTH:



Thirteen Lives

Ron Howard brings 2018 cave rescue mission to big screen

➤ A LOT has happened to cave diver Connor Roe (REME, pictured below) since he helped to save the lives of a junior football team in Thailand four years ago.

He got himself promoted to corporal, posted to a new role as section commander and, once Covid restrictions eased, enjoyed some fresh challenges doing the hobby he loves.

But it is the revolving door of speaking engagements and interviews since his subterranean struggle in 2018 which has taken the Serviceman by surprise.

By his own admission, he had expected life to continue as normal once the adrenalin of the rescue operation – and the international media it attracted – finally subsided.

But a short reminder of the facts explains why public fascination around this story has endured.

For 17 days Roe, and 100 other cave divers from across the world, descended on Thailand's Chiang Rai province to try and free 12 players and their coach from the complex Tham Luang Nang Non system.

The team had taken an impromptu

trip several kilometres inside, before getting cut off by unseasonable rain which led to fast rising water levels.

The tale that follows is one that no movie director could make up.

But thanks to Cpl Roe and his colleagues, who have been advising the creators of two separate films about the rescue, no fictionalising was required.

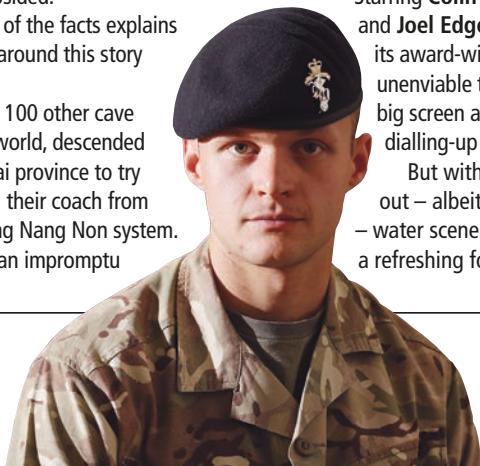
The first offering, *The Rescue*, is a National Geographic docu-film released onto Disney+ last year.

Using compelling interviews with all the key players, including Roe, it explains how the cave rescue took an unorthodox turn when it was decided that the only way to remove the boys was by drugging them first.

And now this month, American director **Ron Howard** (*Apollo 13*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Da Vinci Code*) releases his version of events onto Prime Video (August 5) in the form of a two-hour thriller called *Thirteen Lives*.

Starring **Colin Farrell**, **Vigo Mortensen** and **Joel Edgerton**, the feature gave its award-winning director the unenviable task of bringing to the big screen an event that needed no dialling-up whatsoever.

But with some carefully thought-out – albeit thoroughly unpleasant – water scenes, a haunting score and a refreshing focus on the sacrifices



MOVIES



of the local population, this movie manages to enhance the dramatic real-life story pretty successfully.

Described by the region's then governor as a "war with water", the cave operation was certainly at odds with Mother Nature as much as it was logic – a fact Howard (shown above) seems almost fixated on in this title, with frequent scenes of uncontrollable weather and overbearing landscapes.

It is a side to the operation that Cpl Roe recalls well.

"One of the things you quickly start to understand is that Mother Nature always wins," he tells *Soldier*.

"And as we know in the military, too, if you are battling against her you are probably not going to come off best.

"The mission effort was massive, across the board – and the divers were just one small cog in a huge machine."

This was a fact made all-too clear with the loss of former Thai Navy Seal Saman Gunan – a poignant moment that is treated sensitively in the film.

And in addition to all the breath-holding, *Thirteen Lives* also encourages its audience to consider Thailand's cultural and belief systems, which gives the whole thing some welcome spiritual depth.

Throw in some interesting questions about how rules must sometimes be broken to succeed, and there is certainly plenty to keep a military audience entertained.

That said, it is hard to imagine how this title is going to enhance the weekend of anyone with a caving exped to Alum Pot in the diary.

Although it is only rated PG, some of the underwater scenes are not for the faint-hearted – or claustrophobic.

It might not be as compelling as National Geographic's original first-hand accounts and footage, but Howard's offering certainly breathes new life into the term "immersive cinema".

A thought-provoking watch for leaders of any sort, or for those in awe of Mother Nature and the challenge she can pose to human survival. ■

VERDICT:

Excruciating and moving in equal parts; a good portrayal of a remarkable moment



On Prime Video:
August 5

DIGITAL RELEASES

Clean

Out now



CLEAN



THIS is a dark and gritty story about a man named Clean, played by **Adrien Brody**. Trying to make good and seek redemption for his previous misdemeanours, the recovering addict is a

dustbin man by day and handyman by night. However, a chance encounter where he stops the gang rape of a teenager leaves him on a collision course with the local mafia don. While this film certainly isn't *John Wick* or *Taken*, the realism of the fighting requires a certain amount of admiration and there is definitely a story to be taken away, even if that story is, beware – your binman might be a secret ninja.

Scott Roberts, ex-Rifles

Prizefighter: The Life of Jem Belcher

Out now



PRIZEFIGHTER



BOXING has been a movie mainstay since the dawn of cinema – from Robert de Niro in *Raging Bull* to Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky* series. This latest outing

returns to the genesis of modern pugilism in the 1800s and the story of early English champion Jem Belcher.

Matt Hookings, also responsible for the script, ably carries the lead in this rags-to-riches tale, with decent performances from **Ray Winstone** as his trainer Bill Warr and **Russell Crowe** – briefly cast as the champ's ring legend grandfather Jack Slack. It's a passable biopic and will fill a couple of hours but do not expect much on the originality front. *Prizefighter* also includes every boxing flick cliche imaginable – from tiresome training montages to sage musings on the noble art of fighting and over-long, grinding in-ring scenes.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier

NEED TO KNOW



Caving courage: The interview *Soldier* ran with Connor Roe in the wake of the rescue back in 2018

REVIEW: SARAH GOLDSMITH, SOLDIER

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MULTI-eventer OCdt Hayley Perrin led the charge for the Army women at the Inter-Services Athletics Championships. Victories in the long jump, high jump and 100-metre hurdles helped her team to glory – a feat matched by the men's squad. Read a full report on pages 68-69...



Pictures: Michael Wincott Photography



THOMAS EMBRACES CHALLENGE OF NATIONAL STAGE

SUPERBIKE rider Sgt Stephen Thomas (AGC (RMP)) is preparing for a hectic second half to his debut season in the Quattro Group Supersport 600 Championship.

A support class to British Superbikes, the competition represents a challenging step up for the soldier, who wanted a new test after excelling at club level in recent years.

This month he will line up at Thruxton Circuit for what will feel like a home event given its close proximity to where he lives, and he is hoping another midfield finish will be on the cards.

There is also the prospect of some strong Army support as the track is in easy distance of Tidworth, Bulford and Larkhill.

"We have not raced there before so it is a step into the unknown," Thomas told *SoldierSport* in the build-up to the race weekend, which starts on August 12.

"It is a track that has the

second fastest average speed in Europe and it eats tyres, but I'm really looking forward to it.

"Everyone will be in the same boat as nobody is allowed to test there, so it feels like the playing field is being levelled."

A potential narrowing of the grid could prove crucial to his chances of success given the finances involved in the sport.

As an independent outfit, the Tommo 21 Racing team – which also features mechanic SSgt Jason Markham (RHA) – lacks the backing of major manufacturers such as Kawasaki or Yamaha, meaning every penny counts when it comes to performance on the track.

"At club level the budgets are more controlled," Thomas explained. "But when you step up there are a smattering of professional teams in the paddock that are supported by those big factories."

"We are doing what we can and



**"WE ARE
DOING
WHAT
WE CAN"**

it is a challenge, but it is what you expect when competing at the top national level.

"We did two wild card races in this series last year and were finishing just inside the top 15 for the class. We have had comparable results this season which, with 30 to 35 people on the grid, is really good."

A gearbox issue meant preparations for the opening round at Silverstone were severely hampered, but the Serviceman still managed to finish 14th and 15th in the weekend's two races.

An engine blowout then scuppered his hopes at Alton Park before further midfield placings followed at Donington.

"Being a small team, we do not have the time or finances to do regular testing between events," he continued.

"It means we cannot afford to have any issues on a race weekend as it cuts down on our

practice and track time.

"There are six rounds in total left, and we will do five. I'm just looking for consistent track time and, fingers crossed, there are no more problems with the bike."

"Once I get that we can think about regular top-15 places – anything inside the top ten would be amazing."

"The paddock at this level is very different and the fact we have two longer practice sessions, as opposed to six shorter ones, means I have time to sit down and mull things over."

"Before, I'd be on the track for 15 minutes and would then rush in for more fuel and tyres, with 45 minutes until the next session."

"Now I can relax a bit more and analyse things properly. We are trying to find half a second here, or two tenths there, and the devil is in the detail."

The racer said he hopes to have a new machine in place for next year to further help the cause and has thanked the many supporters who have helped to date – including the Army Sport Control Board, his chain of command and the Army Motorcycle Road Race Team.

"It helps me get time off work and provides me with on-duty status to get to events," Thomas explained. "These are the little things that all come together in terms of the bigger picture."

"It is not cheap and without such support it gets to the point where it is just not feasible." ■



THOMAS IN NUMBERS

ROUNDS
IN THIS
SEASON'S
QUATTRO
GROUP
SUPERSPORT
600 SERIES

11

CHAMPIONSHIP
WINS IN HIS
CAREER TO
DATE IN THE
THUNDERSPORT
SPORTSMAN
AND
PRENATIONAL
CLASSES

2

HIGHEST
PLACE
ACHIEVED
SO FAR
IN THIS
CAMPAIGN
- IN THE
OPENING
ROUND AT
SILVERSTONE

14

DAY RACE
WEEKEND
BEING
STAGED AT
THE BRANDS
HATCH
CIRCUIT AS
THIS ISSUE
WENT TO
PRESS

3



WIMBLEDON TEST AWAITS

THE Service's top tennis players will take to the courts of Wimbledon this month as the battle for Inter-Services glory resumes.

The soldiers dominated on the hallowed turf last season as they recorded one of the biggest victories in recent history and come into the event on the back of the Army Championships in Aldershot.

Top seed and defending champion Sgt Chloe Pike (Int Corps) looked in fine form ahead of the military showdown as a 6-0 6-0 win over Lt Col Madeline Lewis (Int Corps) saw her secure the women's title.

However, there was disappointment in the men's draw as Army team stalwart Maj Ben Rogers (RA) had to withdraw from the final due to injury, with Pte Marco Wright (Para, pictured) and Lt Harry Randle (RA) playing an exhibition match instead.

"Marco is a former professional who was

progressing in the ITF Futures circuit but could not quite break into the higher levels of the game," Lt Col (Retd) Ian Haigs, secretary of the Army Tennis Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"So he is a great player to have involved."

"It was a relatively easy win for Chloe and while the turnout was generally okay, it could have been better – particularly in the women's competition."

"The standard of tennis was good, and that can put people off. Those at the top are difficult to beat but we have under-25 and novice competitions for players coming through the ranks."

"The men's and women's teams will have week-long training camps before Wimbledon and we are expecting a tougher test this year, with the Royal Navy having their top people back."

"We will have strong squads available and we are optimistic we can win again." ■



REDS RUNNING HOT

SPEAKING after the latest win, skipper Lt Connie Cant (RA, pictured below) told *SoldierSport* the team continues to go from strength to strength.

"There is a bit of a gulf between ourselves and the RAF and Navy but they are putting in a lot of hard work and have come a long way," she added.

"It is the Army's to lose. We were missing three players from our starting 11 but performed without them. We are now in a place where team selection is tough and people have to be on top of their game."

"We never go in thinking it will be easy and a couple of quick wickets early on can make all the difference. But if we play to our ability, we know we can do well."

The Reds were in action in the Inter-Services 40-over competition as this issue went to press and were due to lock horns with domestic T20 champions Southern Vipers in the build-up.

"It is an exciting fixture," Cant continued. "It is the biggest challenge of our season and it will be a useful marker to see where the team is at."

"We have been winning comfortably this year and this will highlight areas we can improve. We cannot rest on our laurels."



TITLE WIN PROVES ROUTINE WORK



IT WAS business as usual for the Army women at the Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships as emphatic wins over their military rivals saw them cruise to yet another title in Arundel.

Having established a position of dominance in recent seasons, the Reds headed into the competition as heavy favourites, and they justified their billing with a comprehensive defeat of the Royal Air Force in their opening match.

Batting first, the soldiers posted 166 runs for the first wicket as sisters Lt Connie Cant (RA) and LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) ruthlessly targeted the opposition attack.

The former struck 11 boundaries as she top scored with a rapid-fire 89 from 63 deliveries, while her sibling posted 67 from 51 balls.

Both perished late on but their efforts helped the Army close their innings on 200-2 – a total which was never under threat in a run chase that lacked

the intensity, and belief, needed for victory.

WO1 Lisa Newburn (RAMC) was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 3-18 and there were wickets for Cpl Abbie Sullivan (QARANC) and Cfn Shema Wright (REME) as their rivals limped to a below-par 80-5.

It was a case of role reversal in the soldiers' clash with the Royal Navy as the bowlers laid the foundations for another comfortable win.

Wright proved to be the headline act as she claimed 4-20, while Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS)) and Sullivan took two wickets apiece.

Newburn and Sgt Amanda Potgieter (REME) added further scalps as the Senior Service were dismissed for just 69.

Vaggers (23 not out) and Potgieter (34 not out, pictured above) then assumed the responsibility of opening the Army's innings and they raced to their target in the seventh over to complete a ten-wicket victory and seal the title. ■



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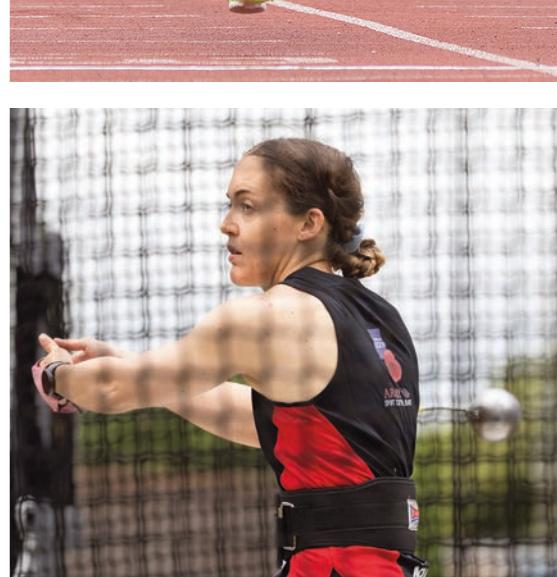
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REDS' DOUBLE DELIGHT

ARMY ATHLETES TOP THE SERVICE STANDINGS AS NEW-LOOK SQUADS DELIVER IN STYLE

THE Army posted two new competition records as they downed a rejuvenated Royal Air Force outfit to reign supreme at the Inter-Services Athletics Championships.

A monster throw of 62.67 metres saw Pte Keston James (RLC, pictured right) set a new best in the men's javelin, while Capt Helen Broadbridge (AGC (ALS)) celebrated her last-minute call-up by setting a new benchmark of 49.99 metres in the women's hammer – an effort that was nine metres further than her nearest rival.

James' record-breaking victory formed part of a consistent scoring effort from the men's team on the track and in the field – despite the best efforts of the RAF's multi-event star Cpl Ryan Bonifas.

The airman enjoyed a slender triumph over Sgt Osman Muskwe (RAPTC) in the pole vault and claimed gold in the long jump, high jump and 110-metre hurdles to cap a sensational individual display.

While Muskwe failed to top the podium, he offered welcome versatility as he also took silver in the shot put, long jump and discus, while further points were added with a fourth-place finish in the high jump.

Flt Lt Michael Measter celebrated a sprint double for the RAF with wins in the 100 and 200 metres. The Army finished second in both courtesy of Pte Kwame Twumasi-Tawiah (RLC) and Spr Mavric Pamphile (RE).

The latter then triumphed in the 400 metres and distance runner Cpl Dean Williamson (REME) tasted success in the 1,500 and 5,000 metres.

A leap of 12.66 metres saw LCpl Wendell Modeste (RLC) pip teammate Spr Dominique Webb (RE) to the triple jump title and there was another one-two for the soldiers in the javelin as Cpl Eion Brown (RE) finished behind James.

Maj Jake Mathews (AMS) secured the shot put honours, while also taking bronze in the hammer – an event that was dominated by Sgt Ben Jones (RE) thanks to an effort of 43.08 metres. Mathews added another bronze in the discus.

With the competition proving tight the Army cemented their place at the head of the field with successes in the 4x100 and 4x400-metre relays to finish on a team total of 163 points – 15 clear of the RAF. The Royal Navy trailed at the back on 75.

"Credit to the RAF, they came out in force," men's team manager Capt Carl McMullen (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"Ryan Bonifas is a national standard decathlete and we had to cancel out their advantage – thankfully Osman could do that.

"We lost a lot of athletes to exercises and other responsibilities and had 21 new faces in the team. We were not sure about our depth of talent and started quite shakily, but they pulled it out of the bag.

"The younger guys who came in faced some tough battles, with events like the 200 and 400 metres being decided on the line – they could have gone either way.

"It is difficult to pick out individual performances. We didn't have as many first places as expected but we were taking seconds and thirds – it was a real team effort.

"If we didn't have that all-

important second athlete in certain events the RAF would have beaten us."

The Army women had multi-event stars of their own in the shape of OCdt Hayley Perrin and Broadbridge – who only joined the team on the day before the competition – and both stood up to deliver big points for the cause.

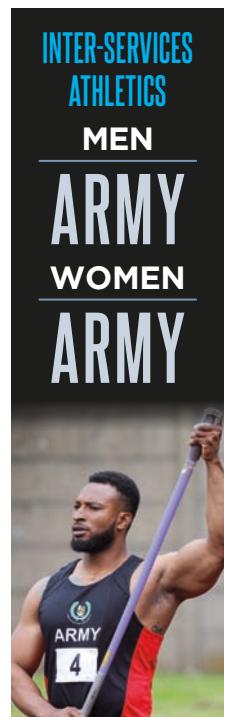
The former triumphed in the long jump, high jump and 100-metre hurdles, while the latter proved to be a formidable athlete in the throwing events as she added discus gold to her success in the hammer, as well as claiming a silver medal in the shot put.

LCpl Jess Williams (RAMC) trailed Broadbridge in the hammer to seal an Army one-two, with Pte Megan Fry (RAMC) following Perrin home in the hurdles.

The Reds dominated the sprint disciplines as the dynamic pairing of Spr Jessie Vakaloloma (RE) and Pte Darcelle Francis (RLC) finished first and second in both the 100 and 200 metres, while the impressive Lt Laura Clark (REME) topped the standings in the 400 metres.

As in the men's competition, the Army claimed victory in both relay races to finish on 147 points, with the RAF on 125 and Navy 90.

On the back of their winning performances, Clark, Perrin, Williamson and Pamphile were named in the UK Armed Forces squad that will compete at the national championships. ■



INTER-SERVICES
ATHLETICS

MEN

ARMY

WOMEN

ARMY

RUNNERS EYE RACE RETURN



Picture: Cat Goyn

UK ARMED Forces athletes return to action at the International Inter-Area Road Relay Championships this month.

The 5x1-mile event, which is being staged at the Brownlee Centre in Leeds, will see the military's finest runners battle for honours against home nation and regional teams.

A strong Army presence is expected in the men's and women's squads and manager SSgt John Castle (R Signals) is relishing the prospect of competing against the top talent in the country.

"These are national standard athletes, and this is the highest level we can get to in the Services," he told *SoldierSport*. "It is a privilege to go up against runners of this calibre.

"We are never going to win, but we have got some really good athletes who will do us proud."

UKAF fixtures have been few and far between this season, but Army athletes all clocked personal best times at the Cardiff five-kilometre race.

Sgt Danielle Hodgkinson (QARANC) topped the female standings in a time of 15min 50sec. Pte Jessie Lutwyche (QARANC) also impressed, while Cpl Roanna Vickers (RAMC, pictured) came third in the 35-39 age category.

Cpl Dean Williamson (REME) – part of the successful Army team at this season's Inter-Services (pages 68-69) – was ninth in a men's race that also featured Cpl Arnold Rogers (RG), who is competing for Gibraltar at the Commonwealth Games. ■



Picture: George Parish

SUCCESSFUL SHOW

MORE than 160 personnel from across all three Services took to the saddle for The Royal Tournament Show Jumping and Skill at Arms Championships.

Staged at the Defence Animal Training Regiment, the contest – which is the designated Army Championships – also featured the eventing leg of the Loriners tri-Service showdown.

This was comprised of dressage and jumping tests and the Army team of SCpl Anthony Glass (LG), Bdr Hannah Brasher (RHA), Bdr Lara Hails (RA) and Gnr Ellie Mitchell (RHA) emerged victorious ahead of the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

The Service also claimed individual honours as WO2 Michael McGrath (RHG/D) was crowned junior champion, and Brasher intermediate champion. The titles were awarded following the accumulation of points in their respective sections during the course of the week.

And there was further success in the skill at arms discipline – which consisted of galloping a horse and the use of a sword or lance in a series of tasks simulating combat on horseback.

Sgt Thomas Jenks (RHA) won the individual sword competition and CoH Richard Raffel (RHG/D) the lance equivalent.



**"THEY
WILL
DO US
PROUD"**



● ARMY rugby union stalwart LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) has joined French Pro Division Two outfit US Montauban. The soldier left Bath Rugby earlier this summer after a ten-year spell that included 73 tries in 191 appearances. He was also part of the Reds team that triumphed in last season's Inter-Services Championships (pictured).

MONTH IN SPORT

August's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services 50-over Cricket
WHEN: August 1 to 3
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The Army will be

looking to claim a Forces double after securing the honours in the Twenty20 format in June and will head into this home clash as strong favourites



WHAT: Royal Navy Equitation Championships
WHEN: August 19 to 21
WHERE: Chepstow
NEED TO KNOW: Following a successful showing at The Royal Tournament (page 70), Army riders will be hoping for more of the same as they travel to Wales



WHAT: Inter-Services Outdoor Archery
WHEN: August 19 to 20
WHERE: Cranwell
NEED TO KNOW: The soldiers come into this event on the back of a triumphant outing at the Forces indoor showdown late last year. With momentum in the sport growing they will be targeting another title



Picture: Cat Gony

FALCONS SWOOP FOR SEVENS Flier



"I HOPE I CAN BRING A BIT OF FLAIR TO THE TEAM"

SEVENS star Rfn Vereimi Qorowale (Rifles, pictured above) has become the latest Army player to progress to the top tier of English rugby union after signing a two-year deal with Newcastle Falcons.

The 27-year-old, who can play wing or centre, follows the likes of LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) and Pte Siva Naualago (Yorks, pictured left) in moving to the Premiership and is hoping to impress his new coaches during pre-season training.

Qorowale's signing comes on the back of an impressive campaign with an Army squad that was victorious at the Melrose Sevens competition and finished third in the Super Sevens Series.

"It was my dream to become a professional rugby player and seeing guys like Rocco and Siva has been a real inspiration," the soldier said.

"I played most of my rugby in the back row when I was

younger, but when I came to the UK they asked me to play in the back line.

"Hopefully I can bring a bit of flair to the team – I can't wait to get going."

Newcastle head coach Dave Walder added: "Vereimi is a player who came to our attention through his exploits in sevens and we feel he has a lot of potential and can give us something different.

"He has all the physical attributes that are needed, and by being in a professional rugby environment we believe we will be able to get the best out of him."

Director of Army Sevens, Maj Jon Lloyd (RAMC), said the signing is another example of the quality of player within the Service set-up.

He added: "The Army has a strong track record of players becoming fully fledged professionals and I'm confident Vereimi will be another good ambassador for us in the Premiership." ■



MEDALS MOUNT FOR POOL'S PEAK PERFORMERS

THE Army celebrated a triumphant week in the pool as they claimed all but one of the major honours on offer at the Inter-Services Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championships.

Having waited more than 20 years to lift the trophy, the biggest success story came in the shape of the men's swimming team as they finished 20 points clear of nearest rivals the Royal Navy to claim a long-awaited Forces title.

Pte Kieran Preston (Para) was among the standout performers as he set a new competition record on his way to winning the 100 metres butterfly and was also part of the Army quartet that clocked a new best in the 4x50-metre medley relay.

And it was business as usual for the women as they maintained their stranglehold on a tournament they have dominated for two decades.

Pte Nicola Capstick (RAMC) won gold in the 100 and 200 metres backstroke, a feat matched by Pte Sian Harkin (RAMC) in the 50 and 100 metres freestyle, with both forming part of the victorious 4x50-metre medley relay team.

There was also a successful farewell for Lt Col Katie Hislop (RE) as she took gold in the 200 metres breaststroke and 6x50-metre freestyle relay. A squad stalwart of more than 20 years, it was her final appearance in Service colours.

Swim team manager Maj Lisa Brown (RLC) told *SoldierSport* an injection of new blood was pivotal to the success, with the Army Individual Championships forming the ideal proving ground in the build-up to the competition.

"More than 50 per cent were new faces," she added.

"Those championships were extremely valuable and our head coach said it had been one of



**"THEY
HAVE
A REAL
DEPTH
OF
TALENT"**

the hardest years in terms of selection. It was not the usual people doing the usual events, which was wonderful to see.

"There is now real momentum in the Army swim team, and we already have a pathway in place for next year so we can achieve another double win.

"For the men, this is the first time they have had a real breadth and depth of talent, and they have an exciting future."

Coming off the back of a successful season on the civilian circuit that saw them promoted to division three of the national league, the Army men's water polo team made short work of their opposition.

A 17-7 victory over the Royal Air Force was followed by a 24-6 defeat of the Navy – results manager WO1 Luke Illingworth (REME) said reflected the squad's improvement in recent years.

"We played 40 civilian fixtures last season and are now among

the top 20 teams in the country," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Our performances in the national league mean potential players in the Army now know what we are about. People are also joining up so they can play water polo with us, and we are picking up a lot of good juniors.

"We were confident coming into this competition, but it was important not to be complacent, particularly after our opening win. We stayed professional in two tough games that were a lot harder than the scores suggest."

Goalkeeper OCdt Aril Pandya, defensive star LCpl Morgan Wells (REME) and attacker Capt Nick Covington (RLC) all drew praise for their performances and will be pivotal to the Army's chance of further success when the new national league season starts next month.

"We were the last team to get promoted and will be the lowest ranked in the competition," Illingworth added.

"The aspiration is to be in the top half. The odds are probably against us but we have had three promotions in four years so we'll see what happens."

With the Navy not fielding a team, the Army defeated the RAF 20-3 to win the women's title and there was further success in the diving competition – where the women sealed another trophy.

However, the men missed out to champions the RAF. ■



VARYING RESULTS IN TRIATHLON TEST

**INTER-SERVICES
TRIATHLON
MEN**
**RAF
WOMEN**
ARMY



IT WAS a day of mixed fortunes for the Army at the Inter-Services Triathlon Championships as the women's team reigned supreme, only for the men to miss out to their Royal Air Force rivals.

Pte Jasmine Holmes (Int Corps, pictured left) topped the women's podium in only her second Army race – finishing more than four minutes clear of teammate Capt Rosie Wild (RHA) in second.

With the soldiers claiming six of the top-ten positions the battle for collective honours proved one-sided and Holmes was delighted to contribute to the cause.

"I'm really pleased," she told *SoldierSport*. "I went out as hard as I could from the start. I was third out of the water and then really pushed on the first part of the bike, which was a gruelling uphill segment.

"I caught the lead rider about two kilometres down the road and was able to stretch the gap after that.

"My strongest elements are the swim and bike, so I knew I had to create a cushion.

"I probably then went out too fast on the run because I was aware I'd be chased down – but I committed and knew I would suffer later, which I did.

"I imagined my rivals were breathing down my neck and that really spurred me on."

While it was a successful day for the women there was disappointment for the men, who trailed the RAF by three-and-a-half minutes in the overall standings.

WO2 Nick Drabble (R Signals) was the leading Army athlete in fourth place – his best result in Service colours.

"It was really tough and having a non-wetsuit swim was novel," he said. "I'm not the best of swimmers so I found that stage challenging.

"But the bike went well, and I took about 15 people on the first hill.

"I started the run in fifth place, so to finish fourth was a good result for me." ■

Final Word



The hardest part is getting to the start line so you learn to prepare well in advance. You must keep your overall fitness at a very high level, so that's another major benefit. If you have family like me, you also learn to organise your time.

WO2 Nick Drabble, R Signals



To be competitive you have to be on top form all the time and, being in the masters category, it motivates me to train because you have to work harder to maintain fitness as you get older.

SSgt Jeanne Du Preez, RLC



It's good for your mental strength because you know you're going to hurt during the race and you have to deal with that. Also, you don't get judged for shaving your legs and wearing Oakleys!

Lt Victoria Duncan, RE



It improves your mindset. Knowing you can push yourself really, really hard to the point of collapse, and coming though that, helps you perform better on Army tasks.

Pte Jasmine Holmes, Int Corps

Interviews: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main

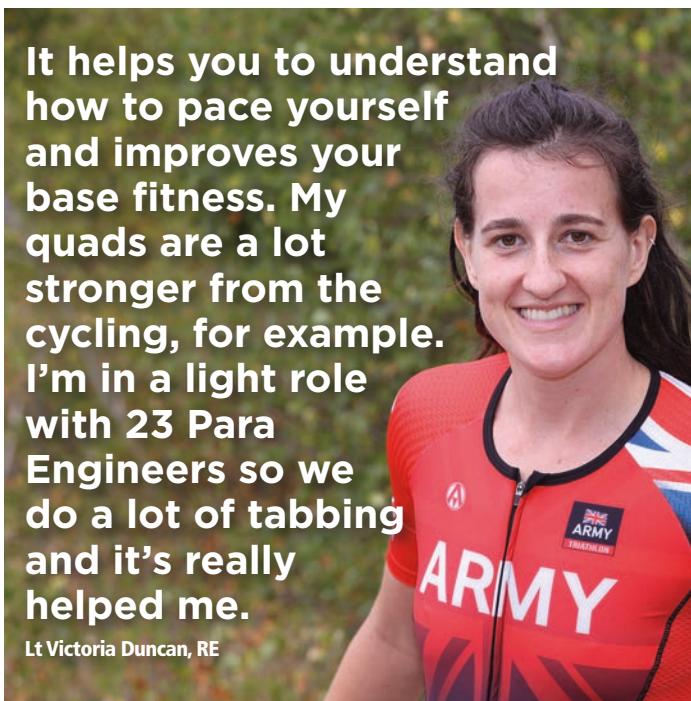


You work your whole body so your strength and endurance improve as you train. Knowing you can perform physically at a high level can only be good for your Army fitness, especially as an infantryman.

LCpl Jenson Cozens, Rifles

It helps you to understand how to pace yourself and improves your base fitness. My quads are a lot stronger from the cycling, for example. I'm in a light role with 23 Para Engineers so we do a lot of tabbing and it's really helped me.

Lt Victoria Duncan, RE



Tri-hards

Army triathletes tell us why the sport (page 73) benefits military life...

I can eat cake guilt-free! Seriously though, a lot of triathletes treat the sport as a lifestyle so it can benefit nutrition, training and personal discipline. Also, it's a real team activity in the Army, with lots of healthy competition, which can only be a good thing.

Maj Craig Bickerton, Scots



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