

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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reveal their
personal
remembrance



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The changes that lie ahead
under Charles III's reign



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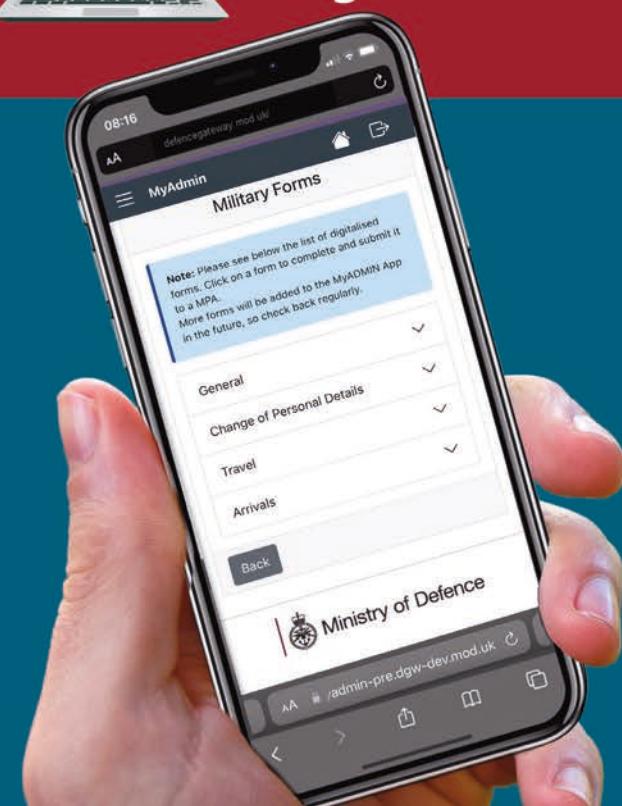
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“

If you can
push through
this, you can
push through
other things

”

Hitting the Fan – p36



Reflecting on new chapters



WHEN personnel gather at the Cenotaph for the National Service of Remembrance this month, it will be the first time in 70 years that such events have not been presided over by Queen Elizabeth II.

Commemoration took shape under her reign to become the unifying movement that it is today. So this moment will symbolise a new era for our military; one reflected on the cover.

Having a new monarch standing shoulder-to-shoulder with troops amid their collective grief will confirm the gravity of that relationship between commander-in-chief and the military.

Change – in all its forms – is something the Army Sergeant Major WO1 Paul Carney reflects on this month as well (page 15).

Please keep up the chat with this important representative, either directly or via our *Talkback* letters section (page 47).

And enjoy the rest of the issue too – with plenty of change going on in the sporting worlds (page 61) and with the return of the infamous Fan Dance (page 36), which gave a recent cohort of infantry – plus our photographer and managing editor – a serious run for their money.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

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The Army's National Charity



ITC Catterick staff greet a new intake of Gurkha recruits

Picture: Graeme Main

Let down by bad buildings

The Army's world-class training courses are being hindered, Ofsted says...

ARMY instructors are delivering solid recruit training despite having to contend with shoddy buildings and accommodation around them, Ofsted has found.

Teams from the education watchdog said that staff in all three Services were often showing great professionalism – with the Infantry Training Centre Catterick rated as “outstanding” for its leadership, management and quality of courses.

A dozen inspections of tri-Service phase one and two establishments – eight Regular and four Reserve – saw ten of them graded “good”.

But a report lambasted the conditions in which personnel were expected to work.

In some of the worst cases, staff and students were faced with water-sodden classrooms while accommodation blocks had problems with both heating and hot water.

The sluggishness with which repairs were carried out under maintenance arrangements also came under fire from Ofsted.

The Defence Medical Academy was judged as “requires improvement”, with its infrastructure and living areas flagged as points of concern. Repairs at the Whittington site were taking too long and commanders did not have effective oversight of contractors’ work.

Meanwhile, conditions were judged so poor for Royal Air Force officer cadets at Cranwell that facilities were

slapped with an “inadequate” rating.

While Army bases fared better, inspectors still found classrooms at Catterick were run down and requiring refurbishment work.

There were also general concerns about the isolated way some Servicewomen were accommodated. And assessors said female troops were still contending with ill-fitting kit.

Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman congratulated commanders for their professionalism but squarely pointed the finger at government for the failings.

Among her recommendations, she said senior defence officials needed to take urgent action on a series of longstanding infrastructure issues.

She added: “Too often, senior officers and their staff are spending time dealing with the legacy of lack of investment or poor maintenance contracts. Such weaknesses affect quality of training, and recruit and trainee experiences.

“I have reported persistent and serious weaknesses in resources, infrastructure and accommodation for the past six years.”

Responding to the report, Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families, Sarah Atherton, accepted improvements were needed.

She said an overhaul at some sites was already under way, adding: “We remain committed to ensuring recruits and trainees receive the best start as they embark on their military careers.” ■

“
Weaknesses
affect quality
of training
”

How did YOUR base fare?

Overall Ofsted ratings for the Army establishments...

ITC Catterick **GOOD**

ATC Pirbright **GOOD**

Defence Medical Academy **REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT**

Minley Station **GOOD**

Royal School of Military Music **GOOD**

Army Training Unit North **GOOD**

SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP

1. USA

STRIKE HARD, STRIKE FAST

RESERVISTS from 7th Battalion, The Rifles and 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment upped their game during some stateside manoeuvres.

Part of 20th Armoured Brigade Combat Team, they traded Northern Ireland for Camp Grayling in Detroit for their annual camp and the chance to train with the Michigan National Guard.

Their fortnight on Exercise Northern Strike proved an invaluable opportunity to hone core skills, while tackling the likes of public order serials and prosecuting attacks on mock enemy positions.

With the Brits having more recently hosted their American counterparts on home ground, lasting links have also been forged between the units.

Brigade Commander Brig Carl Boswell said: "The Reservists are integral to our establishment – they provide not only combat mass, but a different skill set."



Picture: Capt Joe Legros, US Army National Guard

1. USA

CROSS-CONTINENT COOPERATION

A SERIES OF UK short-term training teams have deployed to help African partners develop their capabilities.

They were coordinated by the Nairobi-based British Peace Support Team (Africa), which this year is working across 14 nations to help bolster UN and African Union missions.

2. KENYA

SOMALIA-bound Kenyan personnel are better equipped for the African Union Transition Mission thanks to the efforts of a Welsh Guards-led training team (pictured above).

The Brits delivered a three-week pre-deployment course for some 650 troops, including urban and close quarters battle drills.

"It's really good to be able to provide them with some value before they go to Somalia on what is a really important operation for them," said 2Lt



Toby Hudson (WG), one of the 22 UK instructors involved.

3. THE GAMBIA

MEANWHILE, on the West African coast at the Gambian Armed Forces training school in Bakau, members of 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards put a 250-strong quick reaction force company through its paces prior to UN peacekeeping duties in Mali and the Central African Republic.

Sexual violence prevention training, contact drills, counter-IED procedures and tactical vehicle manoeuvre were among a range of topics covered during a course that Lt Col Gee Jenner (RA) described as one of the most successful to be staged in the country.

"The soldiers established an amazing rapport with each other," said the officer, from the British Peace Support Team (Africa).



4. MALAWI

AND in southern Africa, a three-month observer-mentor tasking saw 11 personnel from a variety of cap badges oversee training delivered by Malawi Defence Force instructors.

Almost 800 students of the Malawi Battalion were being taught individual and section-level fire and manoeuvre techniques, first aid and briefing skills in preparation for a stint in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Officer commanding of the British outfit, Capt Callum Fraser (RGR), said his soldiers had enjoyed working alongside their "enthusiastic and receptive" counterparts.

He continued: "They have an important mission ahead and our team is fully committed to making sure they deploy in the best possible order."

5. GERMANY MASS EFFECT

MORE than 3,000 troops, 800 vehicles and five British brigade headquarters converged on Sennelager for the Field Army's largest training package of the year.

Taking place outside of the UK for the first time in over a decade, Exercise Cerberus was a major test of the formations' ability to mobilise and deploy overseas at short notice.

It was also a chance to build interoperability between the six Nato nations involved – among them the hosts Germany and the US.

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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A German CH53 helicopter drops troops off at Sennelager training area during Exercise Cerberus

Picture: Cpl Alex Morris, RLC

8. AUSTRALIA OPPORTUNITIES IN OZ

REGULAR soldiers between the ranks of lance corporal and major are being reminded of the opportunities on offer with overseas exchanges to Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Long Look, as the Army programme is known, allows personnel to broaden their horizons on three-month placements.

For more details on how to apply to the scheme, which has been running since 1976, read **ABN 046**.

“
We are
quietly
confident
“

Army netballers eye
US Open – page 72

6. OMAN DESERT DRILLS

PERSONNEL from 661 Squadron, 1 Regiment, Army Air Corps have been undertaking survival, evasion, resistance and extract training in the Omani desert.

As members of 1st Aviation Brigade Combat Team, the Wildcat crews and their supporting elements were required to complete desert environment qualifications in the north of the country before redeploying to the Joint Omani-British training area in Duqm for Exercise Khanjar Oman alongside elements of 1 (UK) Division (read more on this next month).

Elsewhere, on the latter package, members of 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment became the first Reservists to act as the enemy force in the Middle Eastern country.

They took on 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland after three weeks of extensive training in preparation for the role.

A total of 76 soldiers deployed, including attachments from 4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, The Queen's Own Yeomanry and 6th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Picture: SAC Charlotte Hopkins, RAF



7. ESTONIA LEADING THE CHARGE

MORE than 800 British, French and Danish troops took part in Exercise Dragon Charge on the Tapa Central Training Area to reaffirm their interoperability.

It was the final force-on-force manoeuvre for the 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh Battlegroup, capping a six-month tour in Estonia as Nato's enhanced forward presence, and allowed them to put into practice ten months' worth of individual and collective training.

The four-day package was

also a chance to ensure cohesion with the additional British battlegroup recently deployed to Estonia, led by 2nd Battalion, The Rifles.

Main battle tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, light infantry, anti-tank assets and engineering capabilities worked together to complete a series of challenging missions that aligned with the intent of Op Mobilise, helping to prevent war in Europe by being ready to fight alongside Nato allies and partners.



Picture: PO Phil Joe Rouse, RN



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AWESOME FIREPOWER

Picture: Spc Dustin Biven, US Army



International effort impresses during Exercise Dynamic Front

THE Army's deep fires capability – and in particular its integration with partner nations – has come on leaps and bounds thanks to exercises like Dynamic Front, a Royal Artillery officer has told *Soldier*.

Maj Steph Manning-Degobertiere (pictured), officer commanding of 26 Regiment's 19 Battery, which operates the multiple-launch rocket system, said this year's iteration at the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany laid down a marker for similar exercises in future.

"There were lots of moving parts, with participation from 19 nations, all aiming to enable smooth integration and effective coordination of concentrated artillery fires," the Servicewoman explained.

"What was exciting to see was the roll-out of a multinational field artillery brigade in command of multinational fires – the first time this has been done in a live-firing environment."

During the exercise MLRS from Slovakia, the United Kingdom and the United States were used to perform fire missions under command of a multinational higher headquarters, this year headed up by the UK-led Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

"Digital fires procedures were a

priority and the UK supported the US and other nations in the use of an encrypted software that allows everyone to share assets and bring fires to bear on targets without delay," continued the officer.

"This is the future of artillery fire mission communications.

"And it is cutting-edge in terms of the evolution of our processes to enhance integration and, ultimately, deliver fire support quickly to those who need it to ensure maximum impact on the enemy."

"We had a decent allocation of reduced-range practice rockets which allowed us to put down some high rates of fire in support of our allies."

"It is always a great opportunity to take part in live training, even more so when it is part of an international effort."

"We were firing on missions that were coordinated with Slovakian rocket systems plus aircraft bombs and guns from a whole host of nations."

"It was really impressive and reinforced that when we all work together as Nato, the firepower we can generate is awesome." ■

BOXER MILESTONE

THE first UK-made drive module hulls for the Boxer armoured vehicle have rolled off production lines ready for assembly. Common to all variants, they will ultimately house the power pack, suspension and driveline, fuel system, electrics and driver's station. The Army will eventually receive a total of 623 platforms – the first 117 of which are being built in Germany and will begin arriving next year – with the remaining 506 manufactured in Stockport and Telford.



IN MEMORIAM



Spr Connor Morrison

DIED JULY 23, 2022
IPSWICH

WARM tributes have been paid to a highly professional, keen and unfailingly selfless young soldier during his recent funeral.

Spr Connor Morrison (RE), from 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, was remembered as an exceptional team player who always put other people before himself.

The 20-year old, who was from Renfrewshire in Scotland and based at Sutton Heath, died at Ipswich Hospital on July 23.

Loved ones and friends gathered to reflect on his life and achievements at Clydebank Crematorium.

Senior defence officials confirmed the sapper died following a "non-operational incident". Further details had not been released at the time of going to press.

Spr Morrison's CO, Lt Col Jack Crossley, said the Serviceman had made his mark during his time in the Army.

Enlisting as a teenager in 2021, the soldier had completed his phase one training at Pirbright before moving to 3 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment. He soon earned himself class 2 combat engineer status.

He later went on to become a logistical specialist, before volunteering for service with the airborne forces.

Lt Col Crossley added: "Spr Morrison had so much promise – keen and enthusiastic, he worked hard to achieve his goals at every stage of his training.

"More importantly, he was a loyal friend and genuine team player – he put others above himself and generously volunteered to cover weekend duties when he was not returning home to enable others to travel themselves.

"He was a selfless and kind-hearted soldier who was well-respected among his peers. He proved himself to be a proud and loyal member of the Corps of Royal Engineers, who will be sorely missed by the regiment and those he served alongside."

“
This is the
future
”





SERVICE GRIEVES FOR 'TRUE PARA' WALDO

■ COLLEAGUES have been remembering a gifted skydiver and operationally experienced airborne soldier following his death while off-duty in Spain.

Sgt Dean Walton, of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (pictured above in 2017), was well known as a stalwart of the Red Devils display team, serving for several years with the outfit.

He had been skydiving with ex-Gurkha NCO and adventurer Nirmal Purja, who is renowned for his mountaineering exploits, when he died last month.

Colleagues from the airborne forces and beyond took to social media to confirm the much-respected soldier's loss, with 3 Para tweeting: "It is with deep sadness we announce the passing of one of our own, Sgt Dean 'Waldo' Walton."

"Waldo was a true 3 Para man and although he spent several years with the Red Devils doing what he loved the most, he was first and foremost a talented paratrooper."

Colleagues from the display team shared the battalion's sentiment, adding on their own Twitter account: "It is with a heavy heart the team has learned of Sgt Walton's passing – our thoughts go out to his family and friends."



Sgt Walton at Basingstoke's iFLY centre in 2018. He was the first British soldier to qualify as a wind tunnel instructor

“It's about friendships that transcend borders”

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



MC MARATHON MISSION

A DECORATED former NCO is taking on 35 marathons in as many days in tribute to the lives lost in recent conflicts.

Brian Wood (ex-PWRR), who was awarded the Military Cross for his actions at the Battle of Danny Boy in Iraq, was nearing the end of the 917-mile challenge as this issue went to press.

Target funds:
£250,000
For: Walking With the Wounded

He is hoping to raise a quarter of a million pounds for Walking With the Wounded, surpassing his 2021 total of £168,000 for good causes.
To support the former Serviceman visit givepenny.com/theultimatesacrifice2022



Picture: Sgt Ben Beale, RIC

TROOPS TAKE ON CAMBRIAN PATROL

RESOLUTE teams from across the world converged on the Welsh wilderness to show what they are made of in the field.

Scores of UK personnel – plus international counterparts from countries including Ukraine and Australia – were among those tabbing through the Brecon Beacons on this year's Exercise Cambrian Patrol.

And despite the weather being more forgiving than past competitions, all faced a tough time on their quest for a prestigious medal.

As always, the relentless marching was broken up by a series of core military disciplines simulating familiar, real-life operational tasks.

Some 79 teams – weighed down with 32kg of kit – completed their gruelling 60km patrols while 15 withdrew before finishing the route.

Notable performers this year included the teams from 1st Battalion,



The Royal Gurkha Rifles – one of eight squads awarded a gold medal – and 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards and 5th Battalion, The Rifles, who earned silver.

Commander Field Army, Lt Gen Sir Ralph Woodisse, said the eight-day event organised by 160th (Welsh) Brigade was a highlight of the global military calendar.

"It is a fantastic exercise – just to get through the training and difficult process of getting here is an achievement in itself," he told the competing troops.

"This is about working out how to deal with tactical threats and making friendships that transcend borders as they do cap badges.

"We need friends during a time when the world is as dangerous as I've ever known."

Members of the 27 overseas teams were paired with British counterparts to prepare for the event, which has been running since 1959. ■



SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

Pictures: Cpl Danny Houghton, RLC

Nato allies come together to test their mountain mettle

VERSATILE troops from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment faced a tough Balkans test as they joined Nato allies to hone skills for operating in the mountains.

Some 120 soldiers from C Company found themselves on unfamiliar terrain in Slovenia's Julian Alps during Exercise Triglav Star.

But they soon rose to the challenge – squaring away a host of vital skills including navigation, rappelling, abseiling (pictured) and other disciplines required for operations in the peaks.

Commanders also got the opportunity to learn small unit tactics from Nato mountain warfare experts during the training, which saw the personnel working alongside colleagues from the host country and the United States.

Company commander Maj Steve White (Para) said he was pleased with the troops' performance.

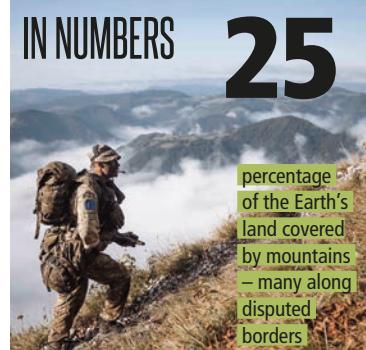
"This exercise gives us the ability to develop basic mountain skills

and adapt our standard operating procedures in an under-trained environment," he explained.

"It will make us more rounded soldiers, able to deploy at high readiness into challenging terrain."

The final exercise saw multinational companies deploy to the mountains to put their skills to the test through several tactical scenarios.

This culminated in an attack over a feature that was twice the height of Mount Snowdon in Wales. ■



“
It will make us more rounded soldiers
”



FORCES fundraising team Healing Military Minds welcomed 350 guests to the De Vere Cotswolds Waterpark Hotel for its inaugural charity ball. As well as an auction, the evening featured a raft of military entertainment and raised £23,000 for charity Combat Stress.

PLEA FOR SUPPORT AS CHAPTER CLOSES

A CHARITY dedicated to supporting soldiers from the British Empire who served before their countries became independent from the UK is to close its doors in the next ten years. The Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League has been distributing cash to former troops hit by hard times for the last 100 years – traditionally aiming to provide two meals a day to veterans. Although it will shut its doors as the last surviving beneficiaries – all now in their 90s – pass away, the good cause is appealing for funding support in its final years. Visit commonwealthveterans.org.uk to find out more.



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Ground view

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

WITH hours to kill on a recent long-haul flight, I found myself reflecting how much – and how quickly – our world has changed.

The past year has seen Russia's invasion of Ukraine galvanise a determined Nato, the chief of the general staff put the Army on a high-readiness footing, and we are more committed on European ops as the alliance moves to deter further aggression.

Closer to home, we have witnessed the loss of our Queen and the accession of Charles III.

These momentous events saw soldiers carry out ceremonial duties with a precision that captured the world's attention. And all the while personnel continued with their day-to-day commitments.

This period has shown the extraordinary range of roles that the Service can perform.

In particular, Nato's response to the war in Ukraine has highlighted the skill sets of our junior leaders.

As well as deploying to Poland and Estonia on Op Cabrit, they have been training those dealing with an unprovoked attack on their homeland.

Over recent weeks

I have visited British troops involved in Op Interflex, sharing skills with personnel headed for the front line.

Running courses in core military discipline and leadership, they are playing a pivotal role in preparing soldiers at the sharp end. And students have been impressed by the depth of experience of instructors, with one remarking to me, "I didn't know your troops were trained to teach as well as fight".

We already have very good young leaders but this could be improved even further if we gave them more structured education.

As you probably know, the Army has been looking at this carefully. And my long-haul flight ended in a ten-day trip to various US military bases to see their approach to upskilling and an NCO academy.

Clearly there are differences between our militaries, but looking at the American offering could help us as we consider our own.

For example, we are watching with interest a US pilot of a virtual training scheme that allows troops to stay at home for part of their course.

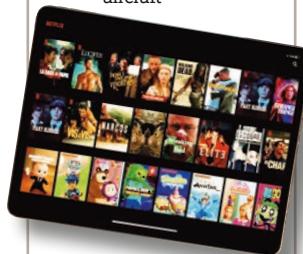
It is important we make the right decisions to equip a future generation for a changing battlespace.

“
This period has shown our range of roles
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q How do you pass time on flights?

A I watch films compulsively; I can never sleep on aircraft



Pictures: Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF and Shutterstock

Loss of the Queen still raw

THIS month's remembrance season promises to be particularly poignant – it will be the first for decades without Her Majesty presiding.

Many generations of soldiers took an oath to the Queen in her 70-year reign. Until her passing, none of us had known any other commander-in-chief.

The sovereign's loss is still raw and deeply felt. So it is important, in my

view, that we continue to take time to reflect on her service as well as looking ahead to the new era of King Charles III (page 26).

As a father of two Servicemen and having been in the Royal Navy himself, the new monarch has a unique perspective on our way of life.

We look forward to his leadership as we remember the fallen.

Long live the King.

Into the wilds...

■ THE physical and mental resilience of soldiers taking part in Exercise Cambrian Patrol (page 12) never ceases to amaze me – and it was inspirational to visit the event this year.

Competitors face two days and an array of military tasks in the demanding wilderness of

South Wales. Successful completion of the event, and particularly winning a prestigious medal, requires fitness and teamwork. But it's also an opportunity for the UK and its international military allies to come together and forge long-lasting friendships.

Congratulations to all.

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■ PIONEERING paras have made the first low-level jumps from the new aircraft that is set to become their mainstay when the C-130J Hercules retires next year. The soldiers, part of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, descended from the A400M Atlas over Salisbury Plain during tactical trials of the platform by Royal Air Force crews from 206 Squadron. And they had positive feedback on the experience. "There is more space in the Atlas, which makes it easier with all our kit – it's been great," said Bdr Daniel Murray (7 Para, RHA). The new platform will be able to carry more personnel over greater distances.

Winter costs hit troops

SSAFA says 30 per cent increase in calls is 'significant'

CONCERN is mounting over the cost-of-living crisis after a military charity revealed it is receiving growing calls for help.

Latest figures released by SSAFA's Forcesline showed contacts rose by more than 30 per cent in the summer compared to the same time last year, with callers worried about basic necessities such as food and a roof over their heads.

In June, *Soldier* reported how the charity was receiving increasing calls about financial worries, with some dependents even reporting turning to food banks.

Last August the organisation received 546 requests for support via its webchat function alone – a 59 per cent increase on the same period in 2021.

Handlers say some people are skipping meals in an effort to make ends meet, while others are unable to pay for childcare.

Forcesline boss Bill Grant was concerned about the escalating numbers – particularly as the national crisis was continuing.

He said the service, which is available to both current and former personnel and their families, was now often speaking to people who were approaching the breadline.

He added: "I am very worried about

the growing number of calls we are getting from those who need support – an increase of around 30 per cent is certainly significant.

"While we receive requests covering topics from mobility issues to debt, we're now also taking daily requests for help with the most basic of needs."

And the charity warned of tougher times ahead.

Meanwhile, rocketing numbers of veterans reporting concerns about the cost of living has led The Royal British Legion to offer top-up grants.

Sums of up to £200 per month are now available to help those struggling with energy bills.

Turn to page 23 for saving tips. ■

IN NUMBERS



431

electric vehicle charging points that will be available to white fleet cars across the MoD estate by the end of the year – rising to more than 1,000 over the next couple of years. The department aims to have an entirely electric white fleet by 2027, with chargers for personal use available too.



BRUTAL WAR UP CLOSE

■ A UNIQUE exhibition of images chronicling Ukraine in the years leading up to – and during – the current conflict has gone on display at Imperial War Museum North.

Taken by photojournalist Anastasia Taylor-Lind, the evocative pictures (shown) will move to London next year.

For more information on the exhibition visit iwm.org.uk

“
We’re taking daily requests for help
”

SODEXO STAYS

■ FACILITIES management firm Sodexo has had its contract for supporting troops based in the Falklands and Cyprus extended for two years.

In a deal totalling £107 million, some 900 staff will continue to provide catering, tailoring, laundry, cleaning and other services across various sites in the two stations.

HELPLINE CHANGE

■ THE defence bullying, harassment and discrimination helpline has changed its contact number to 0800 014 2381 due to a change in provider.

This does not affect the Army's Speak Out helpline.

SPOT THE VETERAN

■ A NEW tool which scours electronic health records to determine whether a patient has been in the Armed Forces has been made available to NHS bosses.

The Military Service Identification Tool was developed by researchers at King's College London and trialled in the capital.

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Medical milestone in Catterick

New garrison health centre should be ready for use by 2024

A STATE-OF-THE-ART medical complex at Catterick Garrison has moved a step closer to reality after councillors gave it the thumbs-up.

Planning approval has been granted for a proposed integrated care campus at the base, which will be used by both the military and civvies.

Building work is set to start next spring and likely to finish in 2024 with the facility sitting alongside the garrison's HQ at Baden Powell House.

Jointly run by the MoD and NHS, it will offer primary healthcare services, mental health treatment, physiotherapy and dentistry.

Air Cdre Luke Houghton – healthcare plans boss at Headquarters Defence Medical Services – said he was delighted to hear that Richmondshire District Council gave the green light to the design (shown).

"This decision paves the way for an exciting future healthcare facility," he told reporters.



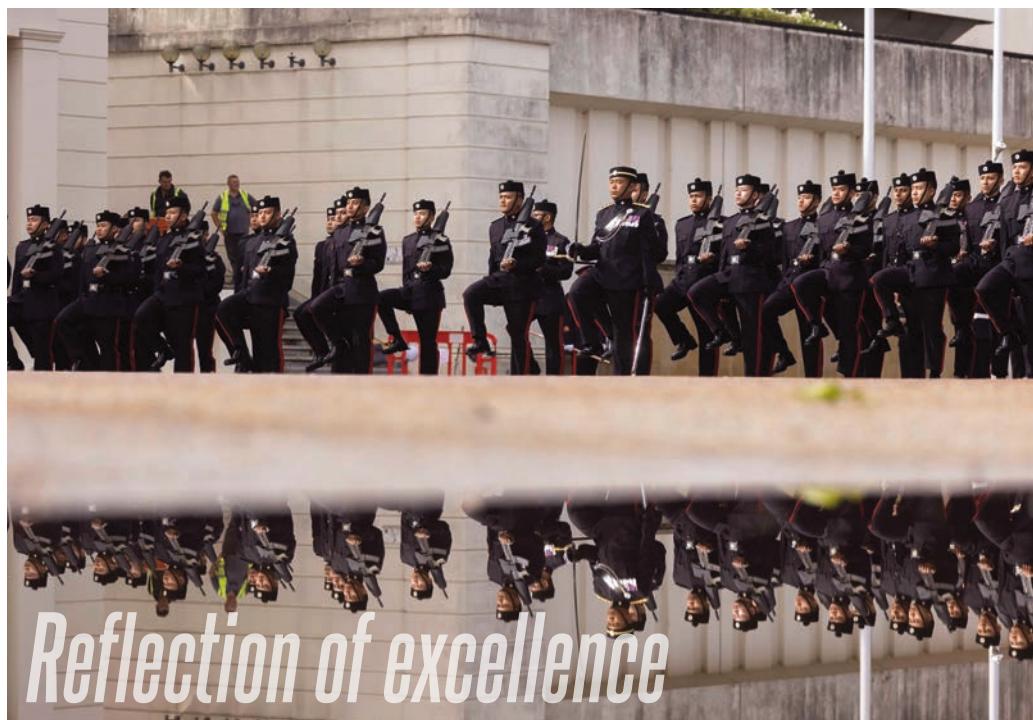
His NHS counterpart Wendy Balmain shared the officer's viewpoint, adding: "Formal planning approval is a major milestone."

Councillors agreed the facility would bring a range of benefits to local communities.

Council leader Angie Dale said the project – which has been in the pipeline for around seven years – was "much-needed".

"It links in with our work on the regeneration of the town centre, subject to a £19 million levelling-up bid from central government," she added.

Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



Reflection of excellence

■ PROUD Nepalese logisticians have stepped up to the plate to become the first personnel in seven decades to guard a king. The soldiers from 94 Supply Squadron, shown above during an inspection at Wellington Barracks, had just been signed off to turn out for Her Late Majesty when news of the sovereign's passing came. Now they have become the first non-Foot Guards to take on the role for Charles III at Buckingham Palace as he settles into his duties as head of state. The soldiers, part of 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, spent several weeks preparing for the new role alongside ceremonial experts from the Irish Guards. Squadron OC Maj Rory Irvine said: "It means a great deal to carry out this duty – drill and marching are not part of our normal role in the slightest."

In this month's issue...

THE FAN IS BACK!

Troops take on Brecon's beast – page 36



WIN
12-month coffee subscription + accessories

SEPTEMBER'S spine line clues – for last month saw a break in our competition schedule due to the Queen's death – were inspired by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

(Kyle) Kothari, (Andrea) Spendolini-Sirieix, (Lois) Toulson and (Noah) Williams are all the names of divers who competed there as part of Team England.

This month we have teamed up with ethical coffee roasting company Chimney Fire Coffee (chimneyfirecoffee.com) to offer one reader a pack of goodies worth almost £200.

The prize includes a 12-month coffee or compostable pod subscription, Coffeevac storage container, branded beanie, sweater and KeepCup.

Launched in 2017 and located in the Surrey Hills, this coffee roaster is passionate about traceability and sustainability, with a range of speciality products to suit different tastes.

To be in with a chance of tasting their delicious brews first-hand, simply tell us what links the clues on the spine of this month's magazine.

Answers, including phone number, to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by November 30.



SPINE LINE COMPETITION

WEED TO WALK ON

MENTAL HEALTH | SKILLS & DRILLS | CASH | 7 QUESTIONS

Pain is temporary

... but your actions live
with you forever, says
veteran on epic quest

► A QUICK glance at *Soldier*'s inbox in any given month is proof that military service and a willingness to take on hellish physical challenges in the name of good causes tend to go hand in hand – and former Blues and Royals staff corporal Paul Minter is no exception.

The 36-year-old recently completed an astonishing near 6,000-mile run around the UK coastline.

Together with three fellow veterans, he established mental health charity Head Up with the ultimate aim of funding a purpose-built retreat for serving and former personnel in emotional distress.

And as he told *Soldier* when we caught up with him on Pwllheli beach during the Welsh phase of the route, it was the thought of making a tangible difference to people's lives that kept him going through tough times...

The task

“ I've been running six days a week for six months, averaging 30 miles a day. There have been lots of adversities – from cracked ribs and sprained ankles to snake bites. I stepped into a nest of adders and one of them bit me. I also ran through giant hogweed and got blisters all over my legs. But I haven't missed a day. I was determined to do every single mile to show people you can get through anything if you just keep going. **Pain, whether it's physical or emotional, will subside eventually but the actions you take throughout that time will live with you forever.** ”

The cause

“ For my first 15 years in the Army I didn't know much about mental health, but towards the end I suffered with paranoia, anxiety and depression. I'd done four tours of Afghanistan and one in Iraq and was also blown up twice, including an incident in which three people were killed. I didn't know what the feelings were and spent months not wanting to get out of bed. So I started looking at different methods to improve my life, such as nutrition, sleep, journaling and cold-water therapy and how all of these things affect your brain. I've also lost several friends to suicide, including three during this run, so I have a deep personal need to help people. ”



The bigger picture

“ We want to create a holistic countryside retreat where guests can learn life skills to help them deal with mental health issues and access the support they need. Serving or former members of all three Services will be able to refer themselves and attend a seven-day residential course, in a relaxing, calm environment, sleeping in luxury pods that will connect them to nature. When someone is in a bad place it takes a lot of willpower and discipline even to get out of bed and put their clothes on, which is why **sometimes you need a guiding hand and that's what we want to do with Head Up – to help people who can't do it on their own.** ”



The team

“ There are four of us. We have a business plan in place and are currently in a two-year fundraising phase, aiming for a total of £3 million. **George Dagnall** (ex-Rifles) and **Adam Carrier** (ex-RHG/D) will row the 3,000-mile Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge next December and **Simon Moloney** (also ex-RHG/D) will take on a multi-day challenge by climbing Mont Blanc, cycling to Calais, rowing the Channel to Dover and then running to London. I think everyone in the military has been trained to such a high level of adversity that we don't mind being uncomfortable. **Doing hard events gives you the same buzz and sense of achievement you get from difficult tours or exercises.** ”



• To follow the team and support their fundraising visit head-up.org.uk

The stats



171
running days



13
pairs of
trainers and
210 pairs of
socks used



5,800
miles covered –
equivalent to 191
marathons

9,176,000
steps taken



769,600
calories burned

Need to make change?

Head Up have partnered with free mental health app **Swiss 8**, which boosts well-being by building good habits around fitness, sleep, nutrition, mindfulness and more.

Download the tool from your device's app store



Paul Minter

A moment in time

A tri-Service search is on for troops' personal photographs of Op London Bridge

► WITH memories still fresh of the vast military effort behind the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, the Army is calling for those involved to share photos from behind the scenes.

Beamed to an audience of billions around the globe, the event was one of the most photographed occasions in history – but Service planners are also keen to capture the moments that took place away from the glare of the media.

From musicians polishing their instruments to guardsmen dusting off their bearskins or exhausted personnel snatching some well-earned sleep, the snaps will help senior officers identify the lessons learnt from the massive ceremonial mission.

"We are looking for informal images that record the lived experience and tell the story from the shop floor," said HQ Home Command's Maj Keith Brooks (RA), one of the architects of Operation London Bridge.

"It only happened because soldiers, sailors and airmen dug deep and there will be lots of photos sat on troops' smartphones that help paint the picture, which otherwise may never see the light of day, but which will be invaluable to our successors.

"They will be shown in a seminar at the end of this month as part of the after-action review – like any military operation it's important we fully exploit the lessons learnt for the future, for events such as the Coronation or others of that nature."



Share
your snaps

Send your images to
hc-opbridge-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk by November
14, titling your email
"Behind the scenes"

Do you have the festive fear?

Try these **5** money-saving tips to help take the financial sting out of Christmas

► TIMES are hard – with many of us financially worse off than at any other time in our lives. And with just one payday left until Christmas, the temptation to borrow has never been greater. *Soldier* scoured the web for some of the best money-saving tips to help lessen the blow in the run-up to the big day...

1 REPLACE DOOM SCROLLING WITH BARGAIN BAGGING

From second-hand clothing sensation Vinted, to Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree and eBay, the internet age has created endless ways to source pre-owned toys and gifts – in the click of a button and at a fraction of the retail price. Gone are the days of trawling car-boot sales to get a deal. And items are not necessarily used, either, with sellers often flogging unwanted presents and brand new goods in their original packaging.

2 RETHINK ENTERTAINMENT

Looming trips to winter wonderlands or festive theme parks can be an eyewatering prospect for parents. So consider replacing costly visits with some wholesome free alternatives, such as an outing to the Christmas lights turn-on or a drive-through hot chocolate and car-tour of the best local street displays.



3 DON'T FORGET THE PLASTIC

Military discounts can really add up as you start to fork out more in the run-up to December. So consider signing up to the **Defence Discount Service** privilege card for deals at thousands of retail outlets. It costs £4.99 for five years and includes some impressive savings at theme parks, clothing stores, holiday parks and everyday shopping outlets.



4 AVOID THE PAYDAY LENDERS

This is an expensive way to borrow and costs can spiral out of control fast. Instead, consider using the not-for-profit credit union **London Mutual** (creditunion.co.uk) or one of the three leading providers in the MoD's **Joining Forces** initiative (joiningforcescu.co.uk), which was set up to provide affordable loans and savings to the Armed Forces community.

5 REACH OUT FOR HELP

If you are feeling overwhelmed, get help. There are numerous places to find support if you have cash problems. As well as the chain of command, consider the Army Health and Wellbeing page on **Defence Connect**, the government-backed **Money Helper** website (moneyhelper.org.uk), **The Royal British Legion's** benefits and money advice team (0808 802 8080) or the **Army Welfare Service** (01904 882053 – email rc-aws-iat@mailbox@mod.gov.uk).

A DIFFERENT A TAKE

Is remembrance more inclusive if religion is left out of it? Some soldiers believe so...



► WITH an increasing proportion of society identifying as non-religious – more than half, according to a recent British Social Attitudes survey – it's likely that traditional, faith-based remembrance rituals speak to fewer people than ever before.

While many draw comfort from the prayers offered up for the fallen, there are those for whom it feels wrong to call on a god they don't believe in.

Cpl Michelle Hordern (AGC (SPS), shown right) can relate. Having joined the Army at the age of 31, she became uneasy with the compulsory church services recruits attended during basic training.

Her search for alternatives eventually led her to a group of like-minded personnel – the Humanist and Non-Religious in Defence Network.

As the outfit gears up for its annual remembrance service, the Reservist told *Soldier* why it might be a good fit for others looking for a non-spiritual home.



1 What format does a non-religious remembrance service take?

There is music – there might be some poetry. We always have the *Last Post* and the two minutes' silence. So it's similar to a traditional service in that sense. We also make it personal by reading accounts from those involved in different conflicts, as well as talking about our hopes for the future. This year our focus is on duty and service after the Queen's death.

2 What do you personally reflect on?

I think it's a really good opportunity to stop and appreciate what we have got and how lucky we are – especially at the moment when you look at Ukraine and think "this is happening now, on our doorstep". Remembrance reminds us that this isn't just about the world wars, but how all conflicts are about fighting for freedom and not being oppressed.

3 What is humanism all about?

For me, it doesn't focus on a lack of belief, but on what we do believe – which is science-based evidence and the fact we only have one life, so it's important to live it to the best of our abilities by making positive moral choices. I believe in compassion and treating others equally and I tend to live by the motto that you regret the things you don't do more than the things you do.

4 How does that way of thinking help you in your Army career?

I think it underpins decision making, especially as a leader. Rationalising and thinking ethically is crucial when taking important decisions on strategies or situations where people's lives are at risk.

5 When did you get involved in the network?

I got married in 2014 and in researching a non-religious wedding I found the British Humanist Association and that spurred me on to look into what the military was doing. I saw they were having a non-religious remembrance service and was inspired to get involved.

6 What motivated you?

I was a bit older when I went through Army training, so I knew my own mind and beliefs and was quite frustrated that I had to go to church every Sunday. I had a Muslim friend who went to the prayer room but having no faith I was told to suck it up when I challenged it. I'm not against religion – I support what everyone believes. I just felt there was no one in my corner.

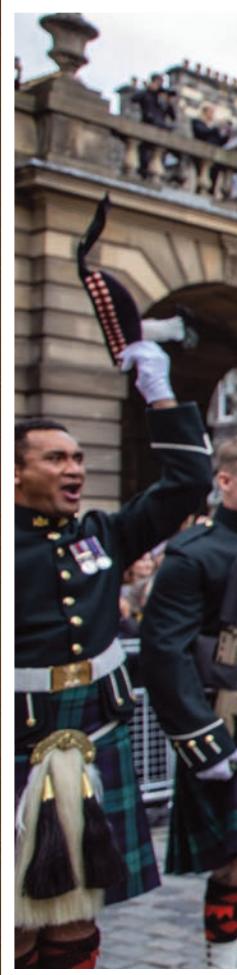
7 Why do you think people hesitate to challenge the system?

As human beings we go with the flow and don't tend to question it. It's also quite difficult, especially as a junior rank, to tell your sergeant major you don't want to go to your unit's remembrance service. But it's important to recognise that in all conflicts, it's not just Christians or other faiths who have sacrificed and lost loved ones – it's everyone. For me, it's just not very inclusive to be talking about God if that's not something you believe in.



Cpl Michelle Hordern is a Reservist based at North West Officer Training Regiment. A member of the Humanist and Non-Religious in Defence Network, she delivers pastoral support and is a qualified funeral celebrant.

NEXT GENERATION





A new era has dawned on the British Army, with a King at its helm and many changes on the cards as a result. Here is a rundown of what to expect over the coming months...

WHEN recruits at AFC Harrogate became the first in 70 years to swear an oath of allegiance to the King, they set in motion a fresh chapter of military history. It is something that will stand these individuals apart from nearly all other Servicemen and women. But aside from having a new commander-in-chief, a change in monarch also spells some alterations to regimental identities. Here, ceremonial policy expert Lt Col (Retd) Kestrel Simson gives a rundown of the modifications set to happen over the coming months...

CAP BADGES AND BUTTONS

Most regiments and corps wear a cap badge with a crown depicted on it and many personnel have asked if that will change. It did in 1953, when shortly after the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II it was announced the heraldic royal crown used to symbolise her authority would change to one based on the style of the St Edward's crown instead of the Tudor crown used since 1901.

King Charles III, on advice of the Garter King of Arms (the authority on heraldry), has decided to return to the style of the Tudor crown (shown page 28) and so all the insignia of the corps and regiments who have the St Edward's style of crown will need to be changed.

These badges are now being drawn but it will be some time before they can be manufactured and available for issue.

Some cap badges – for example, those worn by the Royal Horse Artillery, Royal Engineers and the Royal Military Police – have the late Queen's cypher incorporated into their emblem. These will also change to include the new sovereign's cypher (shown page 28) as they did in 1953. Any new design of badges and buttons will be issued to officers and other ranks.

STANDARDS, GUIDONS AND COLOURS

Any change in the design of the crown will also impact on these items carried by the Household Cavalry regiments, Line Cavalry and most Infantry regiments. The direction from 1953 was that these would only be replaced once the old ones were worn out and we would expect the same direction now. It could take up to 20 years before the process is complete.

Interestingly, this doesn't apply to the state colours carried by the Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Guards. On the demise of each sovereign, the state colour of the Grenadier Guards

(shown left) is laid up almost immediately, as is tradition. The existing state colour was made in 1952 on the death of King George VI so, as it has now been laid up, a new one will need to be made. Those carried by the Coldstream Guards – for this regiment uniquely »





It has two state colours – were presented by King William IV in 1836. And the Scots Guards were awarded theirs by Queen Victoria in 1897. The crowns on each are the ones used by the monarch in question and these colours haven't changed since they were presented and won't be changed now as they will never be replaced.

OFFICIAL PORTRAITS

There have been questions about the official portraits of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh that hang in messes and guardrooms across the world.

Should they be replaced?

There is no formal direction on this matter, especially as such items are not provided at public expense. So regiments and corps are free to do as they wish.

Once official portraits are available for King Charles and the Queen Consort, they may be purchased to replace those of the late Queen and the Duke.

These can then be hung elsewhere in messes.

ROYAL CYpher

These are worn by those the late Queen appointed as aide-

de-camps, such as the chief of the general staff, some corps colonels, assistant divisional commanders and those with honorary professional appointments, including the Queen's honorary surgeon. These individuals wear the late Queen's cyphers below their rank insignia.

As they were Her Late Majesty's personal appointments, the King may, in time, wish to reappoint them and then they would be required to wear his cypher (shown above left). In the meantime, however, the existing ones will be worn.

HONOURS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

Like coins, some medals will have to change to reflect the image of King Charles. It is expected that all campaign, long service and meritorious medals (such as the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal) will be altered to show King Charles' effigy but until the designs have been approved and the medals become available, those bearing the likeness of Her Late Majesty will continue to issued. ■





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A night patrol in Antrim, 1976.
Images have been used to
illustrate the period and do
not relate to any allegations
referenced in the article



TROUBLED LEGACY

How the Army supports veterans caught up in historic investigations

Words: Becky Clark Pictures: Mike Weston, Graeme Main

NOVEMBER is the time when the nation reflects on the human cost of war. Come Remembrance Sunday, many gather at their local cenotaph, sombrely observe the two minutes' silence and then carry on with their day – perhaps heading to the pub to enjoy a pint or bite to eat.

But there are others who don't have the luxury of resuming their carefree lives, and for whom there is no forgetting.

Grieving families; those dealing with physical and mental wounds – for them the shadow of conflict looms large years, if not decades, after the final shot was fired.

And for another cohort, the past comes calling despite their best efforts to move on.

In 2012, Paul (not his real name) received a letter that would bring the horrors of The Troubles flooding back.

More than 20 years after leaving the Army and some 40 years since he deployed on the first of seven tours to Northern Ireland, the former Royal Green Jackets senior NCO was being asked to give evidence in a historic investigation.

For legal and security reasons we cannot reveal his identity or any details of his case, but his story is typical of hundreds of veterans embroiled in protracted criminal or civil proceedings relating to this bitter chapter of British history.

Talking to *Soldier* in his homely front room in Surrey, the memories of Operation Banner come thick and fast.

"It wasn't trouble, it was a war," he says.

"You had the two communities and I felt sorry for both

»



FACT FILE: THE ARMY OPERATIONAL LEGACY BRANCH

ROLE Set up to support veterans involved in investigations, inquests and inquiries arising from any historic operation – including Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan – and to assist with the passage of information between the MoD and outside agencies. It does not carry out investigations itself and should not be confused with the now defunct Iraq Historic Allegations Team.

PROCESS When a veteran receives a letter from any investigative body, they are made aware of the legal and welfare support available to them and told to contact the MoD's Directorate of Judicial Engagement Policy, which will then ask their permission to refer them to the AOLB. Alternatively, the veteran might hear about the branch through word of mouth and can approach them directly.

CONTACT If you have been contacted in relation to an operational legacy issue or are aware of someone who has and needs support, email or call **Maj Tracey Brooks** via apsg-aolb-op-legacy-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk, **07813 007 392** or **0300 1534300**

» sides because a lot of them didn't want all that.

"There were next door neighbours who couldn't talk to each other – bottles coming through their windows, you know, firebombs; people being beaten up.

"I found one woman battered to death in the middle of the road because they thought she was an informant.

"It had nothing to do with religion – that was just an excuse. You couldn't do those things if you were religious. It was all political."

A homeless person blown to pieces by an inner-city bomb; a 14-year-old boy shot in the head to punish his father for talking to the authorities; the comrade, a "nice lad", who died in his arms after being shot through a letter box – these are the ghosts that follow Paul around to this day, popping into his head while he does the washing up and making him scared to close his eyes at night.

There are physical scars, too – the dent in his forehead from a sniper's round, the piece of an IRA bullet still lodged in his hand.

Not that the injuries earned him much of a reprieve – days later he was out of hospital and back on the streets where friend and foe often seemed as one.

"One moment people would be thanking us for rescuing a family from a burning house, the next thing you were being shot at," he recalls.

"But we couldn't return fire because there would be a crowd – kids and innocent people – so you couldn't just shoot back.

"You had split seconds to decide – you were thinking of your own life but also the lives of others."

An ex-boxer, Paul talks with a restless energy, peppering his accounts with references to Karl Marx, Winston Churchill and Shakespeare.

Having left the Army in the nineties after 23 years and 65 days, he admits later relying on alcohol to help him cope with his demons.

But about 18 months ago he made up his mind to go cold turkey – a feat he accomplished without any outside help.

And things began to look up in other ways, too, thanks to support from a dedicated team of serving personnel.

The Army Operational Legacy Branch (AOLB) was

“
At times it
made me
suicidal
”

established in 2020 to assist veterans involved in historic investigations, as well as to liaise between the MoD and outside agencies.

By the time they took on Paul's case in December 2021, he had been dealing with the legal system alone for almost a decade – a timeline that the department's Maj Tracey Brooks (AGC (RMP)) says is not unusual.

"These things can go on for years – it's so drawn out and unpleasant and the strain on the veterans is enormous," she explains.

"We were set up because the MoD realised it needed to look after these people. At the moment we have 59 on our books ranging in age from their early sixties to late eighties, and all of them were involved in incidents in Northern Ireland.

"But we know there are many more out there.

"They are a difficult demographic to reach, though, because many aren't online and often they want to run a mile from the military because their experiences on operations have scarred them."

Alongside Maj Brooks, the branch consists of three colleagues at Army HQ plus three regional veteran visiting officers – experienced late-entry officers who travel to wherever an individual is living, including abroad, to render direct assistance.

Not to be mistaken with investigation teams, these personnel play no part in the legal process but offer former soldiers welfare support throughout. And they are keen to spread the word about their existence.

"Some of the veterans we deal with are really struggling," the officer continues.

"We speak to them initially and they say, 'I'm fine'. And when we meet them, they're not fine.

"They're having nightmares and flashbacks, there may be alcohol misuse or other health issues, terrible financial problems, some are on the verge of homelessness – they have complex needs.

"We can do the legwork with the relevant agencies – for example, by helping them get a formal diagnosis of PTSD – which can often change their pension and benefit entitlement, or by arranging for them to have a blue badge if they have mobility issues, that kind of thing.

"So there are real tangible results from the work we do and we're very proud of that."

On top of personal and legal concerns, some veterans also face pressure from the relatives of victims.

Despite being given anonymity in the courts for this very reason, they can sometimes still be cold-called by those seeking answers to why their loved ones died – or receive overt threats, as Paul did.

Quoting from a menacing email he got, he recalls: "It said, 'what the f*** are we going to do with you?'. I got rid of my computer.

"It does play on my mind because there are people out there who know who I am. I still look at car number plates when I'm walking down the road and if I see a window open, I'll flinch because the snipers used to fire from there."

Such incidents are a stark reminder that feelings run »



Foot patrols during The Troubles.
Images have been used to illustrate the period and do not relate to any allegations referenced in the article

AOLB IN NUMBERS 2020

YEAR THE ARMY
OPERATIONAL LEGACY
BRANCH WAS SET UP

59

NUMBER OF VETERANS
CURRENTLY ON ITS BOOKS
WHO ARE INVOLVED IN
LEGAL PROCEEDINGS



» deep, even so many years after open hostilities ceased – and that at the other end of the legal process there are broken families still searching for closure.

“It’s really difficult because on the one hand I feel desperately sorry for the veterans,” says Maj Brooks.

“They are spending the last years of their lives, when they should be enjoying retirement and being with their families, dealing with court appearances and worrying about their security.

“They’ve been carrying trauma around for years without talking about it.

“They joined the Army when they were 18 and got shoved out onto the streets of Northern Ireland because there was a crisis, but they weren’t worldly wise and were simply following orders.

“On the other side, though, you see people who lost loved ones and still don’t understand what happened to them. The human cost is enormous.”

Whatever their personal feelings towards the topic, visiting officers are not allowed to discuss details of the incident in question with the veterans.

As Maj Brooks points out, they may have been directly involved in an unlawful death and be facing a prison sentence, or they may have been called to give evidence as someone who held the keys to the armoury on a given day or signed a piece of paper.

The spectrum is wide, but ultimately the whys and wherefores don’t matter – the team are there to guide them through the process and help in any way they can.

In Paul’s case, referrals to Combat Stress and Op Courage – the NHS mental health support service – led to a diagnosis of complex PTSD and put him on the path to improving his well-being.

He practises mindfulness, reads avidly and is a keen

painter. Landscapes in vivid colours adorn the walls of his house and when his grandchildren visit he does arts and crafts with them.

However, had the AOLB not intervened, he thinks things could have turned out very differently.

“Their support is fantastic and without it I don’t think I’d be here,” he says.

“The whole thing was so frustrating because you never seem to get anywhere. At times it made me suicidal.

“But the past is the past – and you have to change your attitude. I get annoyed with people who complain.”

As it stands, Paul’s case is ongoing. But while he and other veterans face their own private battles, in wider society a debate is raging over whether elderly former soldiers should face prosecution.

Against a backdrop of pressure from campaigners and a string of high-profile cases such as that of Dennis Hutchings, who died while on trial in Belfast last year, the government introduced its Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill.

Currently in its second reading in the House of Lords, the legislation proposes giving veterans immunity in return for their cooperation with a new reconciliation and information recovery commission.

Such a change in the law may come as welcome news to some who served on Operation Banner, however Maj Brooks is in no doubt that millennial veterans could one day find themselves in the dock as the focus moves to more modern conflicts.

Should that be the case, the Army now has a mechanism to offer them the support they will need.

But for now one thing is clear – in the vastly complex, always brutal, business of war there are no winners, and very little justice to be found. ■

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIFE?

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PATIENCE.
KINDNESS.
TIME.
A DESIRE
TO HELP.**



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HITTING THE



FAN

The platoon commanders' battle course sees the return of a legendary rite of passage

A

FTER a year of training at Sandhurst the end is almost in sight for the young officers on the 15-week platoon commanders' battle course at the Infantry Battle School (IBS) in Brecon.

But they can't afford to get complacent at the eleventh hour. Not anymore.

Because after a three-year hiatus, the Fan Dance is back.

The IBS has reintroduced the legendary and fearsome route march this year at the behest of its commanding officer Maj Adam Mackness (R Anglian, pictured right).

"I've been badgering the chain of command to resurrect it since I arrived in post last year," he told *Soldier*.

"A combination of medical and safety concerns around phys events being staged that were not linked to specific training for deployments or exercises, combined with the Covid pandemic, led to direction from on high to suspend Fan Dance for a couple of years.

"But that position has softened now, and the upper »





» echelon supported my request.

"It's an iconic event and we get so much out of it; the phys, the robustness, teamwork, leadership, navigation."

With two companies of around 30 personnel battling it out to be the first to finish the undulating 26-kilometre course – which includes a three-and-a-half kilometre stretcher race across boggy ground at the end – the pressure is on individuals to perform not just for themselves but for their team.

Each person pushes themselves to the absolute limit because the slowest one dictates the pace.

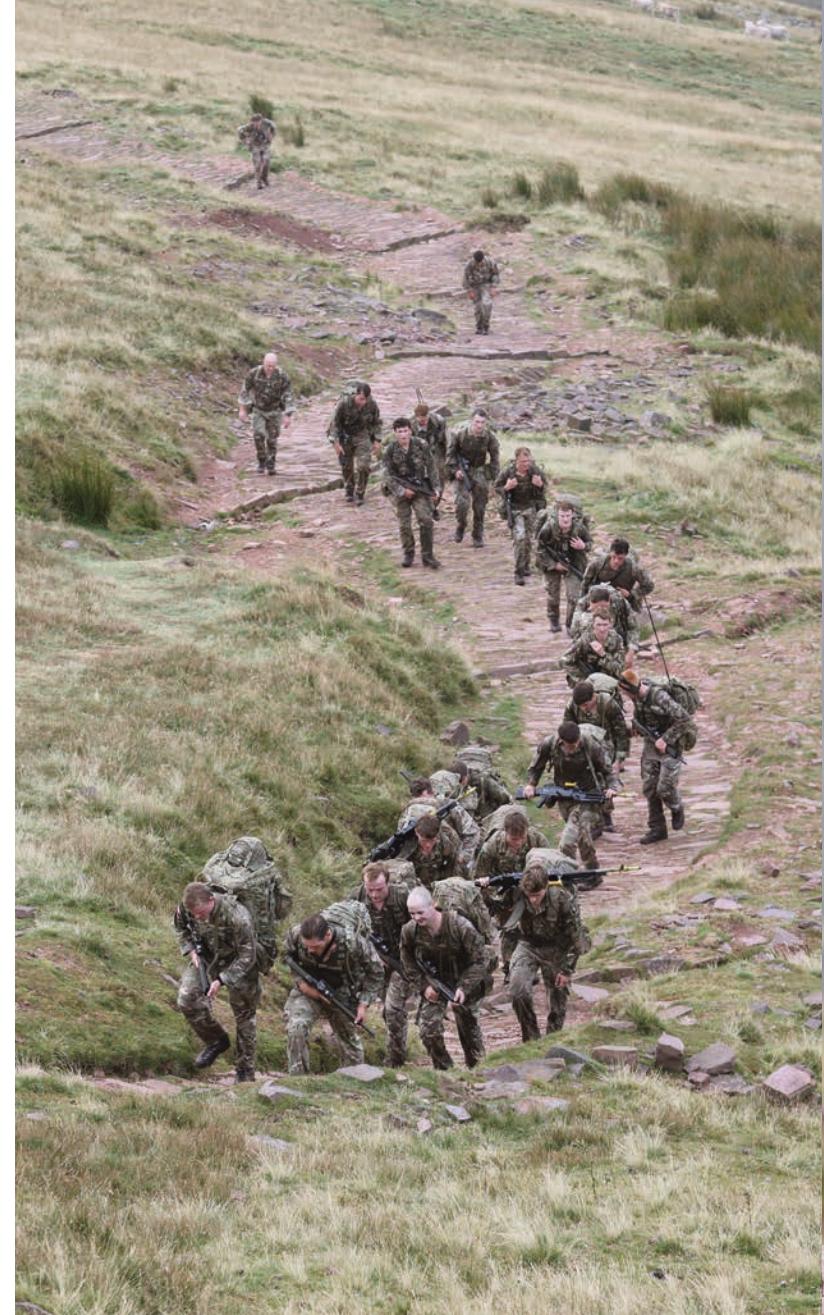
"As I say in my pep talk to the participants at the finish, we've taken them to a deep, dark, horrible place," said Maj Mackness.

"But when they go on operations this is something they can rely on by saying to themselves, 'do you know what, I've done something harder'. They'll always have that in their locker."

For these young officers, fresh out of Sandhurst and about to join their battalions, there is another important dimension to completing the Fan Dance.

"This is utterly instrumental for the infantry in my opinion because it gives you credibility," said 2Lt Ben Sheppard (R Welsh, pictured right). "Everyone at your unit will know you're capable physically and can lead."

The young officer was grateful »



“
It gives you
credibility
”



Dancing to a challenging tune

The Fan Dance was introduced following the Second World War as part of certain elite forces' selection courses.

This stiff challenge has stood the test of time and it is still used in that role, as well as for 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team's Pathfinder Platoon and the IBS battle courses for section commanders, platoon sergeants and platoon commanders.

Students on the latter head round the following 26km route...



It's a long 26km by any measure. And variations are employed on different courses.



Safe not sorry

Technology is helping to push safety levels for events like the Fan Dance to new highs.

In the future, participants in challenges like this will almost certainly be monitored constantly by small, sophisticated sensors transmitting real-time data on vital body functions to medical staff.

Indeed, such technology is already being trialled by the MoD's team of boffins.

But devices that measure prevailing conditions and provide safety margins for arduous training are already relied upon, explained one of the Infantry Battle School's directing staff, Capt Daniel Spray (R Anglian, pictured below).

"Weather plays a huge part in our planning," the officer told *Soldier*.

"The safety of the students at all times is paramount and when I prepare for the Fan Dance it's my first and most important consideration.

"We take wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT)* readings on a regular basis and check in with the Met Office before we stage the march.

"We also carefully plan our movements so that ambulances and CMTs are always in the best places.

"Prior to the event, I have all the permanent staff and safety people in together and we rehearse how we would casevac an individual if there was an incident.

"IBS staff are not here to set the pace – that's student-led – but purely to observe and ensure safety is maintained."

* WBGT is a sophisticated device that calculates ambient temperature, relative humidity, wind, sun angle and cloud cover, and how those things combine to be felt by an individual. Importantly, it signals how much stress is placed on the body by the conditions



“
We now have more technology to ensure the event is as safe as possible
”





» to get the chance to take on the Fan Dance before deploying to Estonia to join his unit, which is leading the Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup.

“Successfully finishing this almost gives you the right, and privilege, to enter an infantry battalion,” he said.

“Obviously, you still have to earn your place in your unit, but this gives you a great starting point.”

Gaining inner confidence is a vital aspect to the course, added 2Lt Toby Hudson (WG, pictured right).

“When you arrive at the camp you can see Pen y Fan poking over the top of the hill, which is pretty intimidating as you know what you’re going up against and it’s there, waiting for you,” he explained.

“But finishing the Dance gives you a degree of extra mental strength, I think.

“If you can push through this, you can push through a lot of other things and it’s an icon of Brecon and the Battle School itself so it’s great to know that you’ve done it.

“The closest we came to this at Sandhurst was the log race or Exercise Long Reach in the Black Mountains, where we covered 70km during 36 hours with a Bergan of 20kg or so.

“This is more intense, though, taking us about five hours and carrying 22kg.

“It’s very taxing but there are some incredible highs as well, such as when we got to the top of Fan y Big at about six in the morning and the cloud was below us just as the sun was rising – the scenery was stunning.

“Even though we were hanging out we still took a moment to enjoy the view.” ■



Got the makings of a platoon commander?

The platoon commanders’ battle course qualifies its Infantry participants to lead in close combat. It includes:

- **Week 1: Ex First Look**
(admin, weapon handling tests, nav/phys assessments)
- **Week 2: Ex Dragon’s Blood**
(infantry fundamentals)
- **Week 3: Ex Dragon’s Eye 1**
(offensive actions)
- **Week 4: Ex Dragon’s Claw**
(support weapons and complex terrain)
- **Week 5: Ex Dragon’s Eye 2**
(defence and patrols)
- **Week 6: Ex Dragon’s Fist** (urban)
- **Week 7: Officership**
(wider responsibilities of platoon command)
- **Week 8-9: Ex Grim Warrior**
(final exercise)
- **Week 10: Ex Fan Dance**



There is also an additional five weeks of live-fire tactical training for those whose battalions have loaded them on this course (they gain the “A” qualification which means they can then conduct advanced ranges).

Breakfast of CHAMPIONS

Vets and soldiers forge friendships, chewing the fat...

FORMER infantryman James Wallace remembers the life he once had – a reality far divorced from his civvy career running a pub in the Kent countryside.

These days the business of managing staff and dealing with unruly patrons are the limits of the op – but as a soldier on the front line he commanded troops on life-or-death deployments.

And in the mid-2000s, when the world was grappling with a ruthless terrorism and the UK was involved in brigade-level actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was a very busy man.

“I was in Basra on Telic 6 in 2005,” the 46-year-old former sergeant with 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards reflects as he surveys the rural scene outside The Peacock in Goudhurst, near Tunbridge Wells.

“Although I didn’t go to Helmand, I did deploy to other difficult places which could turn violent.”

As the waft of frying bacon drifts in from the kitchen, twitching the nose of the former NCO’s pet bull mastiff, Wallace retreats back to the dim coolness of the bar and something of his old life.

The lexicon of soldier talk is again beginning to fill the air.

At 0900 on the last Saturday of each month, The Peacock is the venue for former troops to meet up for a bite to eat with likeminded friends. Part of a UK-wide group, the Cranbrook and District Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club offers a forum for ex-personnel – and their serving contemporaries – to gather, have a brew and generally chew the fat.

“We usually get a crowd of 30 or so turning out for the morning – although more than 100 people have joined in the three years the organisation has been up-and-running,” Wallace says. “They have free run of the pub until 1200, when I open as normal.” He pauses before laughing: “Some stay on for a pint after eating too.”

The brainchild of one-time soldier Dereck Hardman (see panel on page 44), the breakfast club network grew out of a motor

Words: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Graeme Main





engineering project for ex-personnel at Kingston-Upon-Hull, Yorkshire. Noticing how participants enjoyed meeting up for a morning buttery and brew, he took the step of rolling out a much wider scheme. There are now more than 400 accredited venues in the UK as well as overseas, and they are free to join for current and ex-troops.

While the age range crosses the decades and various operational theatres, many of those arriving at The Peacock certainly do not fit the traditional veteran stereotype. Far from being silver-haired men, the majority here are young, forging new



66
I have friends now
who have experiences
similar to my own
99

lives on civvy street after years in uniform.

Gareth Skinner, a former WO2 who served extensively in the Middle East, says some are initially surprised by the more youthful dynamic. "There is a common view that the veteran community tends to be made up of older guys – this is not always the case," the 44-year-old ex-member of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers says.

"I was on four tours of Iraq, starting with the first Op Telic, but it is not all that long ago – and there are quite a few people here who come from the same era." »

» Having seen friends suffer from post-traumatic stress as a result of military service, Skinner points out that the club also acts as an important signpost to mental health help.

But he believes a venue where ex-personnel can mix with others who have similar experiences can pay dividends in itself – good memories and humour setting a healthy tone for the coming day.

Tucking into a full English, Steve McWilliams has already been on the receiving end of his colleagues' direct banter. As a former Royal Corps of Transport driver, his buddies have reassigned his cap badge "rickshaws, camels and taxis".

And he certainly served at a demanding time – after signing up as a teenager in 1967 he had completed five Op Banner tours in Northern Ireland by the time he left 12 years later. He then donned a new uniform with Cleveland Police.

Former corporal McWilliams – who admits his time serving left a mental mark on him – says meeting other veterans has helped.

"My son, who was also in the Army, is a member at Cranbook and encouraged me to join my local club at the Last Post in Stockton-on-Tees," he says.

"I'd been through a rough time but the welcome I received there was so warm – I have friends now who have experiences similar to my own.

"The first thing I was asked when I joined was my Army service number – you remember it years later and I quickly felt at home," the 70-year-old continues. "There was a rapport with the people there straight away."

Given the barbed humour being exchanged, it seems McWilliams has rapidly found a cohort of friends. The table is alive with tales from Northern Ireland to the Balkans, as well as regiments current and amalgamated.

John Hislop, once a member of The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars, is perched at a corner of the group. In true Army spirit, his fork is plunged into a surplus fry-up – the spoils of which are being divided with other takers.

Embarking on a life under armour, he went on to serve during Op Granby – the Gulf War of 1991 – along with postings that included Germany. Now aged 63, he says the club keeps up the camaraderie of times past.

"I missed military life, and this is a great place to meet," he says with a smile.

"It is also fun winding each other up and taking the piss – squaddie humour doesn't always land well with civvies."

The sentiment is shared by club founder Steve Davies – a former corporal with 3rd Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets – who points out that the mix of backgrounds provides scope for sharing stories as well as new friendships.

"There is no agenda here – just an opportunity to meet and talk," he concludes. "Breakfast is a way of coming together, of maintaining our community."

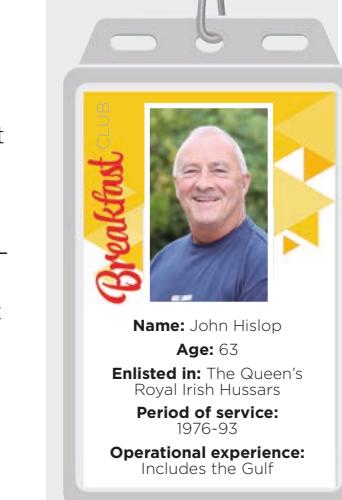
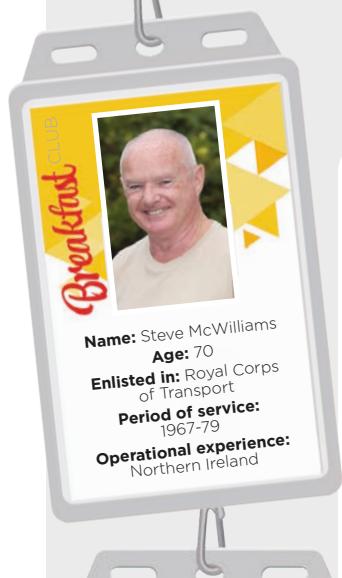
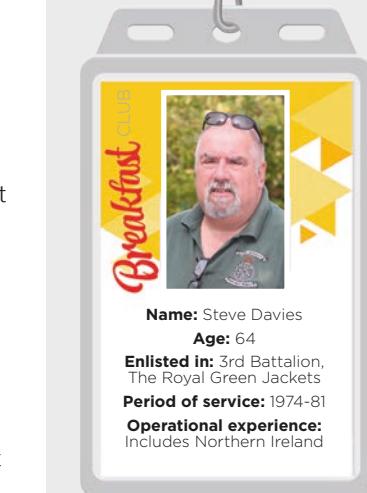
This is certainly true. There is a shared bond with soldiers that is rarely found on civvy street – unsurprising given the unique nature of military life as well as the sacrifice it demands from troops and their loved ones.

The default position of a soldier is to look out for their friends – and this remains long after service has ended.

Behind dark humour and banter, the welfare of pals remains at the heart of those on this most informal of morning parades. ■

Snap, Crackle and Pop...

Breakfast Club members show their cards



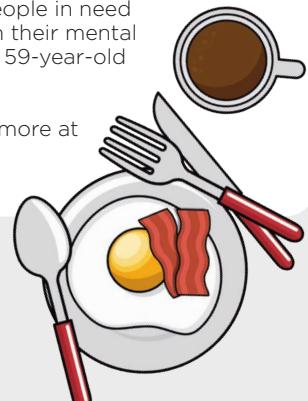
Tucking in...

THE brainchild of Dereck Hardman, the network of breakfast clubs grew out of a military vehicle restoration project the ex-sapper had started.

Having procured a BV206 back in 2007, he had been working on transforming the vehicle into a novelty civvy limo with the help of a former REME pal. Several other one-time personnel would turn up at the workshop for a butty and brew during the Saturday morning work – and Hardman sensed a trend.

The former soldier – who served for ten years in the Royal Engineers before leaving in 1991 – said he had been taken aback with the success of the project. "We have been able to signpost people in need of help with their mental health," the 59-year-old added.

Find out more at afvbc.net





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'Is this removals negligence?'

RECENTLY had the displeasure of moving to a posting overseas.

The process was complicated and confusing, but my biggest bugbear was the removals company.

They mixed up dates frequently and tried to change my appointment six days before moving from Bulford to Ulm in Germany, as they had accidentally booked me to move me on a bank holiday.

As a result, the people who worked on the day were not the usual staff but untrained and, frankly, dangerous.

They destroyed a glass cabinet, lost some of our plates, packaged things I had clearly asked them not to and broke our garden table by piling boxes on it.

One removed the cable from a lamp which was still plugged into the wall and left the live cable on the floor which I stood on, thankfully wearing shoes. They could have actually killed me and, luckily, my 18-month-old son wasn't in the house.

After trying to get some redress from the company, I was ignored for weeks. When I finally got a response they simply told me I should claim on insurance.

I have contacted the removals ombudsman but they have not replied, so can we claim compensation for negligence during removals?

I am nearly £500 out of pocket for damages and charges, and will now have to pay the increased premiums on my insurance if I claim.

And yet they continue to operate on a lucrative government contract with impunity, knowing full well they won't have to perform to get paid.

I am clearly the loser in this situation.
— WO2 Dave Hampson, REME

Lt Col Kevin Carpenter, Transport and Movement Policy Branch, Strategic Command, replies:

Users are responsible for securing insurance cover for the removal and any storage, separate from their normal home contents policy, noting that disturbance allowance includes an element for purchasing transit insurance.

The full responsibilities of the contractor and the users of the Global Removals Management Service (GRMS) are detailed in **JSP 800**, volume two. These are reiterated in the documentation provided by the contractor before the move.

Subcontractor Agility, responsible for the GRMS contract, replies:
We investigated this incident and could not find a complaint form lodged using the approved route via the Agility portal. Therefore, our quality team was not sighted to this particular issue and could not engage earlier to avoid escalation.

Nonetheless, the team apologises for the stress that this move has generated. In-depth scrutiny has taken place to ensure continuous improvement and wider observations were passed to the global removals working group.

As part of the move process, personnel are provided with preparatory documents as well as information about taking out additional insurance and the limitations of not doing so.

“
They could have actually killed me
”

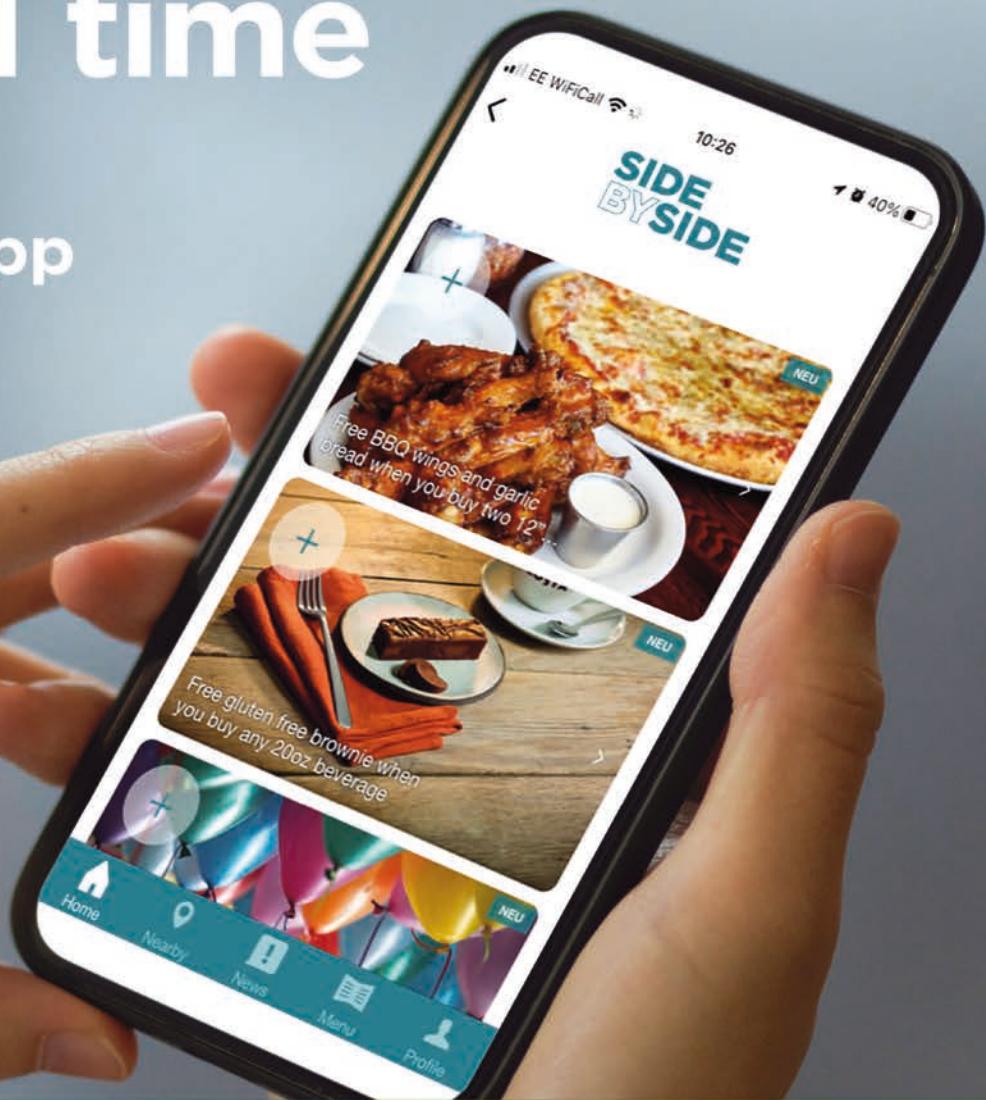
YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style. Before 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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‘PALTRY PAY RISE NOT KEEPING UP’

● DURING the last Rusi Land Warfare Conference it was interesting to see the most popular online question was: “Soldiers will fight if they feel valued and trust the chain of command. After 12 years of pay freezes or sub-inflation increases, what pay rise should we expect this year?”

An answer wasn’t provided by the panel. But now, of course, we have one. Armed Forces personnel up to one star will receive an extra 3.75 per cent, while officers ranked two star and above will get 3.5 per cent.

When announcing the rises, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said he believed the pay award would benefit the whole of the Armed Forces and support retention.

Really? Since 2010 Army pay (for the majority) has increased by a derisory 18.2 per cent, while UK-wide average pay has increased by 39.1 per cent.

In this same period allowances have been frozen or risen only marginally – motor mileage allowance and day subsistence are just two examples. Yet food and fuel costs have risen massively.

According to government statistics the cost of food and drink has gone up 12.6 per cent year-on-year as of July 2022.

The prices for our accommodation and meals in camp have also gone up and continue to rise.

So how does the Army expect to retain soldiers if they are offered a sub-inflation pay rise this year, especially as if they left their pensions would be accruing in line with the consumer price index, which is around ten per cent?

– Name and address supplied

GOT A GRIPE?

THEN WHY NOT GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST?

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

“
It
doesn't
change the
truth
”



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

Gurkha's step down in provision

● WHY does a transfer – voluntary or not – from the Brigade of Gurkhas strip the individual of the compassionate provisions they were entitled to?

The fact that a serving person moved from one cap badge to another doesn't change the truth that their parents are still living in Nepal.

JSP 751, part one, volume three, section six, states: “Non-UK personnel, including soldiers of Nepalese origin who have transferred out of the Brigade of Gurkhas to other arms, corps and regiments, whose in-scope relatives are domiciled overseas, will only be considered for compassionate travel back to the UK (if serving overseas) or the individual's country of nationality. The latter will be assessed using the 'nationality' and 'second nationality' fields on the individual's JPA record.”

– **SSgt Rabindra Shrestha, R Signals**

Maj Gary Power, Deputy Chief of Staff, Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas, replies: All Gurkhas serve under the Gurkha terms and conditions of service (GTACOS); a bespoke package agreed between the governments of the UK and Nepal which differs to those of the wider Army and defence.

One of the five employment principles of Gurkhas is that they must be Nepalese citizens when they join the British Army and remain so during their service in the brigade.

For the purpose of travel and compassionate leave at public expense, this is considered a legal,

moral and welfare obligation on the part of the UK to Nepal.

As Gurkhas are recruited from their home country with the consent of its government they should be entitled to travel at public expense back to Nepal for compassionate reasons.

However, as you identify this entitlement ceases when an individual transfers out of the brigade to the wider Army or elsewhere in defence. The individual is no longer considered a serving Gurkha and is no longer employed under GTACOS.

At the point of transfer, he or she will serve under the wider Army's terms and conditions and will no longer be covered by the Gurkhas' bespoke agreement. The same policies and entitlements for all serving UK and foreign and Commonwealth personnel also apply to them.

When they naturalise as British citizens (Gurkhas cannot naturalise while serving within the Brigade of Gurkhas) they cannot be employed under GTACOS.

When transferring out of the brigade, these troops are informed that they will lose certain entitlements (including compassionate travel at public expense) that they used to receive as part of their package.

It is up to them to consider these factors when making a decision about such a transfer.



CAREERS

SaluteMyJob has launched a cyber career jumpstart programme to attract, train, qualify and place members of the Forces community into jobs. Visit salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways

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 who have a disability or injury resulting from their military service – including mental health conditions. See open.ac.uk



COMPETITIONS

HOAY winners

July: Maurice Gibson, Inverness; Stephanie Sustins, Tredegar; Tracy Loe, Salsbury **August:** Helen Doidge, Waterloo Lines, Warminster

Spinelines winners

July: Tim Carpenter **August:** Simon Fendick, Nottingham



SEARCHLINE

Armed Forces charity Little Troopers

Troopers has opened a therapy programme for teenagers feeling the impact of family life in the military. The initiative, beginning this month, offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified therapist for those up to age 18. Referrals can be made by a parent, school, community group or welfare worker. Visit littletroopers.net

The University of Chester's Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans is looking to learn more about the experiences of former British Army personnel from the Indian subcontinent and West Indies. The research – funded by charity The Forces in Mind Trust – is examining how service shaped the lives of ex-troops and their loved ones. Contact veterans@chester.ac.uk for details.

Lanyard collector Craig Pennels is trying to achieve a Guinness World Record for the largest collection of these items. He also wants challenge coins. Can you add to his collection? Email lanyard.challengercoincollector@gmail.com



WELFARE

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 014 2381

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 forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

A charity that can 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 through 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 domestic abuse victims 01823 334244

mankind.org.uk

Relate
UK provider of relationship support
relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The 25th Anniversary of the **Artillery Clerks' Association** will be held in the Royal Artillery sergeants' mess, Larkhill on June 23-25, 2023. Visit artyclerkassn.org for further details and updates.

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 966

TEN details have been changed in this picture of troops from 1 Infantry Training Battalion conducting a pass-off parade to mark the end of their combat infantryman's course at Catterick.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 966, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details, including email address, by November 30. 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 correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a set of six Bellicia: Knights of the Luftwaffe puzzles – a new 1,000-piece jigsaw range from Zee Productions.

Worth £17.99 each, and beautifully illustrated, this would make the ideal Christmas gift for any military history enthusiast. With each puzzle depicting a different aircraft of the Second World War, it is a prize that will offer someone a highly rewarding hobby over the festive season.

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





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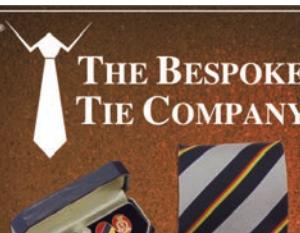
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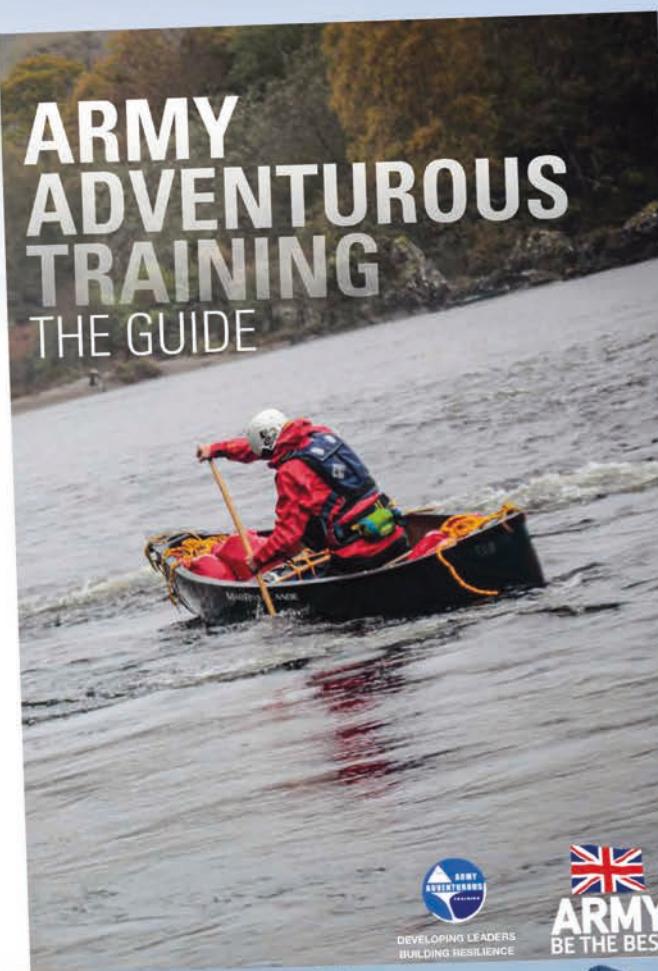
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REVIEWS



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PICK OF THE MONTH:

Two Point Campus

Would-be deans tasked with making studies pay

Out now on all formats

► WITH many freshers already halfway through their first university term, the terrifying passage of time since this reviewer left higher education is beginning to dawn.

In the distant days of art college, the first guest speaker on our journalism course was a reporter who had been on *Op Granby* in the Gulf, the country was being run by John Major and the irritating Bryan Adams track *Everything I Do* was topping the charts.

Some things never change, however, and for the angry leftists running the student newsletter the target for vilification was often the capitalists seen as cashing in on education.

This covered a broad remit, including catering contractors, landlords and politicians – all while attending lectures that usually started at some ungodly afternoon hour.

It is with some irony, then, that this month's video game pick is all about making money from those enlisting in university.

Two Point Campus is a tongue-in-cheek, real-time strategy offering that puts players in the dean's cap and gown.

The aim is to build a revenue pile from the degree business.

Starting with a blank canvas, assembling the university from the ground up is the first task before picking courses, hiring the lecturers to carry them off and bringing youngsters through enrolment.



GAMES



Having established the institution, the route to success then requires keeping students happy by providing decent halls of residence, laying on facilities for them to let off steam and setting up the right learning infrastructure.

In the game's education market economy all of this comes at a price – but the better the standards, the more people will be attracted to the courses. If the institution commands prestige, then the books will look healthier.

While this sounds a simple undertaking, pulling off the multifaceted task in real time quickly becomes a tough ask.

As well as managing the fabric of the building, bosses soon find their email inbox burgeoning with student demands while eccentric staff also cause dramas if they are not managed effectively.

And the appeal of studying soon falls if facilities are not maintained or the undergraduates find fault with teaching standards or creature comforts.

Thankfully, the game's three-dimensional interface – a throwback to similar-themed titles of the late 1990s and early 2000s – is perfect for the task.

Building the likes of lecture theatres, hiring personnel and tweaking priorities is carried out via a point-and-click system that performed well on the Switch version we sampled.

And with a tutorial seamlessly sewn into the game mechanics – in which an adviser keeps aspiring deans abreast of their tasks and options – it does not take long to be drawn into the action while becoming absorbed in

the humour.

Bizarre courses with titles ranging from "virtual normality" to "money wrangling" set the tone from the off, while the CVs of lecturers and other members of staff competing for jobs are often hilarious.

The real-time strategy genre may not be as fashionable as it was back in the early 2000s heyday but titles such as *Two Point Campus* are a reminder of how compelling it can be when it is well thought through and executed.

Clever little touches – such as the narration of the game through a university radio station – add to the atmosphere, while the personal satisfaction of good management is a feeling rarely experienced in video gaming these days.

The open world nature of the title means there is plenty of scope for future downloadable content, too.

But there is an abundance of gameplay straight out of the box as well, in sessions that will happily eat up the downtime hours.

All in all, this one is a winner and well worth the investment – the 18-year-old incarnation of this reviewer would be up in arms, but hiking up university fees has never been so much fun. ■

VERDICT:

Two Point Campus graduates with honours



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

Enjoyed managing a university? Try this diverse strategy pairing...

Two Point Hospital

The precursor to the *Campus* outing, players are pitted as a medical director running a US-style hospital facility in this enjoyable all-formats offering. High standards of care are required to balance the books in a game that packs the same dynamic and off-the-wall humour as its successor. It's another entertaining romp where eccentric doctors, odd patients and a bizarre line-up of fictional medical conditions fast become a headache.



Evil Genius II

Anyone who has ever had the inclination to be on the villain's side in a James Bond movie will find their ambitions well satisfied in this PC and console outing. Gamers have a choice of parodies to assume – ranging from caricatures



of Ernst Stavro Blofeld to Hugo Drax and the dodgy Col Rosa Klebb – in a quest for world domination involving disciplines such as lair building and henchman management. Highly recommended.



Medieval

A great warrior, flawlessly captured

PICK OF THE MONTH:

► THE most expensive Czech movie ever made, *Medieval* is out now on digital channels. And for fans of enthralling battle scenes, it is well worth adding to the download list.

The historical drama stars **Ben Foster** (*Lone Survivor*, *X-Men: The Last Stand*) as Jan Zizka – the legendary Bohemian general who never lost a clash during the Hussite Wars.

Wikipedia at the ready for this one, but the Czech Republic was historically known as Bohemia and its national hero was famed for, among other things, his innovative tactics – including the use of cannon and armoured wooden trailers more than 500 years before the invention of the modern-day tank.

Filmed on location and sprinkled with some fantastic battle scenes, authentic castles and a top-draw cast who do not disappoint (**Michael Caine**, **Matthew Goode**, **Sophie Lowe**), this English-language interpretation of a remarkable period is one *Soldier* readers will want to catch.

It transports its viewers to the 14th century world of the Holy Roman Empire, which is plummeting into chaos while King Wenceslaus feuds with this brother for control of the empty throne.



Pictures: Vertical Entertainment

MOVIES



➤ Daring and righteous Zizka embarks on a mission to kidnap the fiancee of a powerful lord. And what follows is a series of brutal clashes and small-scale engagements, which prove to be the movie's greatest strength and are truly quite special. The swordsmanship alone makes this a must-watch.

As Zizka's captive becomes caught in a dangerous political game between the two monarchs, the hero falls in love with her and attempts to liberate her by fighting back with a rebel army and battling the corruption that runs rampant among those vying for power.

If you enjoy historical action in the form of bloody battle scenes, violence and greed – and have a spare two hours and five minutes on your hands – this is the flick for you.

In my view it was \$20m well spent – and comes highly recommended. ■

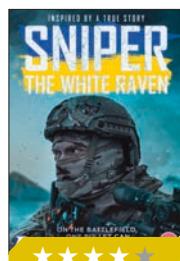
VERDICT:

An epic medieval historical drama



REVIEW: SGT ADAM JACKSON, PARA

MOVIE RELEASES



★★★★★

Sniper: White Raven
Out now

WHEN Russian commandos execute the pregnant wife of science teacher Mykola (Pavlo Aldoshyn) they unleash his alter ego, the White Raven – a one-man

army not seen since the 1980s

heyday of *Rambo*. After running away and finding himself with the local militia, the protagonist chances upon an adhoc sniper school outside the Donbas. Here, and clearly echoing world events, Raven begins to learn a new trade and starts to take his revenge on the occupiers. It all comes to a head with an *Enemy at the Gates*-esque duel between Raven and his Russian counterpart. Full of action where it's needed, and tense suspense in other places, this Ukrainian film is a modern foreign language military classic.

Scott Roberts, ex-Rifles



PICK OF THE MONTH:

Veterans in Politics

Reservist reveals line-up for season six of political podcast

➤ STAFF sergeant Jonny Ball is the founder of CampaignForce – a cross-party initiative to get the military community more involved in government at all levels.

The latest series of his podcast *Veterans in Politics* launched last month and here, the former Regular tells *Soldier* what's coming up on the show and why he believes personnel have so much to offer.

Who are you interviewing this season?

It's quite Army-heavy. There's Johnny Mercer, Dan Jarvis, Tobias Ellwood, James Cleverly – a Reservist in the Royal Artillery – and the latest Liberal Democrat veteran in politics, Richard Foord (ex-AGC (ETS)). We also have some less well-known names, including former bomb disposal officer and



Conservative activist Rachael Finch and Mike Tapp (ex-Int Corps), the Labour parliamentary candidate in Dover.

The podcast has been going for two years – why did you start it?

I used to listen to quite a lot of veteran mental health podcasts, not knowing that I would one day draw on that knowledge when I had my own brush with trauma – I suffered a near limb amputation in a motorcycle accident in 2019. Podcasts gave me coping tools and a place to go, so they pretty much saved my life.

How can podcasters stand out in a crowded market?

By carving out a niche and sustaining it with regular content. There are loads of veteran and political podcasts out there – usually by famous people or journalists, whereas I'm just a Reservist sat in his shed. But no one else is doing both. A lot of podcasts fail after four or five episodes, but two years down the line I'm still going.

Do you worry that the current turmoil in the UK government switches people off politics?

No, I actually think it's the opposite – we in the Armed Forces are used to facing crises, whether domestic or international. We are the community people turn to in times of trouble. So the fact we

are facing a political crisis means there is ripe opportunity for military veterans to stand up and serve again. The public know we are reliable in that sense.

Being a politician looks like a thankless task – is there a common thread that motivates your guests?

They miss that sense of purpose when they leave the military and want to feel it again. The other factor is they are fed up with local government not delivering for military families in the communities where they've resettled, or they see the lack of values in the political elite and think "that's just not good enough, I can do a better job". So they're almost like reluctant politicians – and those are the kind of politicians we need.

What do you hope listeners take from your podcast?

The hardest thing in anything – whether it's joining the gym or changing jobs – is making the decision. Starting a political career is really difficult and what the podcast offers is an insight into other people's stories. I hope that inspires others, who might be quietly thinking about it, to start their own journey.

- Season six of the *Veterans in Politics* podcast is available now on streaming services or via campaignforce.co.uk



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INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



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SOLDIER SPORT



◀ FULLY FOCUSED

ARMY cyclists hit top form in rural Leicestershire as they successfully retained the Inter-Services Road Race Championships team titles. The men and women dominated the standings in their respective events to end the season on a high. Read a full report on pages 68-69...

Picture: Ssgt Deb Taylor, RLC



Pictures: SWpix.com

ROBERTS EXCITED FOR HIGHS OF HOME WORLD CUP

ENGLAND rugby league star SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) believes home advantage could be crucial as the team begins its quest for World Cup glory this month.

The 33-year-old is part of a 24-strong squad for the tournament, which gets under way on November 1. And with big crowds expected at stadiums across the North, the St Helens ace told *SoldierSport* there has been real excitement in the camp ahead of kick-off.

"We have never experienced crowds like this before," she added. "More than 20,000 tickets have already been sold at some venues and it will be packed out.

"I've played in some big games for St Helens, but nothing like this. The singing spurs you on and they cheer the massive hits – it fills you with confidence and feels like we have an extra player on the field."

Roberts has enjoyed a stellar

two years at Saints, winning a domestic treble in 2021 before lifting the Challenge Cup again this season.

However, she sustained a calf injury in May's showpiece fixture, meaning she faced a race against time to prove her fitness ahead of the World Cup.

"It was a relief, to be honest," the soldier said as she reflected on her inclusion in the squad. "It has been a season of ups and downs with injuries.

"It is an amazing honour to represent my country on home soil and is probably a journey I will not get to make again.

"I was out for six weeks after the Challenge Cup final, and it was a long process to get back. It also messes with you mentally – everyone else was working towards the World Cup, whereas I just had to focus on my rehab."

Roberts returned as a substitute in Saints' defeat to Leeds Rhinos in the Super



**"IT HAS
BEEN A
SEASON
OF UPS
AND
DOWNS"**

League semi-finals in early September and, despite the lack of recent playing time, insists she is up for the challenge of facing off against the world's best.

"I still played ten Super League matches this season," she explained. "Since my injury I've been through the process of contact training, running and change of direction drills – I was good to go for a full 80 minutes in that semi-final.

"But it is difficult to walk straight back into a team full of internationals when you have been away for so long."

With the domestic season complete and the final squad announced, Roberts said the players have been able to focus on the task ahead in a more relaxed manner after what was an intense build-up.

"There was a lot of competition for places, and nobody can just expect to go to a World Cup and play," she said.

"It was so competitive every time we met up and you were constantly wondering if the coaches thought you were doing well enough."

"As players that can be draining, and you could tell the squad announcement came as a massive relief."

"I have full confidence in the girls and in truth I would have picked the same players."

"We have been keeping an eye on the test matches from the other side of the world and I'm confident we can rip into the Australians and win. Yes they are paid professionals, but they will not get it easy."

The World Cup was due to be held in 2021 but was delayed by a year due to Covid.

Had it been staged when originally planned, Roberts would have headed into the tournament in fine form having scored 16 tries in ten Super League outings but she was in philosophical mood when reflecting on the change in schedule.

"You have to look at it positively," she said. "A year ago we didn't really know the other squad members that well."

"We were all competing against each other and would then meet up at weekends. But because of Covid we could not socialise, so we didn't get to know each other."

"Personally, I would have rather played last year as I'm now 33, as opposed to 32, but as a group we've had more camps and more preparation, which can only work in our favour."



WORLD CUP IN NUMBERS

TEAMS COMPETING IN THE MEN'S WORLD CUP

16

NATIONS LINING UP IN BOTH THE WOMEN'S AND WHEELCHAIR TOURNAMENTS

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TRIES IN TEN ST HELENS' GAMES FOR SSgt CARRIE ROBERTS IN THE 2022 SEASON

15

PREVIOUS STAGINGS OF THE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP - THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS HELD IN 2000. ONLY TWO TEAMS HAVE EVER WON IT - AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

5



Picture: SWpix.com

YEARS OF SACRIFICE PAY OFF

THIS year's World Cup sees the men's, women's and wheelchair tournaments running simultaneously in a festival of rugby league – and the Army will be represented in all three.

With SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) named in the England women's squad, the Service also saw Gnr Mitieli Vulikijapani (RA) called up by the Fiji men's team.

Veteran James Simpson, who served with The Yorkshire Regiment and 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery, Royal Artillery, completed the roll call when he was included in the England wheelchair squad.

"It was a huge relief to find out I had been picked," the Leeds Rhinos star, who lost both legs above the knee in an IED blast in Afghanistan, said.

"I'm really looking forward to it and the players are so excited. For me, it has been years of hard work, dedication

and sacrifice to get to this point and I cannot wait to get out there."

"The team is the best it has ever been and the competition for shirts is so fierce."

"We are going to put on a show, and we wouldn't be doing this if we didn't think we could win it."

London's Copperbox Arena will host England's group games, which get under way with the clash against Australia on November 3. The final will be played in Manchester on November 18.

Vulikijapani's selection comes on the back of a strong season with Super League outfit Hull FC, for whom he made 17 appearances and signed a one-year contract extension in August.

Fiji lost to Australia in their opening game of the tournament but bounced back to defeat Italy a week later.

They were facing Scotland as this issue went to press. ■

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STORMERS ON TOP

LAST season's Premiership runners-up, 12 Regiment, Royal Artillery, began the new rugby union campaign in style with an 18-12 win over defending champions 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

The infantrymen made a strong start with a converted try early on, but their rivals hit back with a score of their own, followed by a penalty, to lead 8-7 at the break.

Bdr Tex Vunakagi extended the lead as the Stormers dominated the early exchanges of the second half before 1 Yorks hit back as some slick handling resulted in a try on the left. A successful penalty then sealed the contest for their opponents.

Victorious skipper LBdr Matt Waqanisau said: "We were raring to go after what happened in last season's final. We had a few new boys in, and it was great to start with a win."

"We look forward to going up against 1 Yorks – it's always a physical encounter."

In the other match in the season-opening double-header, 8 Training Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers downed 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment 30-15.



REDS SPURRED ON FOR NEW SEASON



**"THEY
ARE THE
BEST
OF THE
BEST"**

THE Army women's football team have been training alongside some of the leading lights in the ladies' game as they ready themselves for a fresh shot at Inter-Services glory.

The Reds were second best to champions the Royal Air Force last time out and will be determined to wrest the title from their grasp when the contest resumes in the new year.

As part of their early preparations, the players took to the turf alongside Women's Super League outfit Tottenham Hotspur for a session under the watchful eye of the club's head coach Rehanne Skinner.

As well as training with the soldiers on the pitch, the Spurs stars were given a taste of life in uniform at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where they received briefings and toured the facilities before engaging in tasks such as role fitness tests.

It is hoped the link between the two organisations can continue to grow, with both sides

recognising the benefits.

"We have learnt about some of the things the Army women have done and what they do on a daily basis," Skinner said.

"They are very committed to everything they are trying to achieve and that's inspirational."

"We have learnt through some of their functional testing, the things that are important for being in difficult situations, how to work together as a team and the resilience element associated with that."

"Hopefully that can help us moving forward."

SSgt Yvette Kemp (RAPTC), assistant coach of the Army women's development team, helped organise the event and said it was a day to remember for the Service players.

"This is a WSL team and to be coached by the best of the best is fantastic," she added.

"We watch these girls week-in, week-out so to be playing next to them is something they will never forget." ■



SPORT SHORTS



Marathon masters

ARMY athletes celebrated a clean sweep of titles at this year's Inter-Services Marathon Championships.

Staged as part of the London Marathon, the event saw Maj Paul Molyneux (RAMC, pictured) crowned men's individual champion in a time of 2hr 25min 1sec – an effort that also saw him finish third in the masters' category and 18th in the non-elite standings.

Strong runs from SSgt Kim Bowling (RAPTC) and Cpl Danny Titcomb (REME) helped the Army win the men's team title.

Cpl Belinda Houghton (RAMC) clocked a time of 2hr 44min 3sec to become the individual female champion – also finishing in the non-elite top ten.

She was ably supported by Cpl Jessie Lutwyche (QARANC) and Capt Rosie Wild (RA) as the Army women sealed the team prize.



Picture: Paul Paxford

Cyclocross takes off

THE 2022 Army Cyclocross Series continues at pace this month with the second leg rolling into Chetwynd Barracks in Nottinghamshire.

The race follows a successful opening round in Nuneaton and will be staged on November 9. The schedule concludes at ATR Grantham on December 7.

For more details on the events follow [@britarmycycling](#) on Twitter and Instagram or visit the Army Cycling Facebook page.

COURT APPEAL ON THE RISE



THE Army squash season steps up a gear this month as the Inter-Corps Championships return to Aldershot from November 8-10.

Coming on the back of a successful outing at the UK Armed Forces Individual Championships, organisers are hoping the event will build on the growing momentum in the sport post-Covid.

In an all-Army final, Maj Elaine Radcliffe beat Capt Michelle Higgins (both RAMC) to clinch the women's title, while Capt Gaz Hall (RA) won the men's master crown.

"It was a fantastic couple of days," Radcliffe said. "The Army coach gave us instructions to fine tune our games and that proved successful as I overcame the Royal Air Force number one to reach the final.

"I cannot wait to come back in February and take on the RAF and Royal Navy in the full UK Armed Forces Championships."

Around 700 players are currently registered with the Army Squash Association and, with an estimated 500 also playing socially, secretary Lt Col (Retd) Dave Campey told *SoldierSport* hopes are high for further expansion in the game.

"We have a new event in the form of the Army Individual Open Championships and are holding the Reserve Championships for the second time in February," he said.

"We will also be looking at unit-level squash, using a digital programme to organise games within a local area and match players of a similar level.

"But it's not just about what happens on court, we are trying to create a family and community feel.

"I think we are in a really good place." ■

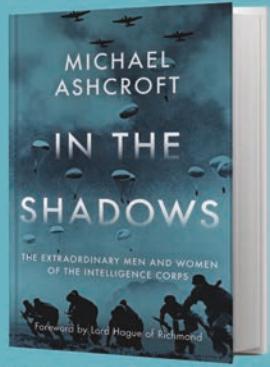
**"WE ARE
TRYING
TO
CREATE
A FAMILY
FEEL"**



THE UK Armed Forces women were in action against Tonga in the plate final of the International Defence Rugby Competition as this issue went to press. The team, which includes Bdr Beth Dainton (RA, pictured), suffered back-to-back defeats to Australia and Fiji in the group stages but qualified for the showpiece with victory over Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. The two-and-a-half week tournament was staged in New Zealand and featured seven military sides.

Picture: UKAF Rugby

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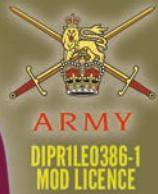
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DOMINANT IN DEFENCE

ARMY MAINTAINS POSITION OF STRENGTH AS MEN AND WOMEN RETAIN CYCLING TEAM TITLES

TITLE holders the Army produced a dominant display on two wheels to claim an impressive double at the Inter-Services Road Race Championships.

Capt Rosie Wild (RA) and Sgt James Bevan (REME) were crowned women's and men's individual winners respectively, and with soldiers packing the top-ten places in both races the Reds emphatically captured the team trophies.

For Sgt Mike Cripps (RE) the result completed a successful first season as men's team manager and he was quick to praise the collective effort shown by his riders.

"The event was delayed due to the passing of the Queen, so our preparation wasn't ideal," he told *SoldierSport*.

"There is a lot of depth within the Army Cycling Union and it was fantastic to see people stepping up."

"The likes of SSgt Ben Smith (Int Corps) and Capt Mark Greenwood (RAPTC) really delivered for us. As defending champion, James Bevan fulfilled a leadership role, and a special mention must also go to Pte David Bolland (RLC)."

"His aggression and attacks put the Royal Air Force on the back foot and made them chase hard. That allowed James to take full advantage and he found himself in a strong position to secure the win. David's selflessness really opened the door."

"But the whole team followed orders and they carried out the plan to perfection. It was a professional performance."

Despite heading to the start line as defending champions, Cripps was determined

to ensure there was no complacency in the camp.

"It was convincing, with six of our riders in the top ten," he continued. "But I have a lot of respect for the Royal Air Force and there were some individuals in the Royal Navy who really stood out."

"It was an open race but with two laps to go I could see we had broken them, and it was ours to lose."

"We probably exceeded my expectations; in an event like this you must be professional and that was the case on the day. It is looking good as we head into next year."

Plans for the 2023 campaign are already at an advanced stage and a team announcement is expected later this month.

Following a successful race series in Belgium in August, Cripps said the Army will be returning for more of the same next year and he also hopes to have riders competing in the national championships.

"Everyone wants to ride at that level, but you have got to earn it," he added.

"That would be huge and will see us on the elite stage. It would be as good as it gets for Army cycling."

Having dominated the competition in recent years, the Army women surged to another title as they claimed eight of the top ten positions.

Wild was ably supported by the likes of Lt Col Christina Murray (Int Corps), Maj Angela Laycock (RE) and WO1 Chanel Mason (RAPTC) and their experience proved too much for their Forces rivals.

"As team captain, Chanel came up with the gameplan that

I would go hard from the start and try to tire the others out," Wild explained.

"I had a battle with Capt Jess Wood (RA) and Sarah Briggs, from the RAF at the front and we managed to hold that gap throughout the race."

"The chasing group was controlled by Lt Claire Nott (RLC), who was able to slow the pace and maintain our lead."

"In an event like this you have people who sacrifice themselves for the team knowing they are not going to win, and she did her job brilliantly."

"For various reasons we have not been able to race together much as a team this year, so there were some nerves in the camp beforehand."

"It is the first time in a few years that we have not had a clean sweep of the top ten which is good to see – it means we have to up our game."

With another trophy secured, Wild said the focus now switches to the new season and she hopes more talent can join the fold.

"In many ways cycling can feel like an inaccessible sport but we are very open to finding new riders and developing them," the officer continued.

"We are already planning training weekends for next year, which will be for people of all abilities at different locations across the country."

"That is how I got into it. This is not a clique and the 11 riders at this season's Inter-Services will not necessarily be the 11 for the new campaign." ■





Pictures: John Shirras

BROADLEY REFLECTS ON FIVE YEARS OF SUCCESS

HEAD coach WO2 Woz Broadley (RLC) celebrated a triumphant end to his time in charge of the Army women's rugby league team as the squad secured a 13th successive Inter-Services title.

Following a walkover against the Royal Navy, the soldiers downed the Royal Air Force 10-0 at a rain-swept Salford, where tries from Pte Courtney Cornish (AGC) and Pte Jenna Greening (RLC) proved decisive on a challenging afternoon.

While the absence of the Senior Service – who were unable to field a side due to injuries – proved frustrating, Broadley was pleased with the result against the RAF, despite the relative lack of points.

"We dominated in terms of field position," he told *SoldierSport*. "They had a couple of opportunities to score but we backed our defence."

"The girls did a tremendous

job. We faced a number of sets on our try line but the RAF did not look like they would get through to score.

"Normally we would put more points on the board but, with the conditions, the error count was through the roof."

"In a way, I am glad it was a close game as it is good for the competition and helps the confidence of the RAF and Navy."

A combination of work and family commitments has seen Broadley step down and he can look back at a stunning five years in charge, during which he oversaw phenomenal growth in the women's game.

"When I took over, we had nine players turn up for pre-season training – we now have 106 on the books," he explained.

"We won the Challenge Shield in 2019, reached the final of the Super League South and have seen players called up to represent England and Wales."

"I have exceeded my expectations. A lot of time, hard work and dedication has gone into this job, and we have created an environment that the players want to be part of."

"It has allowed them to come, have fun and express themselves on the field."

Broadley believes the group can continue to evolve and predicts more players will go on to perform at the top level of the civilian game, following the likes of SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) and Gnr Abby Eatock (RA).

"If the player availability is there, they can win the Super League South and reach the knockout stages of the Challenge Cup," he continued.

"This year we played the development squad in the former and they performed better than was expected."

"They were able to get games under their belts, which is crucial for them moving forward." ■

INTER-SERVICES RUGBY LEAGUE

ARMY

10

RAF

0





RETURN TO ACTION

ARMY volleyball players have returned to the court as part of the UK Armed Forces set-up for the start of what they hope will be a more normal season in 2022/23.

The sport was among the last to return post Covid restrictions and the military outfit is due to play its first fixture in the England Shield later this month.

Head coach WO2 Nikki Mead (AGC (SPS)) recently welcomed the women's team to a pre-season training camp in Aldershot (pictured) and she told *SoldierSport* spirits were high with competitive games looming.

"The focus was very much on conditioning as there were some players who had not played in a while," she explained.

"We had not taken part in the national league for a couple of years due to Covid, but are hoping to do well. It will all depend on availability though as everyone is so stretched now."

"The men and women both finished with mid-table positions last time out, but it was quite hard for us as we were so late in getting started again."

"This is a season to regroup and we almost need a 12-month shakeout to give us an opportunity to work with players when they are available more."



RIVALRY BUILDS AT GRID IRON CAMP



**"THEY
ARE
REALLY
GETTING
STUCK
IN"**

THE Army American football set-up continued its upward trajectory with an intensive training camp alongside their Forces colleagues in Tidworth.

Following on from a successful summer gathering in Aldershot (pictured), the event served to stoke the competition between the teams as they build towards the inaugural Inter-Services competition next year.

More than 60 soldiers took to the field for the drills and with the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy combining their resources to match that number, the turnout was another positive step for those charged with developing the fledgling sport.

"It was really good," Army head coach WO2 Abe Day (RA) told *SoldierSport*. "We had two days of mixed training, and you could see the rivalry coming out when we finally got to the game."

"The coaches thought it would be two days of learning, but the players had other ideas – it was the birth of the Inter-

Services rivalry."

The Army's summer camp yielded equally impressive results as the talent pool continues to grow.

"We had four or five trialists and there were quite a few people who stopped what they were doing, came over and asked how they could get involved," Day continued.

"So in terms of publicity, it was great."

"There was also a good intensity to the training and the players are really getting stuck in. Before, it had the feel of a new team with people finding their feet, but we are now way ahead of where anyone expected us to be."

"We have seven civilian coaches working with us and are getting daily messages from personnel wanting to get involved. I knew we would do well, but I thought it would take a lot longer to get this far."

The Army team is now building towards their first competitive outing against the Yorkshire Rams in March. The Forces competition is due to start in September. ■



NOMINEES NAMED

THE Service's boxing team head the list of nominations for this year's Army Sports Awards.

Cruiserweight LCpl Carnell Brown (AGC (SPS), pictured above), who became elite national champion when the tournament returned post-Covid, has been shortlisted in the sportsman of the year category alongside Team GB wakeboard star WO2 Dale Crossley (RE) and judo ace WO2 Ethaniel Jeffries-Mor (RG).

Scottish fighter Cpl Meg Reid (RLC) is in contention for sportswoman of the year but faces competition from fellow Commonwealth Games athlete Cpl Sarah Hawkes (AGC (RMP), pictured below), who represented Northern Ireland at judo.

Ironman World Championship runner-up Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC) and dual-code rugby international Bdr Bethan Dainton (RA) complete the shortlist.

Army boxer LCpl Terri Stuart (REME) is in the mix for the rising star award, along with rugby union duo Spr Jack Johnson (RE) and Pte Courtney Pursglove (RLC), and triathlete Pte Jasmine Holmes (Int Corps).

Prizes will also be presented in the sports official, sports team and lifetime achievement categories. The ceremony is at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on November 17.



MIXED FORMAT AT THE FORE

MIXED netball showed further signs of its growing popularity at a keenly fought Inter-Corps Championships in Aldershot (pictured).

Despite numbers being slightly down due to exercise and operational commitments, a total of nine teams took to the court for the day-long tournament, which saw the Royal Logistic Corps defeat the Royal Artillery 11-10 in a close final.

With the sport on the rise the Army will enter a mixed team, alongside their ladies' squad, at the US Open Championships in Las Vegas this month, ahead of three matches against the Canadian national team in Vancouver.

"The Americans hold this competition every year and it has been an aspiration of ours for a while," tour manager and mixed team player Maj Sam James (RA) told *SoldierSport* on the eve of departure.

"We are quietly confident, especially with the ladies, as we have some awesome players. The mixed team have a chance – it depends on the experience of the others."

James predicts that traditional netball nations such as Australia and Jamaica will pose the biggest challenge but believes the mixed squad will be buoyed by a positive showing at the national championships over the summer.

"We finished joint third in our pool," she said. "It was a good performance considering it was the first time the team had played at that standard."

"They faced the England national team and came up against females from the Netball Superleague, so they did well." ■



● THE Royal Artillery Sports Parachute Association has been reflecting on a successful season that included strong showings at military and national level.

Fielding teams in two formation categories at the Armed Forces Parachute Championships, they excelled in Netheravon, with the line-up of Gnr Harry Morrissey, LBdr Phoebe Griffiths, Sgt Adrian Lewis, LBdr Seb Sergeant and Sgt Mike Rutherford claiming bronze in the rookie field. The Black Swans – a cohort from 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery – won the junior accuracy awards.

The Gunners then progressed to their first British championships and were second in the rookie standings.





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Final Word



A close family friend who served in the Coldstream Guards for a long time will be at the forefront of my mind. We lost him to cancer about a year-and-a-half ago and then put a poppy cross in an RBL field of remembrance for him near our home town of Newcastle. We'll be doing the same this year.

OCdt George Priest, Exeter UOTC



My grandfather, who served in the RAF, is on my mind along with my dad's friend, who was a tail gunner during the Second World War. I'll also think about a Gallipoli battlefield tour I did recently. It is so important to preserve the memory of such conflicts.

LCpl Holly Rosevear, RAMC



My father served in The Royal Welsh and the Paras, and I go out for a drink with him. I'll also be thinking about a friend of mine, Ashley Nickless, who was a Royal Marine and took his own life following a battle with PTSD.

Tpr Taylor Bennison, QDG



I always think of a good friend of mine, LCoH Jonathan Woodgate, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2010. Back then I was a Regular soldier and colleague of Jonathan's in the Blues and Royals. He was patrolling down an alleyway when an insurgent dropped a grenade over the wall. He had no chance in such a tight space. It was his last patrol before he'd been due to fly home.

SSgt Tom Biddlestone, RY

I will be reflecting on the fate of the Ukrainian soldiers I met recently while transiting through South Cerney to deploy on an exercise. They'd been on Op Interflex training in the UK and were heading back to the war zone at home. It was a sobering moment.

Capt Rob Joles, RY



Remembrance reflections

We asked personnel who they will be thinking about this month

Luckily, none of my relatives have been killed in past conflicts as far as I know, but since I've been in the Army I've started thinking a lot more about the families and loved ones of those soldiers who have died while serving their country.

Tpr Morgan Jarvis, RTR





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