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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Wyndham (Roche) Ltd. Print contract managed by Williams Lea.

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Season's greetings

A Christmas message from the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall

ANOTHER year flies by and we are again approaching Christmas, the New Year and the opportunities 2014 will bring. As well as family time – unless you are deployed of course – this is a period for celebration and for some reflection.

I continue to be struck by just how much of the outstanding work that you do reinforces the things that make me most proud of the British Army.

We are fortunate to stand high in the affections of the nation. The Army's reputation is probably as high as I have known it throughout my service.

This is of course linked very closely to the magnificent performance you are delivering every day on demanding operations at home and abroad – especially in Afghanistan.

The momentum out there is tremendous, exploiting the platform we have built over the past decade.

I see ample evidence of the resilience, robustness and humble determination that we expect of ourselves.

This includes the significant feats of gallantry and courage of our soldiers in the fight, the stoicism of our rear parties and families at home and the extraordinary achievements of our injured such as the Row2Recovery and Walking With The Wounded teams over Christmas and the BLESMA Transformers' skydiving team.

You will all have countless examples of your own.

Then there is the camaraderie and teamwork that brings the best from us all as individual soldiers.

It allows us to deliver superb feats of planning, organisation and practical achievement, often doing very complex things on a large scale.

This is evident on operations, exercises, in sport and adventurous training – just about everything we do. But at its most basic, and most importantly, it goes on in every squad or section across the Army all the time.



These are the building blocks of our combat power.

All ranks of the Army from the most senior commanders to the newest recruits have a daily stake in these characteristics. And I could go further with examples of the innovation, initiative, and humility that are the other key features of our success as a military force.

I will conclude on the Service family. The support we all receive from our loved ones has been a key feature of the era of campaigning that is almost behind us.

None of us could serve our friends, our regiments, the Army or the nation without that support and encouragement.

This is a good time to reflect on that, to spend quality time with partners and families and to repay that support.

This opportunity is of course denied to those of you staggering on operations who are, as ever, very much in our thoughts. I hope you will be able to make up for it soon.

Wherever you may be, best wishes for the season and New Year. And above all thank you for all you have done over the past 12 months, wherever your service has taken you.

Your contribution to the success of the Army is hugely appreciated. ■

CONTENTS

December 2013 VOLUME 69/12



Picture: Graeme Main

FEATURES

27 Tropical training
Jungle drills test personnel to the limit

33 African assignment
Paras drop into Kenyan exercise

38 The art of war
Book captures troops' creativity

41 A place to call home
Charity helps get veterans off the streets

45 Automobile auction
Classic car gets fund-raising revamp

48 Serviceman to Savoy
Ex-soldier lands top role as butler

50 Op Reindeer's Hoof
Christmas comp kicks off

REGULARS

7 The Informer
Herrick hardware here to stay

53 Talkback
Ruminations from the ranks

61 Bullet Points
Troops' intelligence assets

72 Movies
Partridge power

74 Games
CoD's comeback critiqued

76 Music
Arcade misfire

78 Books
Al Murray's memoir

80 Top Gear
E-readers evaluated

98 Final Word
Troops talk training abroad

SOLDIERSPORT

84 Kitesurfing
Army show promise at Inter-Services

87 Mountain biking
Downhill dominance for the Reds

88 Clay target shooting
Service's top guns end season on a high

92 Rugby union
Bye-bye to the Ba-Baas

95 Basketball
Corps contest proves future's bright

IN BRIEF: THE JUNGLE WARFARE INSTRUCTORS' COURSE

- JUNGLE WARFARE INSTRUCTORS' COURSE: Training in South East Asia in service bases since the Second World War.
- EACH course accommodates 55 British Infantry personnel and ten civilian staff.
- THE package lasts for seven days and nights, including living and sleeping in the jungle.
- FROM 2014 the package will run twice per year.
- The package is open to all personnel.
- Training packages can be Training Team Brunei.



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Herrick beasts go beyond

Vehicles will become core MoD equipment

AROUND 2,000 protected mobility vehicles bought specifically for use in Afghanistan will be kept on the road after operations end.

Platforms to be incorporated into the MoD's core equipment programme include the Warthog, Husky, Mastiff, Ridgeback, Wolfhound and Jackal.

A number of others upgraded as an urgent operational requirement (UOR), including the RWMIK Land Rover, will also be kept running along with technical kit such as mine-rollers.

Back on home turf some of the equipment will be converted for different roles.

Mechanics at the Herrick Exchange Point in Warminster are already working to repair blast damage and remove armour ready for UK training.

Deliveries to units will then begin in the New Year.

One formation to have already benefitted from returned equipment is the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards.

Some 75 years after its members first took to tank soldiering, the unit will hand over the Challenger 2 main

battle tank and welcome the Jackal into its ranks instead.

In a major step towards Army 2020, the Germany-based regiment is transforming into Britain's leading light cavalry regiment.

Cpl Andy Stewart, who drove the first Jackal into Wessex Barracks to mark the new start, said: "It's quite exciting to be part of this transition to working on another platform.

"I've had good times with the Jackal on operations and in my training. It is one of the few vehicles in the Army that genuinely put a smile on my face when I got to drive it.

"People think it looks vulnerable, but it's really quick and really effective.

"We're moving on and everybody likes a challenge – that's why you join the Army."

Defence Minister Philip Dunne said the UOR process had provided troops with levels of protection "never seen before" on the battlefield.

"This will ensure that both Regulars and Reservists continue to benefit from these machines for decades to come," the politician added.

Bright future: Husky is one of several prized vehicles that will be retained after ops end in Afghanistan

“
It's quite exciting to be part of this transition
”



MEDICAL MISSION

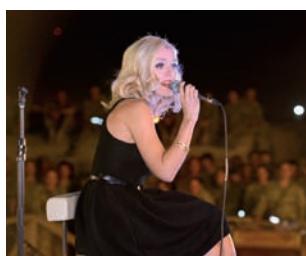
BRITISH casualties on Op Herrick have dramatically decreased as Afghan soldiers continue to take the lead, according to medics returning from Helmand province.

Soldiers from 33 Field Hospital said that most traumatic injuries being dealt with in the Bastion Role 3 Hospital are those of locals.

Lt Col Steve Archer (QARANC), commanding officer of the formation, commented: "We saw a dramatic reduction in the number of Isaf patients and were certainly seeing lots of Afghan soldiers coming in, which shows they are taking the lead.

"The complexity of the combat medic's job remained the same on Herrick 18 as on previous tours but the intensity was reduced."

The senior officer said a new Afghan-run medical facility will be in place next year to coincide with British combat troops leaving.



A BIRTHDAY BALLAD

AFGHANISTAN may not be the best place to spend your birthday but having a world-class singer drop in to help you celebrate has got to cheer you up.

Cfn Bryan Larkin (REME) was working with Camp Bastion's Theatre Logistic Group when mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins paid an impromptu visit and sang *Happy Birthday* to him.

"It was a real surprise," admitted the vehicle maintainer. "I'm two months into my tour and the last thing I expected was to be sitting on a vehicle with Katherine Jenkins singing."

The Welsh star was in Helmand province on a three-day morale-boosting trip, accompanied by comedian Kane Brown, Capital FM radio presenter and comic Greg Burns and singer-songwriter TJ Bilham.

Jenkins said meeting the troops had been a "humbling and emotional" experience.

She added: "It is an immense honour to be able to perform for the men and women of our Armed Forces and I will continue to do so for as long as they want."



1 UK

SIGNAL OF CHANGE

A MAJOR building project is to turn Beacon Barracks in Stafford into a Royal Signals hub.

Currently home to 22 Signal Regiment, the camp will be redeveloped in time for 2015 when members of 16 Signal Regiment and 1 Armoured Division Signal Regiment will move from Germany.

The MoD has announced plans to provide new and refurbished technical, working and single living accommodation at the site to house the additional troops.

A decision is due this month on the contract to build new houses for incoming families on adjoining land.

2 UK

FOND FAREWELL

GRANTHAM residents have lined the streets to say goodbye to members of 168 Pioneer Regiment.

The 20-year-old unit has been officially disbanded under Army 2020 plans.

"I am sad to see the regiment go," said SSgt Mark Williams (RLC). "I started as a private and worked my way up so I have a lot of memories here."

The troops have been given new roles in other formations.



Falkland Islands

“
I'm sad to see the regiment go... I have a lot of memories here
”



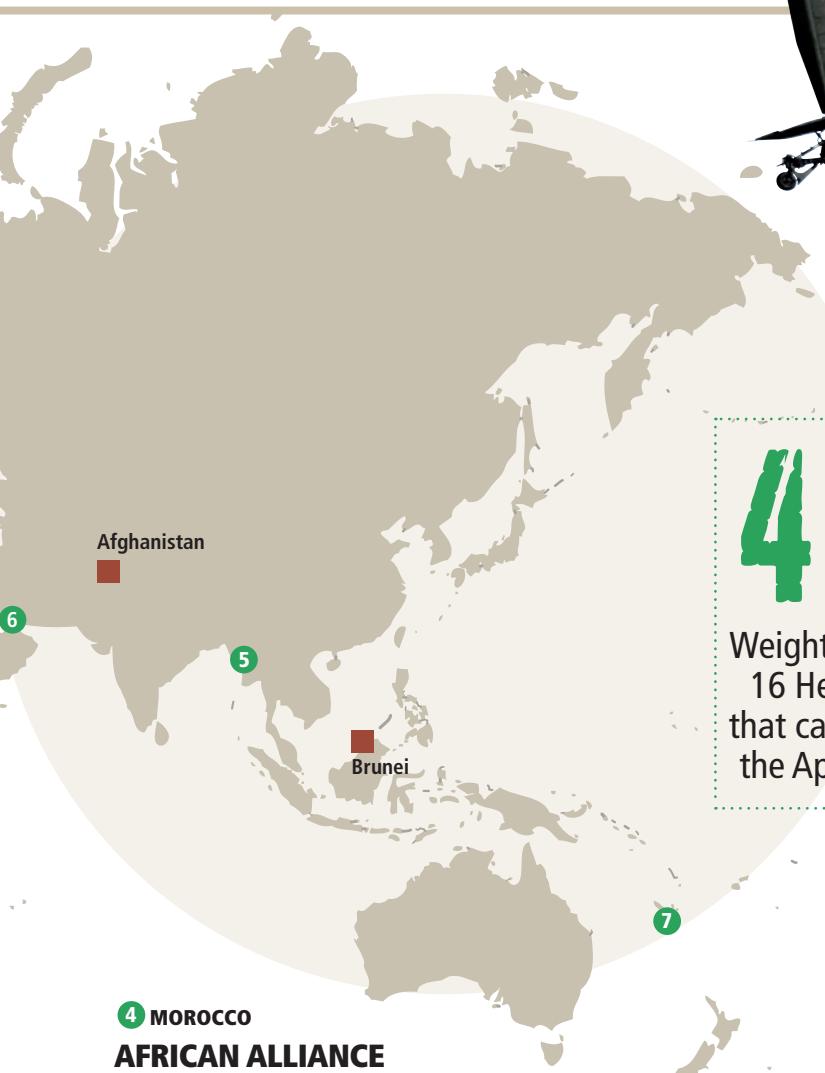
3 KENYA

CITY SPRINTERS

MEMBERS of 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment joined 21,000 runners for the Nairobi Half Marathon while on exercise in Kenya.

The sappers completed the gruelling course, which wound its way through the city streets, in less than two-and-a-half hours.

● Desert descent – pages 33-36



4 MOROCCO

AFRICAN ALLIANCE

ROYAL Gibraltar Regiment personnel have deployed on Ex Jebel Sahara – a joint training package with the Moroccan Deuxieme Brigade d'Infanterie Parachutiste.

The month-long initiative is based a few miles north of Marrakesh and involves 161 members from the unit and 200 soldiers from the partnering African force.

"It has been exciting, especially the live firing," said Pte Karim Atto, a new member of the regiment.

The soldier, who has Moroccan parents, speaks fluent Arabic and was able to translate between junior soldiers on the exercise.



“
It's
brilliant
to
discover
what
they
went
through
”

99



45 KG

Weight of each of the
16 Hellfire missiles
that can be carried by
the Apache airframe

6 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

GULF FIRST FOR APACHE

THE Army's most fearsome gunships have operated in the Gulf for the first time as part of a naval exercise.

Apaches from 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps joined HMS *Illustrious* in the waters off the United Arab Emirates, where they flew sorties alongside the ship's Sea King, Merlin and Lynx helicopters.

The two-week package was part of the Cougar 13 deployment, which sees the Royal Navy's Response Force Task Group train with partner nations across the Mediterranean, Red Sea, Gulf and Horn of Africa.

HMS *Illustrious* later deployed to the Philippines to assist with the humanitarian relief effort there following Typhoon Haiyan.

7 NEW CALEDONIA

READY FOR DISASTER

SERVICE personnel have taken part in a French-led disaster relief serial in the Pacific region.

Exercise Equator in Noumea, New Caledonia involved UK troops based at British Forces Brunei (pictured below) plus their colleagues from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

The package tested participants on their planning and command skills ahead of a full field training serial in April 2014.

Both exercises are part of French efforts to strengthen military cooperation between its forces in the Pacific region, South East Asian nations and members of Nato.





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"I ENDED UP JUST WANDERING AROUND, LIVING IN A TENT"
- HOMELESS HELP, PAGES 41-43



Debate over right age for enlistment

CAMPAIGNERS are calling on the Army to raise its recruitment age from 16 to 18.

Religious leaders were among those to sign an open letter to the MoD from the group Child Soldiers International, which claimed troops enlisted as youngsters were twice as likely to die in Afghanistan than adult recruits.

A separate study by Forces Watch found that teenagers who join with no qualifications suffer twice as much stress-related mental illness as soldiers with more education.

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's *PM* programme, report author David Gee said youngsters presented with "glamorous" recruiting material were not well placed to make informed decisions about joining the military.

But critics of the paper argued it had ignored the opportunities offered by a Forces career.

A MoD spokesman said a comprehensive welfare package was in place for British troops.

He added: "Our policies on under-18s in service are robust and comply with national and international law.

"All Armed Forces marketing material contains realistic first-hand accounts of experiences of operations, which is precisely what potential recruits want.

"During the employment process individuals are well informed and constantly reminded about the risks linked to serving in the military."



HOME TRUTHS



A personal view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation...

“
Departure from high-profile operations should not lead to a reduction in affection
”

'Public support and life of surprise here to stay'

After 18 years of being intimately associated with the Army, I find myself thinking about what the past has involved and what the future may bring.

As the new girlfriend of a soldier in the mid-1990s I had no concept of what life married to the military might entail (I'd need a book to cover that).

Although the mysteries of assignments and promotions are less of an enigma, living with a Service person remains anything but straightforward.

At every stage of our life together two recurring themes have been present – uncertainty and unpredictability.

Through no fault of the Army or any individual we have found ourselves moving, changing jobs or simply reacting to global or domestic politics.

And just like every other military family, we have taken it on the chin. We have accepted turbulence as part of the bargain.

By this time next year it is expected that we will be part of a predominantly UK-centric organisation for the first time in living memory.

Everything from leaving Afghanistan through to the delivery of the new employment model is turning the Army towards being at home, on standby and ready to react.

How this is actually put into practice through the new Force structure is still being worked out.

But one thing appears certain – change is coming and we as the wider Army community are going to have to deal with it.

However, I am concerned that those who suggest our future organisation will offer a haven of stability and prosperity for all might be a little quick to forget history.

Although the structure will be different I suspect that unpredictability will remain and the Army Families Federation (AFF) mission will stay as relevant as ever: to provide support to those with a soldier in their life, no matter what their circumstances.

Remembrance Day has passed and I was once again delighted by the degree in which UK communities embraced this.

Despite the dwindling number of world war veterans, people across the country still use the occasion as a chance to pay their respects to those long gone and to show their support for the soldiers of today.

It is important that our departure from high-profile operations does not lead to a reduction in the affection held for military families across the population.

We are increasingly a part of the community and it is only right that personnel of today are recognised for the sacrifices they have promised to make, as much as their colleagues are remembered for those they were compelled to make.

www.aff.org.uk



"THIS IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING NON-CONTACT SPORTS IN THE UK" - SERVICE SHOOTERS TRIUMPH, PAGE 88

f11,320

Total value of the prizes up for grabs in *Soldier's* festive giveaway. Turn to pages 50-51 to discover how to be in with a chance of winning.



CELEBRITY SUPPORT

■ BIG names have got behind a Christmas campaign to celebrate the role of serving personnel.

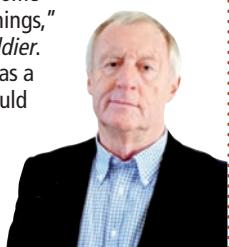
ABF The Soldiers' Charity is running the initiative this month in response to figures from the 2013 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey, which found that 50 per cent of troops do not feel respected by society.

To address the issue, the organisation is asking people to donate or take to Twitter with their words of support using the hashtag **#celebrateoursoldiers**.

Television presenter Chris Tarrant is one of those promoting the project.

"I think if you return home from Afghanistan you probably will have been to hell and back and seen some dreadful things," he told *Soldier*.

"So we as a nation should be making troops feel it was worth it."



GOOD DRILLS



Time to celebrate: At least 1,500 troops are expected to be affected by the change in policy

Picture: Mark Owens

Relief over pension change

NEW rules on aggregated service for military pensions will "change lives" when they come into force this month, it has been claimed.

Until now members of Armed Forces pension scheme 05 who had previously served on scheme 75 were not able to add the two periods of service together to qualify for an early departure point, resettlement grant or tier one ill health award.

Hundreds of Service personnel were left angered by the rules, many of whom were not aware of the anomaly when they departed the military.

The new policy, which will be introduced from December 16, will allow this to happen and follows a review by the MoD.

"People's inability to aggregate their service was never the intention when the policy was written," said Maj Kirsty-Jane Devereux (AGC (SPS)), SO2 pay and pensions policy.

"For some this amendment

really will be life-changing."

In September a company commander whose colleague had been affected by the rule complained to *Talkback*.

"I believe that an injustice is happening," he wrote.

In response Brig John Donnelly, the Army Director of Personal Services, conceded the situation was "highly regrettable" and that the issue was being looked at.

Arrangements for those with breaks in service who left or will leave the Army before the new legislation comes into effect are still being reviewed.

Aggregation affects redundancy forecasts and does not take place automatically so soldiers must apply to the Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency before their last day.

The department is now working to update the online pension calculator to reflect the change but troops are warned that this will not occur immediately.

For details read **2013DIN01-231**.

ARCTIC ADVENTURE

A SOLDIER and veteran have completed a Jeep expedition to Nordkapp, Europe's most northerly point some 650 miles above the Arctic Circle. Gnr Ian Williams (RA) and Wayne Mosedale (ex-Staffords) covered 4,200 miles in 17 days with civvy companions, hitting temperatures as low as -32 degrees Celsius. The team raised £42,000 for Help for Heroes.



THE soldier who has masterminded ceremonial events in the capital for the past 13 years has been given the Freedom of the City of London. Garrison sergeant major WO1 Bill Mott (WG) was honoured at the Guildhall, London, where he received recognition for his role on occasions such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the funeral of Baroness Thatcher.



CITY STALWART

“PERSONALLY I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE WILL GET THERE” - RECRUITING REASSURANCE, PAGE 23



CLIMBING THE RANKS

■ PERSONNEL from The Queen's Royal Lancers were given the chance to step into their leaders' boots during an innovative training package on Salisbury Plain.

Ex Fondouk Lancer 13 saw troops carrying out roles one rank above themselves in a variety of mounted and dismounted tasks.

More than 300 soldiers and some 40 Scimitar and Spartan vehicles took part in the exercise, which covered a range of subjects from route patrols to observation posts.

“It's been fantastic,” said Maj Alex Bowie, officer commanding D Squadron. “We've been practising core reconnaissance skills and have put everyone through their paces.”



WEAPON SEIZURE

■ SOLDIERS from 3rd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment have helped Afghan National Army troops seize an arsenal of weaponry after fighting off an ambush by insurgents.

Members of 1st Kandak, 3/215 Brigade, with support from the British personnel, were on an early morning patrol in the Nad-e Ali district when they were targeted.

Despite being outnumbered, the troops turned the battle in their favour, capturing a number of enemy fighters in the process.

Their would-be attackers withdrew, abandoning a cache of machine guns and large roadside bombs.

FOOLISH FAT REMOVAL

AMERICAN military personnel are turning to liposuction in an attempt to pass their body fat tests, it has been claimed. Plastic surgeons across the pond are reporting an increase in enquiries from troops who are worried about failing the Defense Department assessment, which is based on measurements of the neck and waist.



Picture: Shutterstock

Festive binge warning

“
There can be no excuse for alcohol related ill-discipline
”

As the festive season gets underway troops are being warned not to overdo the Christmas tipples.

Alcohol misuse is higher among members of the Armed Forces than the rest of UK society and in a bid to expose the dangers, hard-hitting posters will appear at various defence sites this month.

As well as being linked to violent behaviour and mental health problems, heavy consumption can impact on the fitness levels and performance of Servicemen and women.

“Alcohol abuse is a professional issue,” commented Brig John Donnelly, the Army's Director of Personal Services.

“In addition to health risks there can really be no excuse for alcohol related ill-discipline and misconduct, and ultimately the failure to be a professional soldier who does not adhere to our values and standards.”

Personnel are being encouraged to consider going booze-free in January, with an Army-wide alcohol awareness campaign planned for the spring.

Visit www.dryjanuary.org.uk for more details.

■ NEW rules mean commanding officers can ask troops to be tested for drugs or alcohol if they suspect their ability to perform potentially dangerous tasks is impaired.

Soldiers will be given a minimum of eight hours' notice if required to do a job that is outside of their day-to-day routine and that the CO has deemed safety-critical.

Anyone found to have prohibited levels in their system or who refuses to submit to a test will be committing an offence.

The measures have been introduced to bring MoD staff more in-line with civilian jobs such as pilots and train drivers.

For details read ABN 107/13.

TWO Kenyan soldiers have been sacked and jailed for looting stores inside Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre during September's terrorist attack. Leaked security footage showed the troops helping themselves to goods following the atrocity in which 67 people died.



LOOTING LOW

BAD DRILLS

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The injured who suffer,
The families who struggle,
The veterans who remember,
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IN MEMORIAM



WO2 IAN FISHER (42)
3RD BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA NOVEMBER 5 – AFGHANISTAN

TROOPS from 3rd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment are mourning the loss of a uniquely talented colleague who will be remembered as a mentor and example to all those he worked with.

WO2 Ian Fisher was on a two-day mission to disrupt insurgent activity in Nahr-e Saraj, Helmand province when he was subjected to a vehicle-borne suicide attack.

The Serviceman amassed extensive operational experience during his military career, including tours of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

After completing three-and-a-half years' Reserve service he volunteered to go to Hong Kong in 1996 as a Regular private with 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment.

"He was widely respected as one of the best of his generation across the Army," said Lt Col Chris Davies, CO of 3 Mercian.

"A larger-than-life character, he played a pivotal role in battalion life, always at the forefront where there was fun to be had."

WO1 Robert Mears (3 Mercian) added: "Ian Fisher was a dependable, loyal and trustworthy man who had the respect of his peers, friends and subordinates alike.

"He was someone who got the job done, no matter what the odds."

In a tribute to the father-of-two, his wife Emma said: "He will be remembered as a doting father, loving husband and a true professional soldier."

LITIGATION WARNING

■ THE MoD has increased its number of military lawyers by nearly 50 per cent to cope with a rise in human rights cases and the spread of litigation from the civilian world.

In 1999 the ministry employed 130 lawyers but that figure now stands at 190.

The revelation came to light under a Freedom of Information request by *The Daily Telegraph*, which found that a further 80 civilian lawyers were also taken on by the department last year.

It was also reported that the MoD's legal wage bill reached more than £16 million this year.

"With a large rise in the number of cases brought by human rights lawyers we are increasingly having to spend taxpayers' money defending the department and our military personnel," a spokesman for the MoD said. "Legal costs represent 0.1 per cent of our budget – one of the lowest in Whitehall."

"We need many different legal services to act on our behalf because of the huge variety of cases that we engage in."

It should
be a
symbol
of hope
and of
a better
future



Competitors defeated by Capt Simon Warren (RE) at kitesurfing's Inter-Services showdown – pages 84-85

Sacred soil to mark sacrifice

Memorial garden will honour guards regiments

S OIL from the battlefields of the First World War has been brought to the United Kingdom to form a special memorial garden at The Guards Museum.

The project is the first time the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has allowed such excavations to take place and a fund-raising appeal has now been launched to help make the gardens a reality.

Corporate and private donors were invited to sponsor the move – a process that involved specially replicated sandbags manufactured by the same company that provided those used to fortify the front lines of Flanders Fields in Belgium.

Some of these bags are still available for anyone wanting to get involved and once all pledges have been received a total of £140,000 will be generated.

Museum curator Andrew Wallis said: "It is fitting that The Guards Museum should be so instrumental in making this garden happen.

"Many soldiers of the guards regiments fought bravely and died in the Great War, so much so that King George V awarded them the title 'guardsmen' to mark

the role they played in the conflict.

"The garden will stand as a tangible demonstration of the strong bond between the people of Britain and Belgium and the sacrifice of those who died for our freedom."

More than 1,000 schoolchildren were involved in collecting the soil during the summer and 70 bags were put on display at The Cloth Hall in Ypres.

On November 11 they were moved to The Menin Gate and, in a ceremony witnessed by Prince Philip, were loaded onto a First World War gun carriage. They then made their into London via a Royal Navy vessel and a procession through the city.

The memorial garden will be located at Wellington Barracks, adjacent to Buckingham Palace, and is due to open next year.

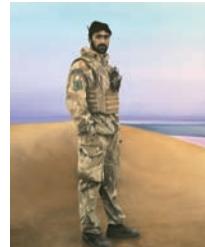
"It should be a symbol of hope and of a better future for all," said designer Piet Blanckaert. "Pilgrimages will be made here from across the world; a place of reflection and peace in an area synonymous with history and exceptional visitor destinations."





"I'M NOW LOOKING TO FINISH AS THE TOP DRIVER"

- RALLY TEAM REFLECT, PAGE 91



Army artwork goes on show

THE Army Arts Society has displayed more than 300 masterpieces during its annual three-week exhibition at the Library Galleries in Salisbury.

Around 65 artists submitted works this year and organisers are now appealing for new blood – particularly serving soldiers – to get involved in 2014.

The group is open to all current and ex-personnel, as well as spouses, partners and other relatives but of its 138 present members only 20 stem from the Service's ranks.

"There is a lot of talent out there but there are so many people who do not know we exist," said membership secretary Roger Dennis.

"For the exhibition we hang everything that comes in, there is no selection procedure. Members are entitled to display four works and there is an eclectic mix. Some of it is of a really high standard."

To help spread its message the society has sent operational art packs, which include sketchbooks, paints and a host of other tools, to theatre so soldiers can put their skills

to the test during any downtime.

One Serviceman to flourish within the organisation is Sgt Rich Salter (R Signals). He finished runner-up to Capt Freddy Paske (LD) in the serving war artist competition and is now planning a solo exhibition in York.

"The society is a brilliant group of guys and girls," the NCO told *Soldier*.

"It is great to talk about art with people from a common background. It also gives you a chance to see your work up on the walls of a gallery. Normally that's very hard to achieve."

Sgt Salter submitted several pieces inspired by his time on Op Herrick 17, where he had to juggle the pressures of his day job with his hobby.

"I was working from 0800 to 2000 and when I came off shift I would spend an hour-and-a-half doing sketches and preliminary works – it was exhausting," he said.

"I've now got five years left in the Army and I'm going to take every opportunity I can so when I leave the Service I can hopefully step into my dream job as an artist."

To get involved visit www.armyartsociety.org

WIN

...War games for your PC

LAST month's spine lines competition celebrated the Service's latest operational award recipients. (Lt Col Francis) Piggott of the Royal Dragoon Guards, (Lt Col Nicholas) Wood of The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, (SSgt Russell) Byrne of The Parachute Regiment and (LCpl Rachel) Hughes of the Royal Army Medical Corps were all decorated for their actions on Herrick 17.

This month we have teamed up with Matrix Games (www.matrixgames.com) to offer three readers a pair of military-themed PC games worth around £100 per pack.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us what links the words on the spine of this issue. Send your answers on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by December 31.

BEAUTY ITEM FOR BOYS

■ **FORGET** a splash of water to get the cam cream off your face – high street chain Boots is introducing a range of "metrosexual" male grooming products to Naafi stores across UK military bases.

Troops in Germany were the first to benefit from the move, which will see around 400 health and beauty items hit shop shelves.

The collection, which also includes goods for women and children, features luxurious treats such as Champneys Men's Energising Face Scrub, No.7 Post Shave Recovery and a Botanics clay face scrub.

"We are always looking for opportunities to offer our customers British products because it gives people a taste of home and Boots is an iconic brand," explained John Goddard, head of operational support for Naafi.

"Over the last few years we have seen that our core audience, young males, are spending an increasing amount of time and money on grooming and we've followed where the market has gone."

The range will eventually be available at Naafi stores worldwide, including bases in the Falkland Islands and Afghanistan.

Metrosexual military? Tell *Talkback*

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Vehicles supplied tax free for export are subject to the relevant HMRC Regulations. Applicable to serving members of HM Forces only. Prices correct at time of going to press. Model shown is a 14MY Land Rover Discovery 4 HSE 3.0 SDV6 with Metallic Paint, 19" split spoke alloy wheels and privacy glass priced at £53,085.00. RANGE OF FUEL ECONOMY FIGURES FOR THE DISCOVERY 4 RANGE IN MPG (L/100KM) IN MPG (L/100KM): URBAN 28.8 (9.8) – 29.1 (9.7), EXTRA URBAN 34.9 (8.1) – 36.2 (7.8), COMBINED 32.1 (8.8) – 33.2 (8.5).



**“IT’S BEEN ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE”
- TROOPS CUT IT IN KENYA, PAGE 98**



X FACTOR judge Gary Barlow got a taste of life in Camp Bastion during a morale-boosting visit to the military base. The Take That singer performed songs and filmed for an ITV programme due to air later this year. The show will feature Gary finding out what life is like on the front line and how military personnel cope with being away from home. On his return to the UK the singer tweeted: “Just got back from an incredible trip to meet the troops in Afghanistan. What an amazing experience and a lovely bunch of people. Thank you, Camp Bastion!”

Picture: Sgt Dan Bardsley, RLC

Sappers save the seas

Conservation work brings team on ‘leaps’

THE future of more than 35 species of fish is in safer waters thanks to a team from 36 Engineer Regiment.

Some 15 members of the unit helped to create a marked marine reserve within the waters of the Akrotiri Sovereign Base Area (SBA), Cyprus, in order to preserve its wildlife, which includes several varieties of sponge and coral.

“Normally our dive team develop their skills in quarries, lakes and the murky harbour waters within the UK,” said Maj Mick Garcia, officer commanding the formation.

His troops spent several weeks undertaking detailed survey work before constructing 100kg sinkers to keep high-visibility buoys in place around the reserve.

“Although it is warmer and much clearer than what we are used to, the skills developed in

such a high-profile task have been significant,” the officer added.

“I have seen the team’s abilities come on in leaps and bounds.”

Fishing in the region is illegal and fines are set at more than £6,000 for those convicted.

The SBA Police’s maritime unit overlooks the new zone and members of the Akrotiri Sub Aqua Club also help to monitor it.

“In the past nets have been found in the reserve, harming marine life and possibly threatening divers and swimmers,” said David Turner, diving officer at the club.

“By marking out the water and working in partnership with SBA police, the benefits to everyone can be seen.”

This year the reserve has had several reported sightings of the Mediterranean monk seal, a critically endangered species.

15 soldiers who helped to create the reserve

SOLDIERS HAVE A SAY

■ SERVICE personnel are being given the chance to comment on a range of issues affecting military life.

Some 10,800 officers and soldiers have been asked to take part in the 2014 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey and responses should be submitted by February 17.

In addition, around 16,000 other troops have been sent a questionnaire in the second phase of consultation on the new employment model.

Individuals who have been approached are asked to complete the 15-minute survey either online or in hard copy.

Both documents are vital sources of information, which assist the Service in developing personnel policy.

BODY ART BOOK QUEST

■ A SERVICEMAN is calling on colleagues to send him pictures of their body art for a charity book celebrating the link between the Armed Forces and tattooing.

Sgt Barry Lawes (R Signals) is looking for examples from across all three Services for the *Mark of Honour* project, which will explore both modern and traditional designs.

“Even the simplest of tattoos can be moving, inspiring or funny, but are often deeply personal and reflect important times in an individual’s life and the history of the nation,” explained the senior NCO. “I’m keen to hear from anyone, serving or retired, who has any sort – especially if it has an interesting story behind it.”

Profits from the sale of the book will be donated to SSAFA.

To get involved or for more information on the project contact Sgt Lawes via markofhonourarmy@gmail.com

DECEMBER'S DVD DELIGHTS



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**— MOVIES,
PAGES 72-73**

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RESERVES ROUND-UP

EDUCATION IMPROVES

■ RESERVISTS will be given the same standard of education as their Regular counterparts from 2015 thanks to the expansion of the Educational and Training Services Reserve.

The unit is establishing more than 150 extra posts around the country to deliver the new capability.

Officers and warrant officers chosen for the new roles will deliver command, leadership and management training, the junior officer leadership programme, instructor courses and cultural and language lessons.

For further details read ABN 117/13.



Picture: Jackie Pringle

NEW SKILLS IN CYPRUS

■ A GRUELING exercise has tested Reservists in Cyprus.

Personnel from the Honourable Artillery Company deployed to the country's Western Sovereign Base Area to undertake their core function of surveillance and target acquisition.

The package was the first time many of the unit's troops had lived in forward operating bases.

It saw soldiers deploy by helicopter, use Zodiac boats on night-time reconnaissance missions and undertake a highly realistic mass casualty scenario.

The training culminated in a joint serial with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

"Operating in a patrol on very alien terrain was a welcome change from the familiarity of Brecon or Otterburn," said 2nd Lt Andreas Stradis.

Lcpl Alex Saunders, a medic with the unit, added: "It was demanding but extremely good experience."



Picture: Sgt Adrian Harlen, RLC

Above, Honest insight: Personnel transported visitors to the front line with various demonstrations

Below, Workshop wonders: The troops carried out crucial safety modifications



Picture: Steve Dock



The truth about serving

Troops educate public to boost recruitment

SOLDIERS have been helping to dispel myths about life in the Army Reserve at a series of public recruiting events.

Hundreds of troops took part in roadshows in London, Reading, Watford, Cardiff and Liverpool in a bid to inform people about part-time careers in the Service.

The London open day saw 17 units from across the capital gather at Horse Guards Parade, where visitors could speak to personnel, get close to kit such as Warrior and Mastiff armoured vehicles and see inside a replica operational base.

Members of 217 Field Squadron, 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) and 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD) even let people operate some of the equipment used to combat explosive devices.

"It's not often that we get to talk about what we do," said Capt Alex Janaway (33 Engr Regt).

"There was a lot of interest and the guys didn't stop all day.

"It was surprising how many

people didn't realise that you get paid to be in the Reserves and that the Army is actively recruiting.

"We got nothing but positives out of the day."

The early stages of the drive to increase the size of the Reserves by 12,000 have attracted some criticism from those who argue it will not be possible to recruit sufficient numbers.

Speaking to *The Times*, Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir Nicholas Houghton, admitted there had been problems with recruitment partner Capita's IT system but said it was too early to judge success.

"Those who, three months into a five-year recruiting exercise, appear to be sort of salivating at the prospect of failure would be better to stay quiet," he added.

"I think this is – I won't say easily achievable – but a comfortably deliverable prospect in the timeframe and personally I have no doubt that we will get there."

The trained strength of the Army Reserve currently stands at 19,090.

Force fixers to the rescue in Brunei

A TEAM of Reservists have travelled to South East Asia to keep the Army's Wolf fleet moving.

Ten members of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers visited Brunei's garrison workshop at short notice to ensure it met the deadline for safety modifications to 42 Land Rovers.

The parts required for the work had been delivered to the base late, meaning full-time staff were struggling to complete the task.

Workshop 2iC, SSgt Tim Langley, who arranged the help, said: "It took about ten weeks from us asking for the troops to arrive and they did a great job. It could have had a knock-on effect on exercises if the work hadn't been completed on time."

"We're already looking at getting more Reserves out here next year."

THE BIG PICTURE





> Lulworth ranges, Dorset

Track to the future

RESERVISTS from The Royal Wessex Yeomanry put Challenger 2 through its paces during a live-fire and manoeuvre exercise. The coming months will see the regiment become the only armoured reinforcement unit in the Army and part of its Reaction Force.

Picture: Sgt Russ Nolan, RLC



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Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Steve Dock

HERE cannot be many environments in the world where it is considered a physical achievement for an infantry soldier to cover five kilometres of ground in a day.

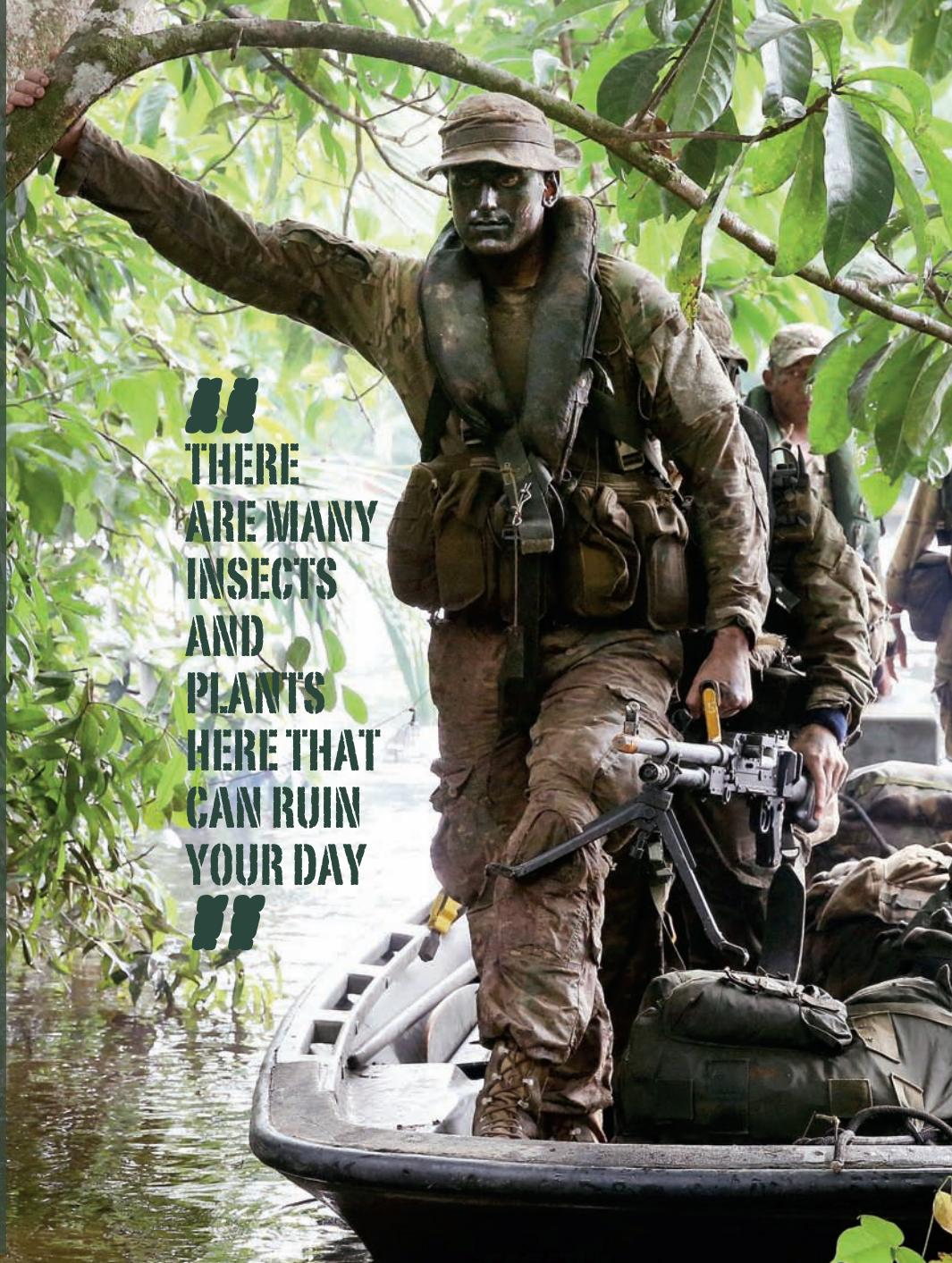
But with dense vegetation, deep rivers, humidity levels of up to 90 per cent and enough harmful insects to put even the most battle-hardened fighter on high alert, Brunei's wilderness is one such place.

Here, the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course uses the unforgiving climate of South East Asia to teach Service personnel how to live in tropical conditions with only their wits and the contents of their soaking wet Bergens for support. »



COURAGE UNDER THE CANOPY

JUNGLE DRILLS READY TROOPS FOR FUTURE CONFLICT



» The seven-week package, which is open to the ranks of corporal to captain, comprises lessons in basic survival skills, navigation and live-firing before culminating in a company-level exercise deep in the country's jungle.

"Covering five kilometres per day out here means you are making good headway, whereas you could jog that distance in just 20 minutes back home," explained Maj Pete Houlton-Hart (RGR), the officer commanding Training Team Brunei.

"The terrain is difficult and you can't see for more than ten metres ahead of you.

"It's sweaty, uncomfortable and easy to become disorientated.

"Just the effect of being in the jungle can be enough to lose your sense of direction – and that's before you fight a simulated enemy."

Although the course is designed to teach troops the specifics of fighting in Borneo's jungle, its lessons

are relevant in other close-country regions too.

From learning how to build a fire to knowing which plants and bugs are decent sources of protein, skills learnt under this canopy are passed back to units by the Service personnel who attend.

"Living out of your Bergen used to be a core skill but because of the Herrick mentality that has faded a bit," said Maj Houlton-Hart.

"Some people might assume that if you can do things in the UK and Afghanistan you can do it anywhere but that is not necessarily the case.

"We take soldiers back to basics. Simple things like navigation and personal admin are so much more difficult in this environment.

"Some of it comes as a bit of a shock to the system but most troops are prepared for the experience to be a learning curve."

Cpl Oliver Ward (Para, pictured right), one of the course's latest

Above, River arrival:

Course students come ashore in the jungle

Left, Under pressure: Soldiers are briefed ahead of a patrol, cross the Belait river using Bergens as flotation aids and take a rest with tracker dog Victor

intake who has served in both Afghanistan and Iraq, explained why jungle survival techniques had become unfamiliar to UK personnel.

"I think we have got a bit lazy on our basic soldiering skills over the last few years," he admitted.

"In Afghanistan nine times out of ten there is a resupply chain in place whereas out here there are no roads and you have what's on your back and that's it.

"There are many different insects and plants out here that can ruin your day."

With GPS devices redundant in this austere environment, soldiers must get to grips with basic map reading skills.

With the help of a pace counter on the front of their rifles, they negotiate the undergrowth using maps that are often inaccurate.

"Here, soldiers have to work on comms schedules and they only make radio contact once or twice a

NATURAL NEMESIS

5 FACTORS THAT MAKE COMBAT UNDER THE CANOPY SO TOUGH



day," Maj Houlton-Hart added.

"That's really different to recent operations where such equipment is switched on constantly and where you can return to base at the end of the day to get fresh batteries."

Lt Ian Whiskerd (Rifles), another student on the course, was in no doubt that the package had left him confident enough to become a future instructor of jungle warfare.

"In terms of bringing on your soldiering skills the learning curve here has been huge," he said.

"We have realised that the jungle is neutral.

"The environment here is not your enemy and you can actually use it to your advantage.

"Even something as basic as making a trap, that is a skill I never learnt at Sandhurst.

"I think the boys in my platoon will like the lessons that I take back to them from this course."



1. POOR VISIBILITY

WHEN patrolling through the jungle, troops cannot see more than ten metres ahead.



2. LIMITED MOBILITY

THERE are no road networks for vehicles and troops must be careful not to damage the undergrowth and give away their position to the enemy. Patrolling is a heavy business in the jungle. Bergens are loaded down and the conditions make all kit wet, which adds to their weight. The humidity saps soldiers' energy quickly.



3. RESUPPLY CHALLENGES

NO roads and a limited number of helicopter landing sites mean that all kit must be carried on troops' backs – including batteries and medical supplies. Resupply may only happen once every four to six days.



4. COMMAND AND CONTROL

UNDER the canopy commanders cannot see their troops. Soldiers must be trusted to get on with the task and use their comms at the right time.



5. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

PERSONNEL only make radio contact once or twice a day in order to conserve the batteries they are carrying – a real difference from Op Herrick. Dense tree cover reduces the range of radios and high humidity levels can damage the equipment.

WITH the drawdown in Afghanistan reducing the need for the ground sign awareness lessons that have dominated its syllabus in recent years, Training Team Brunei is shifting its focus.

From 2014 the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course will be stepped up to run twice per year.

The idea behind the increase is to help prepare the Service for future missions in a range of different environments – including dense areas of forest, jungle or bush.

Maj Pete Houlton-Hart (RGR), officer commanding Training Team Brunei, explained the course's versatility.

"We try not to overuse the word 'jungle' here because the skills learnt are transferable," the officer said.

"Wherever vegetation grows to reduce visibility, the same tactics can be deployed. That includes places in Africa, Asia – anywhere that sits on the tropical belt, basically."

As British Army restructuring and a focus on contingency operations takes hold, renewed interest in Training Team Brunei is creating a buzz among its staff.

Earlier this year the group was brought under the command of the School of Infantry.

"Under this new arrangement there is a keen desire to take personnel who haven't dug a shell scrape in years and who are used to returning to a forward operating base each night and re-open their eyes to a more traditional type of soldiering," added Maj Houlton-Hart.

Such is the quality of the package on offer in Brunei that it is even being used as a model by other nations who are keen to broaden their soldiers' skills in the wake of Op Herrick.

SSgt Justin Golder, of the US Army's 25th Infantry Division, attended the most recent Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course alongside British colleagues.

Charged with helping to set up a similar establishment for his own force in Hawaii, the soldier commended the lessons he had learnt from the Brits.

"The training here is definitely very intense," he said.

"If we could mirror just 25 per cent of this course in Hawaii we will be off to a good start."

"It really is top notch."

Thinking on their feet: Soldiers practise an advance to contact tactic as they go back to basics in Brunei by learning how to eat, sleep, patrol and fight under the trees



FIT FOR THE FUTURE

JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING STEPPED UP...



“
IT'S SWEaty,
UNCOMFORTABLE
AND EASY
TO BECOME
DISORIENTATED
”



IN BRIEF: THE JUNGLE WARFARE INSTRUCTORS' COURSE

- JUNGLE training has been happening in South East Asia in various forms since the Second World War
- EACH course accommodates 55 British infantry personnel and ten international troops
- THE drills last for seven weeks, much of which is spent living day and night in the jungle
- FROM 2014 the package will run twice per year
- THE course is one of several different training serials run by Training Team Brunei





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AFRICAN ASSAULT



Paratroopers descend onto Kenyan ground for the first time in a decade

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

AS a C-130 Hercules flies through intense heat to drop British paratroopers onto African soil for the first time in more than a decade, it carries a significant message.

Jumps undertaken by the aircraft's passengers, members of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, signal their readiness to deploy at speed, anywhere in the world.

With Afghanistan now just a memory for 16 Air Assault Brigade its personnel are instead serving as the UK's rapid reaction force, ready to conduct short intervention missions wherever required.

And on the ten-week Exercise Askari Storm troops from the 3 Para battlegroup hone the skills and tactics required to take on these sort of contingency operations. >>



» "We are light and we jump with what we need to fight," explains Lt Col Mike Shervington, commanding officer of 3 Para, during the package.

"We are concentrating on the key part of an airborne battlegroup's job, which is airfield seizure and defence as well as conducting air manoeuvre operations at crucial moments."

The senior officer adds: "Kenya is 6,000 miles from the UK in a part of the world that is of strategic interest and demonstrates our long reach."

"The paras have not jumped into Africa for more than a decade so to have the C-130 here with us is a huge occasion."

Prior to the highly anticipated training jumps, troops are tasked with securing an "enemy"-controlled airfield on the scrubland of Archer's

Post, five hours' drive north of Nairobi.

In pitch-black conditions amid a flash downpour, the Servicemen storm into the coveted area prompting hours of battle with a simulated opposition.

With the mission complete the next task becomes clear: to defend the position and prepare for another offensive operation elsewhere.

"It's good to see the battlegroup get around the field as this is the first time we've worked on wider elements of fighting for a long time," says Pte Josh Massey.

"In this context things are a lot slower than in Afghanistan and our enemy is a series of moving parts, trying to defeat us as much as we are trying to take them out."

"You have to think on your feet a lot more but we are trained to fight



“
**You have
to think on
your feet
a lot more
but we are
trained
to fight
anywhere
so we're
on top of it**
”



anywhere so we're on top of it.”

Confidence may be key, but personnel must match this determination with an awareness of their surroundings, which are a far cry from the proving grounds of the UK.

“Training for operations in this climate has been difficult, with the heat and rationed water to contend with as well as the wildlife,” concedes LCpl Tom Jeapes.

“We had to tab 25 kilometres through the night carrying mortars and all our kit, then we started the attack in the early hours.”

With the airfield in the battlegroup's hands, its engineers are tasked with preparing the runway for imminent landings (page 36) while other sections dig trenches and prepare to fire in anticipation of further attacks.

With the sun still burning in the sky at 1800 the mortar platoon carries out an adjustment phase to ensure maximum fire will be put on targets when the darkness sets in.

The 81mm projectiles are launched with pinpoint accuracy to distances of two kilometres, landing on carefully calculated spots.

“The destructive area of these weapons covers 40 metres so we fire sets to land that distance apart to increase the impact,” Sgt Andy Carr tells *Soldier*.

“The bomb only makes a fist-sized dent in the ground but the blast explodes outwards increasing lethality.”

With men settled into their designated areas there is just a moment's respite before the light completely fades and the camp comes under fire from the direction of some bushes.

The paras are expecting the onslaught, though, and react with decisive force.

With the assault quashed and in the knowledge that the enemy still has designs on their site, the night phase of mortar firing proves vital to the mission.

Deafening explosions from the base's perimeter are coupled with thunderous shots from .50 calibre machine guns being fired from the west to destroy anything in their path.

“Our mortars were sent in to neutralise the attacking enemy and it was a really good shoot,” Pte Ivan Londal reveals afterwards.

“It was accurate which means we've

taken out the targets and achieved what we set out to do.”

Practising seizing an airfield in this way may raise some questions given that British Forces have not dropped into operations since the Suez Crisis in 1956.

However, in January this year 200 French paratroopers used this method of insertion to help retake control of Timbuktu airport during the conflict in Mali.

UK troops are ensuring they are ready for a similar tasking.

After a year planning the Hercules descent, 27 soldiers at a time plunge towards the sun-baked red ground from 800ft before packing up their canopies and moving forward.

Describing the challenges of this particular drop zone, LCpl Lewis Gardner comments: “I had a bit of a tough landing and the ground is a lot harder than where I've jumped before, which is why it's so important to get this sort of exercise done, to learn.”

“The more chances we get to practise in different places, the easier it will become.”

Pte Stephen

Round added: “We know there is a chance of injury during this scenario but we've just got to accept the landing.”

“It is our job so we crack on and get it done – air drop is the quickest way into battle and we are the first there.”

Operation Herrick is finished for the 3 Para battlegroup and already its soldiers are poised for their next mission, wherever that may be. ■





AIRSTRIP ACTION

How expert engineers transformed a desert track

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

COVERT air missions to drop paratroopers onto enemy territory will always grab the public's attention.

But without the meticulous work of engineers such daring operations would never get off the ground.

In Kenya, on Exercise Askari Storm, British troops needed to be collected by a C-130 Hercules from an airfield near Archer's Post and inserted over a fresh target some ten kilometres away.

And landing on such uneven and cracked terrain would have been highly dangerous, if not impossible, in the absence of personnel from 51 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers.

Explaining his team's brief, SSgt Joe Walker said: "This runway was unusable so we came in with plant machinery and prepared it to specifications set by the Royal Air Force.

"The carriageway needed to be at least 18.3 metres wide and 1,400

metres long, which is the minimum area needed for a C-130 to land.

"There could also be no more than a two per cent gradient on the surface for the Hercules to touch down so we had to work hard to flatten the area."

To ensure the aircraft's safe landing in the 35-degree Celsius heat, the runway needed to achieve the right "California bearing ratio" – a measurement used to evaluate a surface's mechanical strength.

As a result of the sappers' painstaking efforts with a heavy-duty roller to compact the soil, they managed to exceed the required level.

"Troops jump in to secure an area and engineers move in to prepare the surface so that larger planes can land and take off," added SSgt Walker.

"This sort of work could be needed anywhere in the world at the start of an operation – we fix up everything to enable a battlegroup to get going."

"The enemy will always want to deny us runways because of their strategic importance and it's our job to open them up for use."

By working tirelessly to turn a rickety clay track into a smooth bespoke airstrip within five days, this squadron played a key role in supporting airborne operations.

"Without a runway planes simply cannot come in with supplies or troops – our job is therefore vital to any mission," added SSgt Walker.

Diggers, graders and rollers might not be as exciting as machine guns and grenades but in the grand scheme of the British Army success story they are every bit as important. ■



"The enemy will always want to deny us runways because of their strategic importance and it's our job to open them up for use"

SSgt Joe Walker, RE



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RESTRICTED

USE OF NFTO APPAREL MAY LEAD TO
A MORE INTERESTING LIFE

ADVENTURE, EXPLORATION, FULFILMENT

IRANKED:



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3

4

FROM graffiti and cartoons to stencils and paintings, former paratrooper Pete Elcock details some of the most impressive etchings to have adorned the walls of Kandahar Airbase. All of the images were created by military personnel and captured on camera by the ex-Serviceman between 2010 and 2012.

One of several detailed pieces of graffiti art produced by an anonymous Australian soldier who tagged all his designs around the base with the call sign "zero six".

An image of Audrey Hepburn smoking a cigarette, created with a stencil and red paint. One of several images of glamourous female icons.

One of a selection of bright and colourful cartoons found around the base denoting members of both the Australian and British Forces.

A dedication to a fallen American soldier. The wings represent the airborne forces and some initials and a date appear to be painted onto the poppy image.

AFGHANISTAN WAR ART

THE CREATIVE
LEGACY LEFT
BEHIND BY
NATO TROOPS



YOU ARE NOT A
BEAUTIFUL
AND UNIQUE
SNOWFLAKE

5

6

7

8

A striking mural showing a Taliban fighter surrounded by various pieces of weaponry.

A painting by an American soldier symbolising the Reaper Aircraft Maintenance Unit. Translated, the Latin slogan reads "everybody lives; not everybody deserves to".

A painted wall outside the base's Role 3 Hospital depicting some of the different units involved in air evacuation and protection.

Slogans and an image inspired by the 1999 movie *Fight Club*, starring Brad Pitt.

9

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A hand-painted sign outside a cafe in the Belgian area of the base.

Wood carvings around the Royal Air Force headquarters. The fox denotes the badge of 12 Squadron, RAF. The bat represents IX (Bomber) Squadron alongside the unit's motto "we fly through the night".

Part of a larger image by members of the Royal Air Force. The cartoon is a play on the name of the air-to-surface Brimstone weapon.



10



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● **Afghanistan War Art** by Pete Elcock is available to buy in hard copy or e-book format from £5.99 at www.blurb.co.uk Proceeds from the title's sale go to military causes including Combat Stress and The Afghanistan Trust



RETREAT FROM THE STREETS

Forces charity helps homeless veterans make a new start

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR a number of ex-Service personnel, leaving the structure of the military behind and adjusting to civilian life proves an uphill battle.

Although the true scale of the problem is not known, pressure to find a new job and place to live – even a new sense of identity – puts some veterans at increased risk of isolation and homelessness.

But while the reasons for former soldiers ending up on the streets are complex, one military charity is clear

about what can be done to help them get their lives back on track.

True Heroes is establishing a network of facilities, known as retreats, to house those who find themselves with nowhere else to go.

Set up by Denise Harris, whose son Cpl Lee Scott (2 RTR) was killed in Afghanistan in 2009, the organisation has so far opened two homes in Somerset, with plans to develop a total of 12 across the country.

“It was something that I knew was lacking when I founded the charity,” the former nurse told *Soldier*.

“A lot of homeless people are ex-military and that’s wrong.

“Personnel give their all and

suddenly they’re on the scrapheap.

“Some of them are just kids with their whole life ahead of them – someone has to look after them.

“So what we wanted to do was provide a place for them to come where they can live, and where we can re-educate them into new careers and eventually back to civvy street.”

The charity achieves this aim not only by providing accommodation for up to five veterans at a time, but by offering the residents practical and emotional support through a live-in mentor.

“It’s more like a mum or dad role for want of a better description,” explained Mrs Harris. >>



Family unit: Founder Denise Harris with residents Alex Fulford (left) and Andy Burn

>> "The mentors are there for them when they're having a good day or a bad day, to take them to college, get them to appointments on time or help with paperwork.

"When the guys are ready we sit down and discuss what they want to do.

"They have to work with us, of course, otherwise there's no point but we'll do everything in our powers to make it happen."

An innovative business model lies behind the retreats concept.

The money needed to run each one is generated by an integrated pub and restaurant so that, once established, they become entirely self-funding.

"They all have to be sustainable – you can't just rely on donations from the public in the present climate," continued Mrs Harris.

"So the bars and restaurants support the lads living upstairs.

"After the staff and running costs have been paid for, every penny goes to the guys.

"If one location is doing better than another, that will finance the next one and so on.

"The support we've had from the local community has been tremendous. We're full all the time.

"I think it's because by coming in and just having a drink or meal, all the profit from that goes to our veterans – it's not lining someone else's pockets.

"It goes straight to where it's supposed to and that's what people like to see."

Having scrapped initial plans to develop one large facility in favour of several regional units, True Heroes hopes to export the success of

the Ashcott and Minehead homes around the UK.

Among the sites being considered for future retreats are Warrington, Kirkham and South Shields.

"Even if people are homeless, they won't want to move miles away from the area they know and I didn't want people to go back to being a number – I wanted it to be like a family," added Mrs Harris.

"Some of these individuals joined the Armed Forces because they didn't have a family.

"They live in barracks for years, with people telling them what to do and then suddenly they're out and have no one and that's when they can fall.

"We have to catch them before they get to that bad place.

"We're here to help and we'll do all we can." ■



THEY ALL HAVE TO BE SUSTAINABLE – YOU CAN'T JUST RELY ON DONATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC



**I HAVE NO SHADOW
OF A DOUBT THAT IF
I HADN'T FOUND THIS
PLACE I WOULDN'T BE
HERE TODAY**



Home from home:
The Retreat, set up by True
Heroes in Ashcott, Somerset

WHAT THE ARMY IS DOING TO HALT HOMELESSNESS

ALTHOUGH veterans are thought to make up just six per cent of homeless people, the Service is working closely with many charities to reduce numbers further.

The first point of contact for anyone needing help is the Joint Service Housing Advice Office.

Visit www.veterans-uk.info/homelessness/vpu_help

IN FROM THE COLD

55

● ALEX Fulford was among the first to benefit from True Heroes' help.

The former rifleman moved into the organisation's Ashcott home earlier this year after months spent living rough and is now retraining as a paramedic.

Describing how life began to spiral out of control following his return from Afghanistan in 2009 the 23-year-old said: "I came back in May and by Christmas things started to go wrong.

"I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and discharged in 2011 and then it went from bad to worse quite quickly.

"My wife left, I'd lost my job and my house, and my family couldn't cope with me.

"I stayed on a mate's sofa for a while and then he moved so I ended up just wandering around, living in a tent until I found a shed in the woods.

"I stayed there for a few months right in the middle of that freezing winter, with all the snow, and then I got lucky and found this place.

"Before I got here I had nothing at all.

"Now I have a nice warm bed, a roof over my head, running water – all the things people take for granted.

"I get help with whatever courses I need to do – it's given me another shot at life.

"When you have mental problems it's difficult to approach people and ask for help, but once you've done it you get to live in a place like this, surrounded by great people.

"I have no shadow of a doubt that if I hadn't found this place I wouldn't be here today."

● FELLOW Ashcott resident, 42-year-old Andy Burn, also credits the charity with helping him get back on course.

The father-of-two left the Army in 1995 but it wasn't until two years ago that he began to show signs of PTSD, something he attributes to years spent "living on the edge" during tours of Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

"I ended up in my own personal, tailor-made hell," said the former Royal Engineer.

"Before I realised what it was I had thoughts of killing myself.

"I went to see my doctor and told him about the dreams I was having and the auditory hallucinations – I was hearing my own voice telling me things.

"Various agencies got involved and eventually a social worker said that I couldn't continue to live at home.

"I moved into my mum's house but then she rented it out so I was homeless and living in a tent.

"Two months ago I came here.

"If you're having a tough day there are always people who understand.

"There are two ex-Infantry guys and two ex-Engineers and we have that banter.

"There's no pressure on being made to get better or go and get a job but we give back by doing the odd job around the place.

"If everything goes well and I stay stable I'm working towards going home."





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ROADSTER REVAMP

Soldiers spend **1,000** hours rebuilding classic car that will be given to one lucky driver for just **£5**

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Steve Dock

AFIVER buys the British consumer depressingly little these days.

Anyone expecting to get much change from a pint or a couple of litres of petrol has invariably been disappointed in 2013.

But for one lucky person a £5 donation will soon land them with a piece of motoring history.

Lovingly restored by a group of York-based Servicemen, a 1970 MGB Roadster is up for grabs in a charity draw that aims to raise £6,000 for The Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes.

Sgt Jason Sheehan (R Signals) led the project to rebuild the classic car, which was undertaken by a ten-strong team of soldiers from 2 Signal Regiment and its Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Light Aid Detachment.

Between them, the troops invested more than 1,000 hours of their spare time getting the convertible up and running after it was donated by an MG enthusiast.

"My troop [Engineer Support Troop] was looking at what it could do for charity and we came up with this idea," Sgt Sheehan told *Soldier*.

"We put the feelers out to car clubs and were inundated with people wanting to donate vehicles."

"I spoke to one of the REME guys who got quite excited about the rebuild and said a few of their young members could get involved,"

and it went from there.

"This car is older than they are!"

As word of the fund-raiser got out to local motoring enthusiasts the team was deluged with spare parts and expert advice to allow the painstaking work on the 1798cc machine to begin.

"The gearbox and engine needed rebuilding completely," Sgt Sheehan explained.

"It hadn't run for many years and that's where the REME came in."

"Classic models are harder to fix than modern cars."

"Everything is on springs and levers as there is no internal computer system."

"There would sometimes be five of us sat round the vehicle for a couple of days wondering why something wasn't working."

"A lot of the craftsmen involved only know about Land Rover engines so with this they have had to learn how different powerplants work."

"Some older military trucks have similar sorts of systems so those lessons have been useful."

From the padre who used his contacts to get the wheels sandblasted to the craftsmen learning about carburettors, this project has demonstrated that with enough teamwork even the most unusual military missions can succeed.

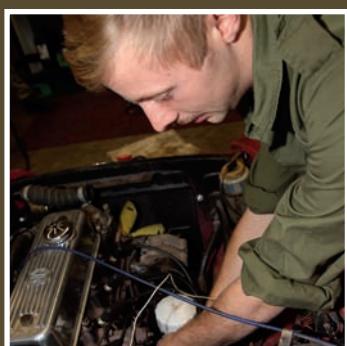
To purchase a £5 ticket and be in with a chance of winning the impressive car email jason.sheehan142@mod.uk

The draw will take place early in the New Year once 1,200 raffle tickets have been sold. ▶



Interested in transferring to the REME?

Jobs are currently available. For details read DIN201301-16 or go to your local Army careers centre



Restoration men: Sgt Jason Sheehan (R Signals, far left) with some of the ten-man team who have given up their spare time to work on the 1970s MGB Roadster at Imphal Barracks, York



UP CLOSE:

THE REPAIRS
CARRIED OUT
BY THE TROOPS

CARBURETOR

THIS was stripped down by the soldiers and rebuilt. "Luckily there's a guy here who started off his career working with these devices," said Sgt Sheehan. "This is an art form in itself."



ENGINE

THE Roadster did not start when donated so this is where most of the repair work was needed. Once the fuel pump was up and running, spark plugs, points and the distributor cap had to be replaced.



“
THIS
CAR IS
OLDER
THAN
THEY
ARE!
”

WHEELS

BRAKE pads on the MGB had become rusty. Its calipers were cleaned up and the disks were replaced using donated parts.



● Visit www.charitybuild.co.uk for more on the project



GEARBOX

THIS needed a complete rebuild. It hadn't run for many years.

SUSPENSION

SPRINGS had become rusty and needed cleaning. The shock absorbers had leaked too.

MGB Roadster: the technical bit

ENGINE
Capacity: 1798cc
Cylinders: 4
Main bearings: 3
Max power:
95bhp @ 5,400rmp
Max torque:
110lb/ft @ 3,000rpm

PERFORMANCE
0-60mph: 12.1 secs
Top speed:
108.1mph
Fuel consumption:
Approx 23mpg



PAINTWORK

A COMPANY called Retro Classica carried out a £5,500 respray for free, restoring the Roadster to its original tartan red. The car's bumpers were also given a new layer of chrome by a York firm.



Bolt Burdon Kemp

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FROM SOLDIER TO THE SAVOY

Ex-Serviceman forges a new career as a butler
in one the world's most iconic hotels

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE salubrious surroundings of The Savoy are about as far removed from a rain-swept exercise or the heat and dust of Helmand province as you could possibly get.

While the two worlds seem poles apart, one former soldier has bridged the divide by forging an unlikely new career after more than 20 years in the Service.

Steven Grey, a former warrant officer in the Royal Army Physical Training Corps, has swapped his military uniform for that of a butler and now serves the rich and famous as part of the hotel's elite staff.

The 45-year-old enjoyed a brief spell with the Australian Defence Force once his UK commitments were complete but a yearning to move into the hospitality trade set him on a new path.

"I'd always wanted to run a hotel so I went to the international butler school in Holland," Grey told *Soldier*.

"It was really intense and almost a military-style boot camp. I coped with it quite well but they managed to break a lot of guys.

"There was sleep deprivation, long hours and non-stop work, it was just like basic training. I quickly realised it was not going to be easy."

The aspiring butler took lessons in flower arranging and was taught how to produce table decorations and greet guests.

He also mastered 25 different ways of folding a napkin as well as the spectacular art of opening champagne bottles with a sabre.

"I'm not a delicate person so I had to refine myself and cut the accent down a lot," Grey added. "They had never had anyone from the North East before."

"We flew to Belgium and were taught how to cut cigars and went to Germany to learn about different champagnes.

"The course taught me how to run an entire household from top to bottom."

With his diploma in hand the Darlington-native posted his new-look CV on the business networking site LinkedIn, where it quickly gained some admiring glances.

"I wanted to work my way up to get to somewhere like The Savoy," the ex-Serviceman explained.

"I was then approached by the hotel – I was totally overwhelmed."

"I started to doubt myself but the training I've had over the years taught me how to handle the pressure."

Grey endured a gruelling interview process before finally landing the job and is now three months into his new career.

"This is where I wanted to work," he added. "It has incredibly high standards, an amazing history and so many stars have stayed here over the years."

"You are expected to have knowledge of the fineries of the world and are virtually a PA for the guests."

"They may ask where the best restaurants are or they might want tickets for a show. I have never lived in London so a lot of research was required."

"We are here to make sure their stay is

as comfortable as possible and they get everything they need, so when they come back they know they will get exactly the same service."

Grey spoke to *Soldier* from the regal surroundings of the Royal Suite, a luxurious setting occupying the front of the fifth floor that boasts spectacular views of the River Thames and the Houses of Parliament.

But this is not his sole responsibility and a typical shift can see him acting as the personal butler for up to 20 guests.

Such demands create a heavy workload and a recent test revealed the former military man walked eight miles during a single shift. He has also lost a stone-and-a-half in weight since starting his new job.

"Organisation is the key to everything," he said. "I'm dealing with 20 rooms, all of which will have different requests, so you have to be fast and learn how to prioritise."

A long career in uniform has given him such skills. After joining the Royal Engineers Grey transferred to the PT Corps, where a number of postings helped influence his future direction.

He ran adventurous training packages in Bosnia and was later in charge of the rest and recuperation centre during the Iraq conflict.

"I would set guys up with low-key things like camel racing, shopping centre visits and trips to the swimming pool," he explained.

"They wanted to chill out. Some needed to just sit in a quiet room, watch some television and get back to reality."

"I also ran the adventurous training centre in Belize and did almost a year out there. It was an idyllic setting with stunning views and a fantastic way to end my career."

The Army helped his preparation in other areas as well. Being a butler is physically demanding and after breaking his back Grey was introduced to a new sport, and he quickly excelled.

"I started strengthening the muscles in my back and really got into my weights," he said. "Without realising I was lifting the same as guys who were 15 or 16 stone."

"I began entering competitions and broke all the British records. I went to South Africa with the national team and was world champion in 1996."

"From using weightlifting to help my rehabilitation I had become an elite sportsman."

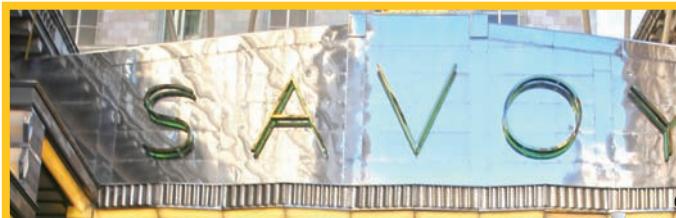
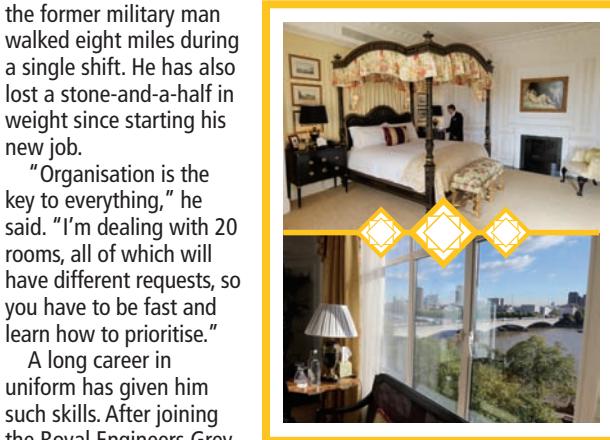
While Service life seems far removed from the elegance of The Savoy it has certainly helped one ex-soldier in his pursuit of a new career in a totally

unexpected field.

Grey is immensely proud of his time in uniform and the experiences it has given him but he is equally enthusiastic about what lies ahead.

"When I left the Army I never thought I'd be doing this a couple of years later," he said.

"I'm from Darlington, where my dad was a bricklayer and my mum served school dinners, and now I'm at The Savoy. It's unbelievable."



FACT FILE: THE SAVOY

- ◆ Originally opened in 1889, the hotel has played host to royalty, world leaders and stars of stage and screen
- ◆ It was the first true luxury hotel in London and was the first to be lit by electricity and install electric lifts
- ◆ Famous former guests include Sir Winston Churchill, Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, Charlie Chaplin and Elizabeth Taylor
- ◆ In December 2007, The Savoy closed its doors for the first time in its history to undergo a complete restoration costing £220 million. It reopened in October 2010
- ◆ The hotel boasts 195 guest rooms and 73 suites that are decorated in either Edwardian or art deco style
- ◆ A butler is available to all guests staying in suites and services include a personal shopper, secretarial tasks and a travel consultant



OP REINDEER'S HOOF 2013



WITH wallets braced for a battering over the festive season, it's likely to be some time before any of us can stump up the cash to treat ourselves.

But fear not. That is where your favourite military mag comes in.

Now in its fifth year, Op Reindeer's Hoof is our festive giveaway, which sees the team at *Soldier* HQ gather as many different prizes as possible for our hard-working readers.

And this year has been no exception. The £11,320-worth of booty up for grabs on our Facebook page from December 1 includes designer clothing, outdoor activities, state-of-the art gadgets, free meals out and weekend breaks.

Read on to discover how to be in with a chance of winning something in the 12-day draw.

Good luck and merry Christmas from all the team at *Soldier*! ☃



DVDs



Chocolate treats



A group indoor karting experience

Among those *Soldier* would like to thank for their Christmas spirit are: Aston Villa Football Club, The Bluebeard's Revenge, Rivington Grill Restaurant, MacWet, Wingman, Everton Football Club, Classic Lodges, Snugpak, Mustard, Newquay Activity Centre, Homedics, TRX, Mikey Digital, RHA, The Seafood Restaurant, Optical Express, Kobo, Watch Shop, Smart Turnout, Haix Schuhe, Banana Moon Workshop, Sent With A Loving Kiss, Heinnie Haynes, Jabra, Garmin UK, National Geographic, Tesco, Canoe, Daniel Footwear, Blizzard Entertainment, Electronic Arts, Chelsea Football Club, Cosa Nostra PR, Powertraveller Ltd, Atomic Floyd, House PR, Nira Caledonia, Thruxton Racing, NAAFI, Gloucester Rugby, CubanEight, Team Sport, Experience Megastore, Brooks Hotel Edinburgh, Military 1st, War & Peace Revival, Tivoli, The Headland Hotel Cornwall, Revelation Films, Wyck Hill House Hotel, Alex Wise, Telegraph Outdoor Show, Paramount, Edinburgh Dungeons, Eco Services.

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One of several weekend breaks

How to enter

1. Visit the *Soldier* Facebook page
2. Click the "like" button
3. Look out for notices about the daily draws and how to enter on your feed or our wall
4. Follow the instructions to enter
5. Readers should only send one entry per day but you can try your luck at as many of the daily competitions as you wish
6. You will be contacted if you are one of the lucky winners

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TALKBACK

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) 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.



Picture: Graeme Main

Why is there a pay gap for Reserves?

HAVING recently left the Royal Armoured Corps where I was a crew commander and joined the Royal Yeomanry, I'm amazed to find that we Reservists are paid much less than our Regular counterparts.

To give this context, I've taken up a full-time Reserve post at the Reinforcements Training and Mobilisation Centre.

My job is instructing and running ranges and I gained the required qualifications and experience in my Regular career, yet I'm paid around £3,500 per annum less than my Regular equivalent.

The Royal Yeomanry is currently training its squadrons for an exercise on Salisbury Plain next year, where we will employ the same tactics and do the same job as our

Regular counterparts. Potentially, we will also deploy alongside them.

The MoD, however, expects the Reserves to do the same job for a lot less pay.

This, I feel, is a major flaw in the new Regular-Reserve partnership. – *Sgt R Gregory, Royal Yeomanry (late QRL)*.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
When you were in Regular service you were a qualified armoured vehicle commander and this was your trade for pay, attracting higher range rates.

This is annotated on the unit establishment table, AFC 8005.

For Reserve units such as the Royal Yeomanry there are currently no posts for armoured fighting vehicle commanders.

When you joined the Army Reserve you were therefore recruited as either a crewman, yeoman or soldier, all of which are on the lower range on the Army Reserve trade for pay that is used to calculate your FTRS salary.

The Army 2020 and Future Reserves 2020 programmes are looking to ensure that the balance of trades within Army Regular and Reserve units is appropriate to meet future requirements.

As part of this work, a review of all roles will be looked at in detail and the varied training that is needed to deliver these posts will inevitably be taken into account when careful consideration is given to pay across the Royal Armoured Corps and Royal Yeomanry.

...Is it because they're being short changed?

I FEEL there is a huge anomaly with Army Reserve pay.

The daily rate is based on dividing the annual wage of a Regular by 365 days, which includes 104 weekend days, eight bank holidays and 30 leave days (142 in total).

This leaves 223 working days so our pay should not be diluted by the large number of non-working days in the year.

Paid annual leave (one day per ten worked) goes a small way to addressing the

discrepancy but Reserve personnel should still receive a daily rate that is the Regulars' annual wage divided by the number of working days in the year – so 223 not 365.

I hope the Armed Forces pay review board will give this serious consideration. – *Name and address supplied*.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: Prior to formation of JPA the military salary was calculated using daily rates of pay. Regulars are now given annual salaries.

Army Reserve personnel not in full-time service are paid on an attendance basis on a daily rate. That is calculated using the annual rate paid to Regulars of the same rank and trade, divided by 365.25 to allow for leap years.

With regards to weekends, Regulars are paid for these days whether they work them or not and this reflects the much higher level of commitment these troops sign up to.

They do not have an employment contract and do not have set hours, cannot earn overtime and can be expected to work seven days a week for extended periods if required.

This occurs on operations, exercises, and includes duties and weekend working. As we move to contingency more



personnel will be at high readiness, reinforcing the need to be available as and when required.

This is reflected in Regulars' annual salaries and thus the 365-day comparator when calculating Reserve pay.

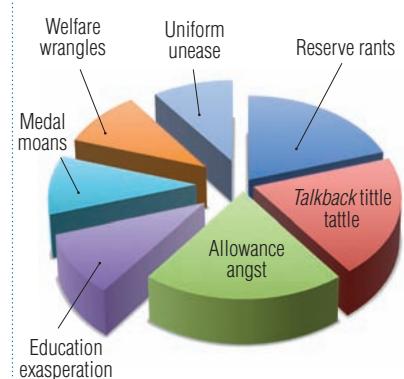
It also means that when a Reservist and a Regular are working together they receive the same amount per day (adjusted for the X-factor).

The bottom line is that the salary construct is fair for all and the pay review board deems it appropriate in comparison with civilian jobs.

Reserve pay has already been enhanced and there are no plans to change the system further.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#REVIEWS (P 71-81)

@The_Relateru

#Norwich has hosted the **#alphapapa** premiere? Sad as it sounds, this was the biggest event in Norfolk for years!

@CallmeDownsie

Call of Duty is certificate 18. Not old enough? Join the Army at 16 and get a couple of years' practice. **#cod**

@ajhmurray

VALKYRIE ALERT! walked out of the cinema! Cruise "we have gotta do something about Ay-dolf Hit-lor!"

#SERVICE CHARITIES

@DannyCole_10

Just seen the new Sainsbury's advert! Wow, what a great advert! **#TrueHeroes** Wish all of our soldiers could be brought home for Christmas!

@Tickets4Troops

So far this year TFT have allocated over 150,000 tickets to our boys & girls! Amazing support for our troops! Thanks to ALL who've donated.

@lil_grego

Better late than never. Sorted a @HelpforHeroes Xmas stocking for one of the guys. Hopefully they like it :) **#H4H**

@supportthewalk

While 3 teams of wounded servicemen & women race to The South Pole, you can do your bit to @supportthewalk this Xmas www.walkingwiththewounded.org.uk

@PoppyLegion

Thank you to everyone who supported our amazing @ThePoppyGirls! The official **#PoppyAppeal** single finished in the charts at lucky number 13!

#CELEB SUPPORT (P 7)

@KathJenkins

Back in the UK after an incredible trip to Afghanistan to entertain our wonderful Armed Forces **#BFF #CampBastion**

#SPORT (P 83-95)

@ArmyLGBT

Ever wondered how to get involved with "that" Army sport? Check out the Army Sports Control Board and get stuck in: http://armysportcontrolboard.org/sport_contacts.html

@soldiermagazine

Room inspections 'over the top'

AM a single soldier living in Service accommodation in Germany.

I've now reached a point in my career where I'm no longer expected to present my room for scrutiny.

I do, however, keep my eye on how single junior ranks are treated in this department – and one example has prompted me to write in.

A soldier I know in single living accommodation recently had his quarter inspected seven times in a ten-day period.

I have been in that Servicemen's position myself. On a previous posting in Catterick the regimental quartermaster sergeant would, without notice, access the rooms when personnel were not present to check for health, safety and hygiene.

Where do single soldiers' rights stand in regard to unfair and invasive treatment?

Family accommodation is not subjected to inspection in the same fashion as far as I'm aware. – [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:

The guidance on privacy is contained in the Army general and administrative instruction 53, specifically section 53.009 although you should note that the principles in 53.009 do not extend to soldiers undergoing phase one, two and three training.

The policy is not prescriptive and the word "reasonable" is mentioned several times in that draft.

A living-in soldier's room is his home but the commanding officer has certain rights and responsibilities.

He or she should inspect the accommodation at a reasonable frequency to make sure it is being properly looked after, a suitable level of hygiene is being maintained and basic health and safety measures are being taken. Overloading electrical circuits is a common failing, for example.

Inspections should normally be carried



out in the presence of the occupant and be preceded by proper notice. Such checks should not require the opening of lockers or drawers.

Quartermaster staff may hold keys to rooms but should only access the accommodation without prior warning in an emergency.

It is equally reasonable that the occupant, having been given notice of an inspection, should have the room in a clean and tidy condition.

Where there is evidence that the accommodation is not being properly maintained by the dweller then administrative or even disciplinary action might result if there has been negligent or deliberate damage.

On the other hand, if the frequency of inspections is not reasonable, appropriate and proportionate then the soldier may make a complaint.

Time to remove the maroon beret?

I WOULD like to know, now that 21 Battery, 47 Regiment Royal Artillery are no longer a part of 16 Air Assault Brigade, how they can still be walking around with their maroon berets on?

They should, surely, lose their entitlement to wear this particular garment and go back to their blue versions. – [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops, replies:
Other than The Parachute Regiment, Army dress committee policy only used to allow those units that were part of 16 Air Assault Brigade to wear the maroon beret.

Army 2020 created a number of sub-



units whose only reason for being is to support 16 Air Assault Brigade but whose peacetime chain of command is outside the formation for reasons of maintaining specialist capabilities.

HQ 16 Air Assault Brigade submitted a case asking for such sub-units to be allowed to wear the maroon beret and this was endorsed at the Army dress committee in November.

Vegan who's sick of bean treated differently

AM a vegetarian. Why? Because the Army will not allow me to be a vegan. There are no vegan ration packs yet the British Army supplies special menu choices to Muslims and Sikhs, among other religions.

This would seem to contravene my human rights.

To add insult to injury the standard of vegetarian food is very patchy.

I'm aware that sacrifices have to be made in military service but this is one that makes no sense at all when the Army caters for other lifestyles and beliefs.

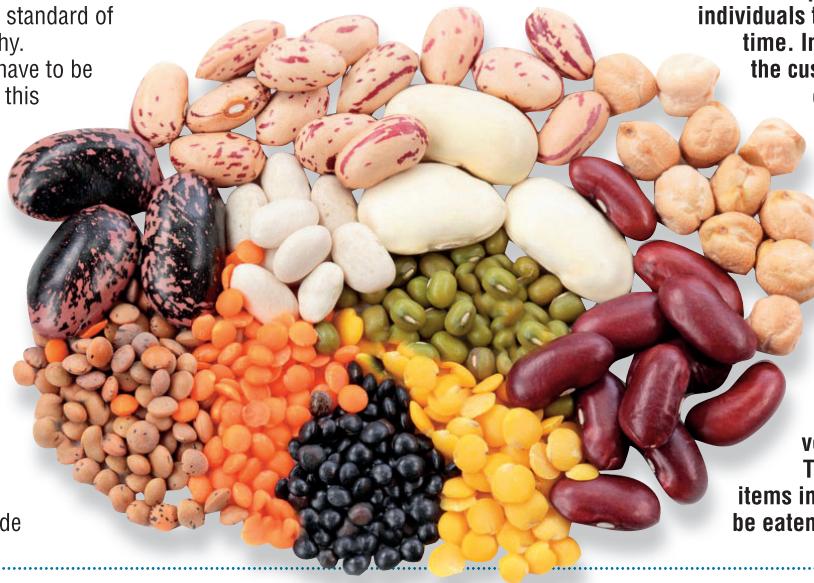
I'm not allowed vegan footwear either.

There are no health and safety issues I wouldn't be prepared to waive in order to be able to do so, and please don't tell me such footwear wouldn't be suitable for duty when we have Sikhs in the guards.

I'm not suggesting these allowances shouldn't be made

but I do question why they are there for some groups and not others. – Name and address supplied.

Maj (Ret'd) Ritchie Player, S02 Food Services, replies: Liaise with unit catering staff who are obliged, in accordance



with JSP 456, to provide for all gender, religions and dietary requests where possible. The standard of food served in Army kitchens should be the same everywhere and you have the right to be fed in line with the regulations.

If the food is not acceptable for any reason there are processes in place for individuals to address this at the time. In pay-as-you-dine units the customer still has the option to discuss food with the catering staff.

As far as ration packs go, there are many variants and the MoD does cater for Muslims and Sikhs, as well as Jews, on religious grounds.

Vegetarians are also catered for but due to their low numbers vegans are not. That said, most of the items in vegetarian boxes can be eaten by vegans.

'Please give us more job-specific training'

I WAS always told that my trade came second to being a soldier, which I completely disagree with.

I'm a member of the Royal Logistic Corps and over numerous tours of Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan I never once took a section or platoon on patrol.

I truly believe that part one of the senior command, leadership and management (CLM) course would be far more beneficial to the Army and individual if it was job specific and didn't include as many general soldiering skills.

It should, in my opinion, contain advanced questions that pertain to our particular trade.

I have recently returned from Afghanistan, where I lived in a patrol base for six months alongside a company of infantrymen.

I was allowed to get on with my job and was required only very occasionally on other duties when numbers were low. This is the reality of the situation.

I also think the military knowledge 1 (MK1) course is completely off the mark. For example, why does a senior chef need to know about weapon systems?

Soldiers revising for the MK1 are only memorising the answers to the questions and do not understand the reasons behind them, which makes the process pointless. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Ben Bathurst, Director of Training (Army), responds:

The CLM programme is pan-Army training delivered incrementally throughout a soldier's career with the requirement set in place by the Directorate of Training (Army).

The objectives of courses are developed collaboratively with capability directorates to provide them with enough flexibility to develop and contextualise training in the most appropriate way to suit each cap badge.

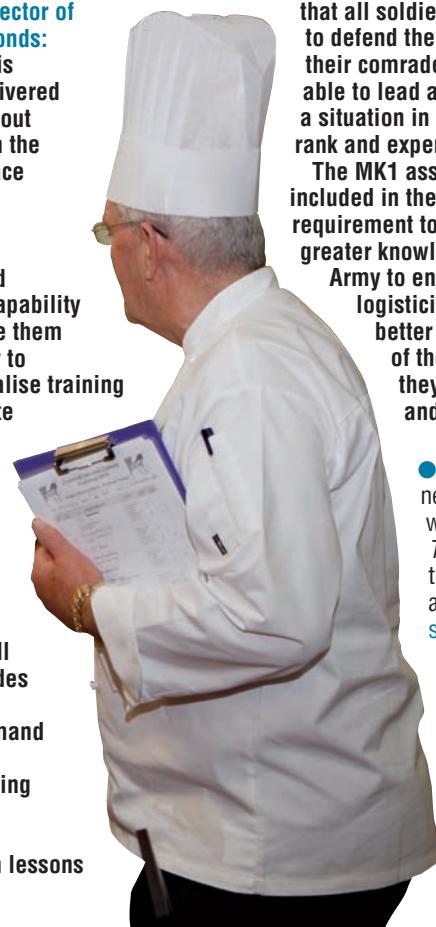
Basic close combat skills are a key element of the CLM scheme; it provides a basic level of military training required by all cap badges and provides the means to develop and assess NCO command and leadership in an appropriately demanding setting.

There is a clear justification, based on lessons from operations,

that all soldiers must be able to defend themselves and their comrades, and must be able to lead and command a situation in line with their rank and experience.

The MK1 assessment is included in the RLC's CLM requirement to promote greater knowledge of the Army to ensure all logisticians have a better understanding of the organisations they operate with and support.

- Do Army chefs need to know about weapons? Tell *Talkback* what you think now. Send an email via mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk or write to the team at the usual postal address (details on page three).



Qualification conundrum

MYSELF and several of my colleagues have been asked to provide evidence of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications in maths and English in order to be considered for promotion.

However, I no longer have my certificates. It's more than 25 years since I left school and they've long since been lost.

Incidentally, trying to get replacements after this period of time is extremely difficult and costly.

I have completed a higher national certificate (HNC) in building studies which includes a maths module. Although my HNC is level 5 on the national qualifications framework (NQF), whereas GCSE is only level 2, I have been told by my regimental administration officer that this will not be recognised by the Army.

In my opinion, this seems both unfair and shortsighted.

Why are personnel sometimes being forced to complete a level 2 learning programme while holding a superior qualification?

This equates to a waste of precious time and money on both the soldier's and the Army's behalf.

Surely there must be some common sense applied to this issue? – Name and address supplied.

Lt Col Joanne Burgon, S01 Ops, Directorate of Educational Capability,

replies: There is a system for capturing qualifications when soldiers join the Army so there is every chance they were recorded on entry and are located in the qualifications field on JPA rather than as a competence.

I would advise that you check your own JPA account and if you find them there ask your training wing staff to transfer them as competences to the correct field.

In the case of your HNC, while it contains a maths module there is no evidence that it contains the breadth of skills required and no evidence of literacy skills.

It is therefore not recognised as an equivalent to the functional competencies required by the Army.

If you find that your qualifications are not on JPA visit your local Army education centre as soon as possible because they can help you access the appropriate courses to secure the required skills free of charge.

From April 2014 literacy and numeracy qualifications will be used as a filter by the Army Personnel Centre so everyone should be checking their JPA records to ensure that they have the correct literacy and numeracy proficiencies recorded in the appropriate field.

This information was communicated through ABN 90/12 should you want to check for more detail.



Swimming takes a dive

I AM based at Merville Barracks, the second largest garrison in the UK, and I've just been informed that our evening swimming sessions have been reduced from four per week to one token session on Thursdays.

Swimming is an extremely effective method of training, particularly for those who are undergoing rehabilitation or are injured. One evening slot of 45 minutes for a brigade is absurd.

I am sure Sodexo, which runs the pool, will state that we could swim at lunchtime or early mornings but, surprisingly, I use that time to eat.

The evening slots appear to have been given to the garrison families and to adventurous training activities but surely the fitness of troops should take priority over hobbies such as kayaking?

I think this is another example of private finance initiatives ruining the MoD's mission statement of providing adequate facilities for us to train.

I know the department is dealing with unprecedented cutbacks but I'm sure it could afford a lifeguard for an extra hour in the evening for the benefit of a brigade (five pence from our wages should pay for it!).

The pool is always busy from the second it opens for our tiny 45-minute evening session. – LCpl I Aitken, 2 Para.

Maj Adrian Grinonneau, Chief of Staff, Colchester Garrison, responds: The decision to amend the pool's opening times followed a request from 16 Air Assault Brigade and it was decided to run a trial until February 2014.

The change involved opening an hour earlier to allow units to conduct organised fitness training in the morning, compensated for by the loss of an hour in the evening which would impact on individuals but in the least-attended part of the programme.

The contractor facilitated the new timings but was not involved in the decision to alter them.

There are no changes to the total hours available and no extra time has been given to other users.

Swimming pool usage by the rehabilitation units is also unchanged.

Details of the trial were communicated to all units and posters have been displayed throughout the barracks and gym since early September.



Wear your heart on your sleeve

Polo shirt

The design for this striking blocked red, white and blue polo shirt was inspired by the stripes on a World War Two France and Germany Star medal – as worn by the grandfather of our Poppy Shop buyer. It features pearlised buttons, an embroidered Royal British Legion logo on the left chest, Union Flag on the left sleeve and woven red, white and blue tape inside the collar.



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Recalling resettlement training

HAVE been employed in the Reserves since August 1999 under a non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) 75 contract.

I now find myself at the age of 55, having served continuously for more than 14 years, about to go in front of a medical board with the probability that I will be recommended for discharge.

When I joined I recall reading a clause somewhere in my terms and conditions of service that said NRPS personnel were eligible for resettlement training.

I have asked my regimental administration officer about this but he says he knows nothing.

I contacted my local Army education centre who said that I'm not eligible for resettlement training as an NRPS soldier.

Given my length of service, age and the fact that I'm leaving more than four years earlier than I anticipated, can you tell me whether there's a chance I might be eligible for this? – **SSgt R Bailey, REME**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies:
We have checked TA regulations for 1999 and the reference to resettlement appears in one of the annexes to chapter six, which was a template for a letter from the CO to those NRPS personnel

who were being redundant.

It stated that these troops could seek a vacancy on Royal British Legion resettlement courses being held at Tidworth or Ellesmere Port at the time.

These courses ceased soon after, which is why it disappeared in later amendments of TA regulations.

You may have seen it but I must stress that this was for redundancy only.

In the same period, retirement on medical grounds did come with certain benefits as shown in chapter nine, part three of TA regulations but these were rescinded a couple of years ago and replaced with the Reserve Forces non-Regular permanent staff (pensions and attributable benefits scheme) regulations 2011.

There were no changes to the level of benefits received. However, it was brought into line with modern pensions and schemes such as payment to civil partners and apportionment on divorce.

The enhanced benefit on medical discharge remains in the new regulations.

Resettlement training for NRPS personnel therefore continues to be inadmissible.

More parental support please

I READ the article in the September issue of *Soldier* (page 15) concerning the increase in education allowance for the offspring of serving personnel.

While providing benefits to allow Service children to continue their learning is a positive thing, I do question why we are not doing anything for those with younger offspring who are currently not entitled to subsidised funding for schooling.

I have a child who is 15 months old and I have to send him to nursery in order to be able to work.

This sets us back just over £1,000 per month and we receive no financial

support from the Army with the exception of the childcare vouchers scheme (which only makes a small dent in the cost).

Why is it that the Service only provides major support for those families with older children and not those with babies or toddlers who might need it just as much?

Surely we should be encouraging parents to return to employment rather than putting them off? – Name and address supplied.

Col Clive Knightley, Assistant Director, MoD Directorate, Children and Young People, responds: The continuity of education allowance is provided to ensure that children of mobile Service families can continue with their schooling.

It is not a payment to assist spouses to return to work.

That said, an MoD review into childcare provision is currently underway in order to ensure that Army parents are not being disadvantaged in comparison with their civilian counterparts.



A word of thanks

I WOULD just like to express my gratitude to the person who wrote a story in a previous edition of *Soldier* regarding a senior NCO who had treatment for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Having just been diagnosed with this, I realised that reading this article really helped me.

Although it wasn't the deciding factor for me in seeking help it did give me more confidence in how the system would work rather than going in blind.

I also feel that this was especially important for me as a warrant officer because of the stigma that is associated with this process. A big thank you to you all. – Name and address supplied.



Language barrier

I WOULD like some clarification on claiming the standard learning credit (SLC) for courses.

I have recently passed the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) level 3 citizenship course.

However, when I went to the Army education centre to claim the cost of the qualification they rejected it, stating that they were valid only for ESOL level 1 and 2.

I am a Nepalese citizen and I've been in the Army for 11 years now. Should the Service not fund citizenship courses for all non-British nationals within its ranks? – **Pte R Gurung, RHA**.

Sue Thain, SO1 Skills Development, Directorate Educational Capability, replies: I have looked into this and the course you have paid for is English for citizenship. This is not funded as part of the English education for soldiers scheme. The Army education centre will help with functional English courses.

The rules for claiming SLCs are very clear – you must get permission for the course in advance. The education centre has rightly rejected your claim and therefore I'm sorry to tell you that the Army is unable to refund your fees.

DISAGREE?

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Spine line winners: SSgt A Stiles, BFPO 15; Ewan Smith, Westdown Camp, Tilshead.

The World at War: WO2 J Malone, Tayforth UOTC, Dundee; Charles Long, Grimsby, Lincolnshire.

Who: C Duckworth, Chicksands, Bedfordshire; B W Exley, Billericay, Essex; WO1 S N Attwater, Chetwynd Bks, Chilwell; D Clarkson, Chippenham, Wiltshire; Maj E Mathieson, Marlborough Lines, Andover.



December 6: **Salisbury Cathedral Carol Concert** in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity. The show will feature traditional carols, music from the Band and Bugles of The Rifles, the Military Wives Choir and the renowned Cathedral Choir. Starts at 1900 and tickets cost £28 and £22, available from Salisbury City Hall box office or online at www.cityhallsalisbury.co.uk

December 20-23 and 27-31: **A Wartime Christmas.** Visit the "A Family in Wartime" exhibition at London's Imperial War Museum and find out what the capital was like during the Second World War. Open between 1100 and 1600.

March 13: **Boarding Schools' Fair 2014** The chance to see and talk to more than 70 independent schools from across the country at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham from 1800-2030. For details contact tdrake.serco@defenceacademy.mod.uk or sduffy.serco@defenceacademy.mod.uk

Until further notice: Chelsea Pensioners' wartime stories are being captured in a new online collaboration between the National

Army Museum and the Royal Hospital Chelsea. **The Old and the Bold** is an audiovisual history project and videos are available to view by visiting www.nam.ac.uk



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ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

Armed Forces' Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

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

Armed Forces Muslim Association: Chaplain 0207 414 3252; www.afma.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforcesthumanists.org.uk

Army Libraries: 01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

459; www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

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

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences: 0131 556 0091; www.svronline.org

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from the UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafa.org.uk

Stoll: (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation) 0207 385 2110; info@stoll.org.uk; www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association: 020 7730 2400; www.nfassociation.org

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BULLET POINTS



INTELLIGENCE

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

ABN 117/13: Reserves educational and training services

ABN 116/13: FR20 update

ABN 115/13: In-year infrastructure investment – Dinfra

ABN 114/13: Raising the participation age in education and training

ABN 113/13: City & Guilds senior awards in leadership and management

ABN 112/13: Literacy and numeracy – Reserve requirements

ABN 111/13: Services insurance and investment advisory panel

ABN 110/13: Borona Stafford contracts award

ABN 109/13: Fundamental changes to MJDI account structures

ABN 108/13: Supplements, CDT and your military career – YouTube video

ABN 107/13: Introduction of testing for drugs and alcohol for personnel undertaking safety-critical duties

ABN 106/13: Armed Forces continuous attitude survey

Continued on page 62

ABN 105/13: Army basing programme update
ABN 104/13: Accrued rights for officers commissioned from ranks in AFPS 75
ABN 103/13: Review of Officer Training Corps units
DIN 2013DIN01-227: The Service complaints (career management) team
DIN 2013DIN01-225: Regulations for part-time volunteer Reserves entitlement to paid leave
DIN 2013DIN01-224: Unaccompanied baggage prohibited items list
DIN 2013DIN01-222: MoD civilian dental practitioners and specialist dental officers pay award 2013
DIN 2013DIN01-221: Disabled parking badges (blue badges) for MoD personnel and dependants living overseas
DIN 2013DIN01-220: BR3 – issue of October 2013 edition
DIN 2013DIN01-219: Tri-Service policy for training return of Service
DIN 2013DIN01-218: Services insurance and investment advisory panel
DIN 2013DIN01-215: Support fund for state schools with Service children 2014
DIN 2013DIN01-213: Late entry commission in the Corps of Royal Engineers
DIN 2013DIN01-212: The introduction of new powers to test personnel undertaking safety-critical duties for drugs and alcohol
DIN 2013DIN01-211: Direct appointee scheme – access temporarily suspended at sponsor's request
DIN 2013DIN01-210: Science and engineering professional framework
DIN 2013DIN01-209: Arthur Barratt Memorial Prize 2013
DIN 2013DIN01-208: Senior officers' course 124 – Nato Defence College Rome – February 24 to July 25, 2014 (inclusive)
DIN 2013DIN01-206: Travel by spouses/civil partners at public expense in connection with official visits
DIN 2013DIN01-205: Pension rights accrued for officers in Armed Forces pension scheme 1975 who commissioned from the ranks
DIN 2013DIN01-204: Accommodation booking in the Portsmouth area
DIN 2013DIN03-022: Guidance for the safe wearing of the tiered ballistic pelvic protection in hot environments
DIN 2013DIN04-192: Sea survival equipment log block amendment 76
DIN 2013DIN04-191: Asset management of non-pattern Service light weapons and operational memorabilia light weapons
DIN 2013DIN04-190: Maritime strategic capability agreement
DIN 2013DIN04-189: Declaration of obsolete – TacGA UK/PRC-346 communications system
DIN 2013DIN04-188: Sonobuoys – direction on allowances and instructions for their supply, storage and use
DIN 2013DIN04-187: Declaration: out of service. Defile marker. DMCX4/ NSN6210992094968
DIN 2013DIN04-186: Trade receipts deliveries, booking-in procedure LCS Bicester

DIN 2013DIN04-185: Declaration of confirmed out-of-service date for the pistol 9mm, L9A1, Browning; DMC L9A1, NSN 1005-99-075-5480
DIN 2013DIN04-184: Declaration of confirmed out-of-service date for the pistol 7.65mm, L47A1, Walther; DMC L47A1, NSN 1005-12-159-3025
DIN 2013DIN04-183: Lifejackets – introduction of United Moulders Limited Mk 5i automatic water-sensing cartridge block including associated components
DIN 2013DIN04-182: Lifejackets/buoyancy aids – instructions for fitting gas cylinders
DIN 2013DIN04-181: Lifejackets – introduction of replacement red fibre disc identification tag for water safety equipment
DIN 2013DIN04-180: Removal from service of initiating kit cratering rapid
DIN 2013DIN04-179: Current Cyalume NSN data
DIN 2013DIN04-178: Amendments to operational medical modules contents (Aug-Sep 2013)
DIN 2013DIN04-177: Disposal of Tristar C2, C2a, KC1 and K1 system equipment
DIN 2013DIN04-176: Authority to demand prescription-only medicines under wholesale dealers license
DIN 2013DIN04-175: Declaration of obsolete – deep discharge recovery charger
DIN 2013DIN04-174: Equipment tables, scales and schedules
DIN 2013DIN04-173: New sleeping systems
DIN 2013DIN04-172: Declaration of obsolete – BCIP VHF Mk 2, Mk 3 HF Mk 2 and KVMS Mk 1 lithium-ion rechargeable battery
DIN 2013DIN04-171: Declaration of obsolete – Clansman Ni-Cad battery discharger
DIN 2013DIN04-170: Declaration of ALC obsolete equipment
DIN 2013DIN04-169: Disposal of Hercules C130K system equipment
DIN 2013DIN04-168: Accommodation/feeding booking form – Maindy Barracks, Cardiff
DIN 2013DIN04-167: Declaration of ALC obsolescence equipment
DIN 2013DIN04-165: Removal from parachutist signal smoke
DIN 2013DIN05-046: Joint Service Publication review – end of phase one
DIN 2013DIN05-045: The Air Warfare Centre integrated mission support tasking process
DIN 2013DIN06-035: JSP 426 – *MoD fire safety regulations* – vol 2, leaflet 7 and leaflet 13 (2013 edition)
DIN 2013DIN06-034: Release of JSP 317 – edition 5 – AL 2 – *Joint Service safety regulations for the storage and handling of fuels and lubricants*
DIN 2013DIN06-033: Amendment to the initial point of contact JSP 800 vol 4A *Dangerous goods by air regulations*
DIN 2013DIN06-032: JSP 426 – *MoD fire safety regulations* – vol 2, leaflet 5 (2013 edition)
DIN 2013DIN06-031: Boat operating parameters to reduce whole body vibration
DIN 2013DIN07-158: Joint battlespace management course
DIN 2013DIN07-157: The defence logistics staff course – general outline and application process
DIN 2013DIN07-156: Degree programme for all military logistics trade personnel
DIN 2013DIN07-155: Undergraduate degree programme for defence logistics officers
DIN 2013DIN07-154: Degree programme for all military administration branches and trades personnel
DIN 2013DIN07-151: Psychological operations course
DIN 2013DIN07-150: Air Warfare School courses 2014
DIN 2013DIN07-149: Helicopter load slinging equipment inspector course
DIN 2013DIN07-148: MoD-sponsored Cadet Force activities indemnified by MoD
DIN 2013DIN07-147: Incremental staff required for Joint Service Sub-Aqua Dive Centre
DIN 2013DIN07-145: Introduction of online training for defence medical information capability programme users
DIN 2013DIN07-144: Exercise Snow Warrior 2014
DIN 2013DIN07-143: Joint Service sub-aqua diving conference, HMS *Raleigh*, January 14, 2014
DIN 2013DIN07-142: Joint Service adventurous training sub-aqua diving audit and assurance
DIN 2013DIN07-141: Joint and single Service security, intelligence, photographic and geo-spatial training courses for training year April 2013–March 2014
DIN 2013DIN07-140: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst assistant instructors' cadre 2014 course dates
DIN 2013DIN07-139: Adventurous Training Group Army course and concentration schedule 2014–15
DIN 2013DIN07-137: Joining instructions for personnel attending the Military Training Unit, HMS *Heron*
DIN 2013DIN07-136: Lt Cdr Hooper Essay Competition – regulations and subjects for 2013/14
DIN 2013DIN07-135: Foundation year and general duties medical officers external education and training
DIN 2013DIN07-134: Military Aviation Authority Centre of Air Safety Training courses FY 2013/14
DIN 2013DIN07-132: Advanced command and staff course: command, leadership and management module
DIN 2013DIN08-013: Benefits in kind
DIN 2013DIN09-017: The Firmin Sword Of Peace Awards 2012 – results
DIN 2013DIN09-016: The Firmin Sword Of Peace Awards 2013
DIN 2013DIN09-015: The Ruth Carter Prize for nurses and the Eliza Mackenzie Prize for student nurses
DIN 2013DIN09-013: Royal garden parties 2014 – civilian staff
DIN 2013DIN10-044: AGC Alpine Ski and Snowboard Championships 2014 – Exercise Alpine White Lion 14 and Exercise Snowboard White Lion 14
DIN 2013DIN10-043: Army Telemark Ski Association Championships – Ex Telemark Titan 2014
DIB57/13: New employment model second

phase of consultation with Service personnel

DIB56/13: PUS writes to all civilian personnel about the new performance management process

DIB55/13: Managing surplus civilian staff

DIB54/13: Prime minister launches Armed Forces Corporate Covenant

DIB53/13: PUS writes to staff on new campaign to recruit civil servants to the Reserves

DIB52/13: Letter from CDS and PUS on the new government security classification system

DIB51/13: Ministerial appointments and Private Office contacts



REUNION

P (Parachute) Troop, 7 Para RHA reunion at the Elephant and Castle, North Camp, Farnborough on Airborne Forces Weekend, Saturday, July 5, 2014, to mark 30 years since the formation of P Troop. All ex-members and friends welcome. For further information contact Mark Flannigan via mark.flannigan@yahoo.co.uk

RAMC Reunited 2014 will take place at The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool on February 7-10, 2014. For further information contact Mick McCran by sending a SAE (C5 size) to 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ. Alternatively telephone 01522 879307 or send an email to michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

Singapore Dawnwatchers' Society (SDWS) for members of the Intelligence Corps or those attached to it in Singapore during the 1960s and 1970s. The next reunion will be at The Maids Head Hotel, Norwich on April 4-6,

2014. Please contact Nik Collett, secretary, by emailing sdws-sec@hotmail.co.uk

SEARCHLINE

24 Regiment The Royal Logistic Corps will disband as of March 31, 2014. The regiment wants to return presentation pieces to anyone that donated to RHQ, 49 (HQ) Sqn or the officers' mess. Items unclaimed by the end of January will be disposed of. All enquiries to WO1 (SSM) Whitty on 94881 3282 or email 24RLC-RHQ-Ops-PCSWO@mod.uk

73 Engineer Regiment combined officers' and warrant officers and sergeants' mess is to close by July 2014 as part of Army Reserve restructuring. Anyone who has donated property to the mess is asked to get in touch about return or disposal of items. Anything that is not claimed will be offered to the Corps Museum or put forward for a charity auction after Easter 2014. Contact quartermaster Maj M Everett on 0115 9008652 or WO1 (RSM) A Everson on 0115 9008645

Nicole Korsten is searching for information about **G Gibson (service number 966437)**, whose identity disc was found by her father in The Netherlands in November 1944. Anybody who can help is asked to contact arnold-nicole@online.nl

Rob Wallace is organising a **charity event on May 17, 2014 at Heaton Park, Manchester**, to raise funds for Talking 2 Minds, a charity that helps sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder. To sponsor or assist with setting it up contact heatonparkrelay@hotmail.co.uk

Tom Baker is trying to compile a list of personnel who served with him at **62 Station Workshop REME, Benghazi, Libya** between

1965 and 1968. Call 01400 250518 or email tombaker4458@talktalk.net

A special interest group is being set up by WO2 Mike Hallums for **Mensa members serving in the Armed Forces (Regular and Reserves) and veterans**. Anyone interested is asked to contact michael.hallums333@mod.uk or mikehallums@hotmail.co.uk

Corinne Todd would like to find a friend called **David Hadden, born January 26 1947 in Rushden, Northants**. He was serving at Hobart Barracks, Detmold in 1977 with 9th/12th Lancers. Anyone with information is asked to contact corinnetodd@hotmail.com

Arpers, a framing business in Cheltenham, is trying to trace **OCdt Jamie Dullaghan** to return belongings from July 2008. Details left with the firm name the officers in charge as Maj Spiers and 2nd Lt Green. Anyone with details is asked to contact Mrs Nikki Paoletti via niki1710rolo@gmail.com

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

First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The

results will be announced in the February issue. Usual rules apply.

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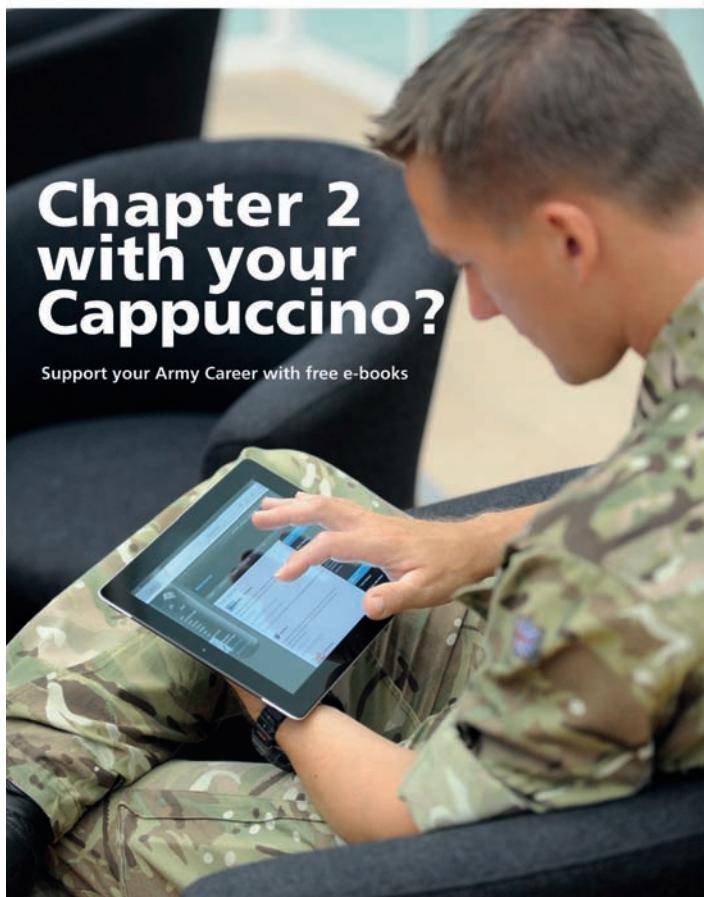
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THIS is a well written account of a Soldier's life in The Household Cavalry between 1955 and 1978. His experiences during the Cyprus Emergency and duties in Northern Ireland are recorded from a Soldier's viewpoint and there are many touches of humour.

I enjoyed reading this thoughtful and entertaining account of Mr Shortman's experiences.

The Duke of Wellington KG

To buy a copy of book please contact:
Mr Shortman – Tel: 01691 680537
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Robert Dicketts, father of Oliver Dicketts

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REVIEWS

FESTIVE FIREPOWER

DECEMBER'S RUN

P72 MOVIES **ALAN ATTACK**

P74 GAMES **DUTY CALLS**

P76 MUSIC **ARCADE ON FIRE**

P78 BOOKS **MURRAY'S MUSINGS**

P80 TOP GEAR **E-READER ANALYSIS**

reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MOVIES



PICK OF THE MONTH: ALPHA PAPA

‘TEXTBOOK’

NORFOLK’S FLAKY-SKINNED RADIO
DJ CONQUERS THE BIG SCREEN

Review: Sarah Goldthorpe

ALATER we will be asking 'which is the worst kind of monger – fish, iron, rumour or war?'. So begins the long-awaited *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*.

Norfolk's best-loved DJ is back. And he certainly doesn't disappoint his audience.

Having conquered just about every media format in recent years, it was only a matter of time before Steve Coogan's cringeworthy alter ego was brought to the big screen.

And full of all the one-liners we have come to expect from the king of sports-casual, this title is a pleasant surprise, both for the hardened Partridge fans and those with no previous knowledge of the character (though if you fall into the second category, where the hell have you been?).

Threatened with a takeover by a new media conglomerate, tensions are rising at the North Norfolk Digital radio station.

Partridge rapidly finds himself at the centre of a siege, where he must exercise the very thing we know he lacks – diplomacy.

The *Knowing Me, Knowing You* star, who won hearts on BBC television some 20 years ago with his eye-watering interview techniques, is surrounded by familiar faces as he works to resolve the situation.

DJ Dave Clifton, previously Alan's arch rival, has moved from alcoholism to hardened drug use and is using his airtime to regale listeners with tales of bed-wetting and withdrawal symptoms.

Lynn's perm has reached a new level of bouffant.

And Michael, the Geordie Army veteran-cum-hotel porter, has been reincarnated in the form of a defecating security guard.

Inspired chat topics run throughout *Alpha Papa* – from an interview with Norfolk's most sun-tanned child to dedications for listeners whose planning applications have been turned down.

Alan Partridge may have joined the 21st century in body but his petty gripes and laugh-out-loud remarks remain untouched by time.

That said, those looking for nothing more than back-to-back television sketches could arguably be left a little flat by this film.

Make no mistake, the old-timers who long for a return to the days of chocolate mousse, Norfolk farmers and the Linton Travel Tavern will be suitably entertained.

But the biggest achievement of this title is the fact it stands up as a film in its own right.

Sit your Partridge-hating girlfriend (why is that fewer women like this character?) in front of this title and they are likely to enjoy its genuinely engaging – even touching – plot that is worthy of a place on any DVD shelf.

As ever, the audience comes away rooting for Alan despite his selfish, egotistical ways.

"The empathy is why this character works," Steve Coogan recently said of the film.

Our mixed reaction of disdain and "we've all thought that" moments when watching Alan is presumably why we've been laughing along with him for two decades.

So sit back, pour yourself a ladyboy chaser and revel in the genius of Mr Coogan and the *Daily Mail*-reading, Lexus-driving, PA-bashing DJ you can't help but love. ■

VERDICT: A triumph for movie fans and Partridge-worshippers alike



KICK ASS 2 out now

UNFORTUNATELY this sequel fails to measure up to its hugely successful cult predecessor. Familiar heroes are immediately thrown back into the fray to fight crime but without a backstory a vital component seems to be missing. Very gory and full of swearing, this naughty title attempts to shock and for the most part succeeds. There are some good laughs to be had but the climax can be predicted from 30 minutes in.

Cpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps

VERDICT: Disappointing follow-up to an iconic original movie



THE COLONY out January 27

SURVIVORS of a man-made ice age eke out a living underground but fall foul of a band of cannibals. This *Day After Tomorrow* meets *The Walking Dead* take on the apocalypse genre gets off to a promising start but fails to deliver with any real scares and eventually fizzles out completely. The villains aren't that menacing and give up pretty easily in the end. It's one of those films where when the credits roll you wonder – "was that it?".

Becky Clark, Soldier

VERDICT: Best summed up with one simple expression: meh



RIDDICK out January 13

THE gravel-voiced **Vin Diesel** returns as the dangerous escaped convict Riddick in a story where he's been left for dead on an apparently lifeless sun-scorched planet. This third instalment of the sci-fi saga is a vast improvement on *The Chronicles* with the muscle-ripped anti-hero revelling in his battle for survival on some impressive vistas. If a big man fighting off massive amphibians is up your alley then this movie is a winner.

Cpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps

VERDICT: A Riddick-ulously good watch



OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN out now

The White House has been seized and the commander-in-chief is in the hands of the enemy. It is an interesting "what if" premise but the story degenerates into a silly farce starring **Gerard Butler** (*300*). It is great to see Butler back in an action release but even an air cadet would be able to see past the film's multitude of military impossibilities. Constant horrific violence does not make up for plot holes and far-fetched conclusions.

Cpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps

VERDICT: Exciting action sequences save this from one-star infamy



THE WORLD'S END out now

HAVING set high standards with *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* it's a shame to see **Simon Pegg** and **Edgar Wright** fall short in the final chapter of the Cornetto trilogy. The story sees five friends reunite for a pub-crawl in their home town and there are plenty of laughs as they find themselves in a battle to save humankind. However, it lacks the charm of its predecessors and a lukewarm ending sees this flavour melt with a whimper.

Richard Long, Soldier



WIN... ALAN PARTRIDGE: ALPHA PAPA

STEVE Coogan's on-screen appearances may have hit a more serious note of late but his most famous character creation is far from dead and buried. Starring the king of sports-casual – plus a host of familiar faces from his television shows – this title is bound to entertain. *Soldier* has teamed up with *Way To Blue* to offer a copy of the DVD to five lucky readers. To be in with a chance of winning, tell us where another man named Partridge appears in this issue. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: December 31

GAMES

PICK OF THE MONTH: GHOSTS

SPECTRES FIGHT BACK

DEVELOPERS HIT THE MARK
WITH GHOULISH OFFERING



Review: Richard Long

THE incredibly popular *Call of Duty* franchise has dominated the Christmas games rush for the best part of a decade now and the 2013 festive period promises to be no different.

Another year has produced yet another instalment and the all-action format, which sits proudly at the forefront of the first-person shooter genre, sticks to its guns in *Ghosts*.

Developers Infinity Ward boast a proud history of farcical storylines in the campaign mode and that tradition continues here.

The plot sees the United States under attack from the Federation, an alliance of South American countries that are waging war – but for no apparent reason.

A deathly laser blast from an orbiting satellite weapon sets the superpower on the back foot and it is left to a small band of campaign-hardened soldiers, known simply as *Ghosts*, to lead the fightback.

Fans of the series will no doubt think they've seen it all before as the action unfolds but there are a few notable additions that make this worthwhile.

Stealth is again the key to success and the introduction of attack dog Riley helps make this a reality.

With long grass to hide in the canine companion can plot a safe route past the enemy hordes, while deploying a lethal lunge to the throat on those unfortunate enough to cross his path.

This proves to be a welcome innovation and there are other notable tweaks and adjustments that break away from the standard run and shoot formula.

Our heroes take to the skies in Apache helicopters, dive underwater to attack a military target at sea and scale a vast skyscraper to gather enemy intelligence.

Stunning set-pieces and impressive graphics add to the mix and the variety in missions – from guile and cunning to all-out war via bombs, bullets and explosions – make this a highly entertaining romp.

But it is the multiplayer and online options that have made *Call of Duty* the success it is and there is no shortage of maps, weapons and features here.

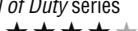
There are seven new competitive modes and while some offer only minor alterations, others, such as "cranked", really take things up a gear. Each kill is rewarded with a speed boost but it also triggers a countdown, during which you must land another hit or face the prospect of exploding.

The co-op multiplayer also benefits from a new "extinction" option, in which teams of four have to protect themselves from continuous waves of alien attack.

While failing to fully push the boundaries *Ghosts* still delivers on all fronts and establishes itself as an impressive addition to the *Call of Duty* portfolio.

With the next generation of consoles now online it will be interesting to see what presents are delivered next year. ■

VERDICT: Back with a bang, the *Call of Duty* series delivers yet again



Review: Richard Long

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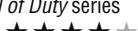
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VERDICT: Back with a bang, the *Call of Duty* series delivers yet again



BATMAN ARKHAM ORIGINS

for Xbox/PS3/PC/Wii U

WHEN this prequel to the blockbuster *Arkham* titles was announced the question asked was would it live up to their legacy? Sadly the answer is no. The story starts with our hero having to face-off against eight assassins but soon morphs into a Batman-Joker tale. It maintains the excellent gameplay but the absence of innovation is notable. Gliding through Gotham is still fun but it's a broken city and the game is unfortunately riddled with cataclysmic bugs.

Stephen Smith, MoD Corsham



16

VERDICT: Gotham's dark side proves to be a buggy mess



BATTLEFIELD 4

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

THE combination of great graphics, fast gameplay and full-on violence makes *Battlefield 4* a very entertaining offering. The campaign is okay but pretty standard. However, it is in the online multiplayer where this comes into its own as you can fight over land, sea and air on some fantastic maps. This is the best game for all-out war on the market. If you have a decent team and an idea of tactics, you can while away your sports afternoons, shooting couch potatoes in the face the world over.

Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC



16

VERDICT: One of the best first-person shooters available



DEADFALL ADVENTURES

for Xbox 360/PC

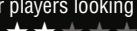
THIS is an action-driven first-person shooter with elements of puzzle solving. The main goal is to become a skilled adventurer and I was hoping *Deadfall* would be some competition for the *Lara Croft* series but I was sadly disappointed. The game encourages you to hunt for clues and treasure but you are very restricted as to where you can explore. Minor details could have made this a lot better. I won't be using it as a stocking filler this Christmas.

Cpl Neil Edwards, R Signals



16

VERDICT: One for younger players looking to avoid graphic titles



ASSASSIN'S CREED: BLACK FLAG

for Xbox/PS3/PC/Wii U

HAVING not played any of the previous games in this series I was keen to get my hands on the latest instalment. Ubisoft have put together a solid package that looks good, plays great and has an interesting storyline. It's very "open world" so when you are on a task there are loads of ways to get the job done. But the real highlight is when you become a pirate captain and battle other ships at sea. This could have been complicated but the developers have kept it simple and fun.

Sgt Mike O'Neill, RLC



18

VERDICT: A great game and one to definitely buy



WWE 2K14

for Xbox 360/PS3

FANS of the *WWE* series will immediately feel at home with this latest offering. For button-bashing exhibition players *2K14* offers arguably the most fluent and fast-paced wrestling game ever seen, while enthusiasts will enjoy the 30 years of WrestleMania mode that boasts an array of legendary matches. The gameplay is immersive, while the graphics are consistently strong and realistic. However, the same cannot be said of the crowd shots, which are PS2-standard at best.

LCpl Joseph Kibbler, AGC (RMP)



16

VERDICT: A hit and miss offering – pun intended



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2014

for Mac/PC

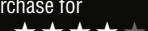
AS complex and addictive games go, there are few that can compete with the *Football Manager* series. The 2014 instalment isn't so much a revolution but more an overall improvement on previous efforts, retaining core features while polishing the details. This time around everything looks that little bit better. But the biggest change is in contract negotiations, which are now live chat sessions of financial and contractual wrangling.

David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen



16

VERDICT: An essential purchase for newcomers to the series



MUSIC

PICK OF THE MONTH: REFLEKTOR

DANCEFLOOR DIVERSION

CANADIAN ROCKERS RETURN
WITH NEW RHYTHM

Review: James Morton

IT'S now getting on for a decade since indie outfit Arcade Fire emerged from the underground in Montreal, Canada, bearing debut album *Funeral*.

Widely acclaimed as one of the greatest records of the noughties, it was followed up with the black magic of 2007's *Neon Bible* and then *The Suburbs* in 2012, the band's most complete work to date.

So, with an unimpeachable curriculum vitae to their name, the Canadians decide to hit the disco for album number four – what could possibly go wrong?

Clearly fans of *Strictly*, the Fire realise that to take to the dancefloor you need a decent teacher. They couldn't have chosen much better than LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy, producer of the coolest punk-dance albums of recent times.

A marriage made in heaven? Let's just say there's a few wobbles on the way to the altar.

Things start promisingly. Very promisingly.

The album's title track is everything you might expect. All of Arcade Fire's dark arts are in evidence – foreboding bass, bleak dystopian lyrics, sinister stabs of brass.

A disco beat that is pure LCD propels the whole track along and it builds to a throbbing climax that sets the record up perfectly.

However, it totters pretty precariously for the rest of the opening half.

Flashbulb Eyes and *Here Comes the Night Time* see the Fire really pulling on their sparkly disco suits and attempting to strut their stuff.

Sadly, the end result is not all that becoming. The samba beats and tinkling pianos jar against the band's natural menace and produce something that simply sounds out of place.

Oddly for a group with such an epic sound, it's the straight-up rock and roll of *Normal Person* and *Joan of Arc* that begins to pull things round – a palette cleanser after a dodgy fish course.

Your typical Arcade Fire fan will feel in far more familiar territory as the album draws to its close.

The couplet of *Awful Sound (Oh Eurydice)* and *It's Never Over (Oh Orpheus)* display comforting signs – the former rushing with sweeping melodies, the latter jacking with muscular propulsion.

Penultimate track *Afterlife* acts as something of a late-album sigh – a tantalising sign of what could have been. The Fire belatedly find their disco mojo, leading to a joyous carnival crescendo on the record's standout track.

Perhaps we've come to expect too much from the faultless offerings that preceded this latest effort.

Certainly no-one can fault Arcade Fire's strong desire to innovate and push their musical boundaries.

Reflektor is not perfect but if you can bear to keep your dancing shoes on long enough, there's plenty of rewards to plunder. ■

VERDICT: A bold change of direction with its share of highs and lows



XXX Three Decades of Roadrunner

THIS superb compilation celebrates 30 years of Roadrunner Records. The label has been the full stop at the end of some of the



biggest names in rock and the four-disc set cross sections the heavier end of their books. There is 80s thrash from the likes of **Whiplash** and **Annihilator**, nu metal from **36 Crazyfists** and **Coal Chamber** before the heaviness is upped by **Sepultura** and **Slipknot**. **Cradle of Filth** cover the dark end of the spectrum and **Obituary** hammer the final nails in the coffin.

Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

VERDICT: A must-have for any devoted metal head



Lightning Bolt by Pearl Jam

THEIR first studio album release in four years was billed as a statement of intent by **Pearl Jam**. However, *Lightning Bolt* clearly suggests the intent was to release 12 likeable but ultimately forgettable tracks. Smooth vocals, crunchy guitar riffs set within a soft rock vibe made me think of the **Dave Matthews Band**, which isn't a negative criticism; in fact, it's an appropriate evolution for the raw and sloppy grunge act of the 90s. Precision driven rock this is not but the sound is interesting and well produced.



Maj Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)

VERDICT: Evidence of a rock band evolving instead of dying young



Demonstration by Tinie Tempah

TINIE Tempah is the current superpower of UK hip-hop. Having reached number one with debut offering *Disc-Overy* he is back with *Demonstration*, an album full of exactly the same kind of music. A roll-call of 12 guest vocalists and rappers lend a hand, with **Dizzee Rascal** appearing on *Mosh Pit* and **Emeli Sande** on *A Heart Can Save The World*. *Someday (A Place In The Sun)* and *Trampoline* are other highlights. I really enjoyed this; it is a strong release without any weak points.



Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

VERDICT: A superb offering – every song is a winner



Bangerz by Miley Cyrus

MILEY Cyrus has outrageously proven she is no typical teen but this album shows she has a likeable voice that complements her



songs well. The record starts with a slow vibe but builds to the dramatic and she has collaborated with a number of artists to help make this a smash. Be warned, there is some explicit language on a few tracks but in my opinion this just makes her stand out from the crowd. I love *Adore You*, it is very heartfelt and the words will mean something to everyone.

Kim Cresswell, Army wife

VERDICT: A diverse and eclectic artist at the top of pop's tree



The Speed of Things by Dale Earnhardt Jr Jr

AFTER a popular debut album **Dale Earnhardt Jr Jr** return with new release *The Speed of Things* – an eclectic mix of pop, rock, dance, new wave and electronic music to satisfy your ears. The Detroit duo offer a contemporary **Simon and Garfunkel** sound with a twist, beginning with the sparkly vibe of *Beautiful Dream* before the pace picks up. A bright future beckons if they continue in this manner and expect to see these songs accompanying television adverts in the near future.



Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds

VERDICT: Slow progressive sounds with acoustic soothing



Live at The Royal Albert Hall by Foals

HAVING disliked their last album *Holy Fire*, I wasn't looking forward to this DVD offering but actually it wasn't that bad. In an era of identical guitar bands with even more identical haircuts **Foals** take a big step out of the mould and actually live up to the hype. *Prelude* was a great opener but *Spanish Sahara* was by far and away the best performance. My favourite song was *Two Steps Twice* which finished the show nicely and left me thinking: 'at last, a modern guitar band that can actually play with the big boys'.



LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

VERDICT: Perfect for the skinny jeans and checked shirt brigade

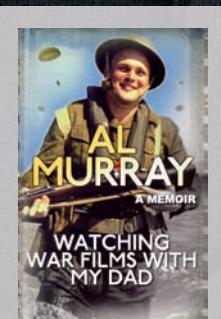


BOOKS

PICK OF THE MONTH:
WATCHING WAR FILMS WITH MY DAD

MURRAY'S MUSINGS

COMEDIAN REVEALS HIS
INNER ARMCHAIR-GENERAL



Available to buy now,
priced £16.99

Interview: Becky Clark

Fthere's one trait that military movie buffs share then surely it is the tendency to spoil a good war film by getting hot under the collar about factual errors.

Never mind that Michael Caine has just fought off 4,000 angry Zulu warriors in one of cinema's classic action sequences, the pedants will be muttering that the real-life Lt Bromhead sported more facial hair.

Among these nitpickers is funny man and self-confessed spotter, Al Murray, as he reveals in his new title *Watching War Films with my Dad*.

Part memoir, part history book, it delves into the comedian's 1970s upbringing and childhood fixations with Action Man, Airfix models and *A Bridge too Far*.

It was seeing such movies alongside his soldier father that sparked Murray's lifelong fascination with the Second World War, as well as his propensity to fume at filmmakers' portrayals of the conflict.

"You don't need to make stuff up about the war – the whole thing is amazing enough as it is," he told *Soldier*.

"I do still try and enjoy movies but I will walk out if they're too bad."

"I went to see *Valkyrie* and I had to leave because it was so offensively wrong – it couldn't possibly call itself factual."

"It's just my cross to bear I suppose."

Unlike his alter ego, the Pub Landlord, whose half-baked theories on world history will be familiar to fans, Murray actually knows his stuff.

"I'm interested in the past and how it informs real life," he commented.

"What I want to get across is that there are always two sides to every story."

"History is very often points of view presented as fact rather than facts from which you can form a point of view."

"That's something we should all think about."

From musings on how war led to the invention of the internet and antibiotics, to reflections on fear and courage, the book is – as Murray puts it – "a bit like having a conversation in the pub".

"The chapter on bravery is the thing I really needed to get off my chest though," he added. "People always say to me how brave I must be to be a stand-up comic and that's just bull****."

"When you think of those who are actually courageous, like some of the people I mention in the book, it's even more ridiculous."

Despite his obvious admiration for his dad and others who serve, Murray's own brush with the military went no further than an undistinguished stint in the Combined Cadet Force, culminating in a dressing down for remaining in his sleeping bag while stagging on.

"Looking back it's hilarious but that incident told me I wasn't suited to the life," he said.

"I know myself very well and I'm not a physical fitness-type person – that would have been a massive hurdle to get over in the first place."

"Also, I'm a daydreamer and I don't think there's room for them in the Army."

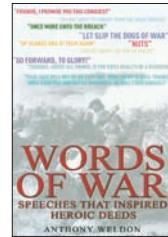
"Now, my view of the Forces is 'thank god for them, otherwise I'd have to do it and everything I've read about it makes me not want to'."

Delivering both on laughs and the serious bits *Watching War Films with my Dad* should earn Murray some new fans away from his stand-up persona. Worth checking out this Christmas. ■

Words of War

by Anthony Weldon

THIS offering delivers a different take on yet another collection of military quotations. What I enjoyed about Anthony Weldon's book was that he put meat on the bone



and explained the context of the speech or quote rather than just presenting an endless list of citations. From Elazar Ben-Yair in AD 66 to Tim Collins in 2003, via Winston Churchill and even Saddam Hussein, this anthology is a must for anyone who likes placing quotes on the bottom of those part one orders.

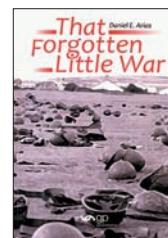
Sgt Mike Owens, 26 Engr Regt

VERDICT: A good potential stocking-filler this Christmas



That Forgotten Little War

by Daniel E Arias



ONE of the best books I have read for a long time, this novel is a series of short stories about ten combatants on both sides of the Falklands War. It focuses not on the fighting, but the aftermath and how it affected their lives and those of the people they loved. Some have been driven crazy, or are at least disturbed enough not to be classed as normal by the rest of society. This is their life post-1982. The characters are fictitious but the author has captured the essence of the soldier.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

VERDICT: A powerful and worthwhile book. Excellent!



The King's Exile

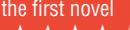
by Andrew Swanston



THIS sequel to *The King's Spy* takes the reader from Civil War-era Hampshire to Barbados with twists, turns, happiness and sadness. The prose is very descriptive and, I believe, true to real events. Throughout the book I willed our hero to escape back to England and felt his disappointment when his plans failed. Thrown in for good measure is a love interest and some of the old-school butchery that was battle in the 1600s. I look forward to the next instalment.

LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

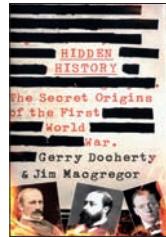
VERDICT: Not as good as the first novel but still very entertaining



Hidden History

by Gerry Docherty and Jim Macgregor

BRITAIN'S leaders in the years before 1914 came mainly from a narrow top drawer. In retrospect it is easy to criticise their actions. Neither of these facts support the authors' fantasy of a secret elite that plotted and led Europe into war. The thesis is absurd and undermined by inaccuracies and misunderstandings. If this group existed, why would Viscount Esher – a political member – have sacked its supposed military leader, FM Lord Roberts? There are many such inconsistencies.



Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian

VERDICT: Has at least involved some research so gets one point



The Western Front Companion

by Mark Adkin



EVEN if UK publishing industry rumours are only half true that a barrage of some 1,000 First World War books is due to hit shelves over the next four years, this will be remembered as one of the largest calibre guns in the arsenal. This weighty tome is packed with information, photographs, colour maps and diagrams. It isn't cheap but if you are looking for the perfect Christmas present for your own Western Front historian, this is a good choice.

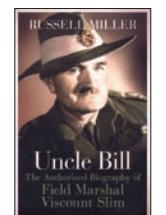
Maj Mike Peters, AAC

VERDICT: A heavyweight title in every sense of the word



Uncle Bill

by Russell Miller



AS the title implies, the author's avuncular approach to his subject disguises the ruthless leadership that drives successful senior officers during war. FM Viscount Slim is described at his grittiest best during Oliver Leese's failed attempt to replace him after the successful conclusion of the Burma campaign. Frustratingly, however, there are no maps. An engaging account for followers of senior British wartime leaders that stops short of excellent.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

VERDICT: A warm bio of "Uncle Bill" but lacks penetrating analysis



PUT A LIBRARY IN YOUR POCKET

AMAZON KINDLE

THIS has a superb six-inch matt screen with no glare whatsoever and the ocularly challenged can adjust the font size to their heart's content. Light and compact, it is the ideal travelling companion and comfortable to hold and operate. The position of the buttons makes for seamless flicking between pages and the battery life is excellent, with little danger of running out on a long-haul flight if charged. The only niggle is no back-lit screen (this is reflected in the price). No touch screen also means it can be fiddly to navigate between titles and locate specific books.



PRICE: £69 WEIGHT: 170g STORAGE: 1,400 books

BATTERY LIFE: Four weeks

CHARGING: Two hours

VERDICT: Light, easy to operate and cheap, this is a great entry point for the newly converted ★★★★★



SONY READER

EASY to use with a very effective non-glare e-ink touch screen, this model's memory can be expanded by using the micro SD card slot. Like the Kobo it can read ePub files – a widely used format in online book stores (but not Amazon). The high quality built-in cover magnetically snaps shut and cleverly puts the e-reader to sleep to save battery life – this is a cost option with other versions. Downsides to this kit include no back-lit screen. And to read Amazon e-books (often the cheapest of the main retailers) you'll need third party conversion software.

PRICE: £99 WEIGHT: 200g (inc cover)

STORAGE: 1,200 books (plus micro SD card)

BATTERY LIFE: Eight weeks

CHARGING: Two hours

VERDICT: A sleek enough device that performs well but why pay the premium over the basic Kindle which is just as good? ★★★★★

AMAZON KINDLE PAPERWHITE 3G

THIS model adds some extra features to the basic Kindle including a tablet-style touch screen yet its battery life is greater. While slightly heavier than the basic version it's slight enough to use for long periods and the screen's built-in light really does work in a pitch-black bedroom or bright sun. Lifetime 3G connectivity means you can download titles while on the move. There is a cheaper Wi-Fi-only version but the £60 premium is terrific value.

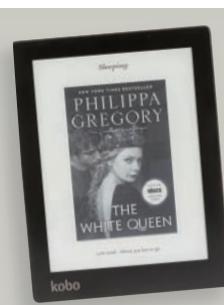


PRICE: £169 WEIGHT: 215g STORAGE: 1,100 books

BATTERY LIFE: Eight weeks

CHARGING: Around three hours

VERDICT: Great for reading in all conditions and the lifetime 3G connectivity is well worth the extra money ★★★★★



KOBO AURA

LIGHTWEIGHT and slightly smaller than the rival Kindles, this e-reader is comfortable to hold and use for extended periods. There are lots of typefaces (two of which are aimed at dyslexic readers) and its built-in LED light with adjustable brightness accommodates dark environments as well as bright ones. The touch screen works well and the "beyond the book" feature providing information on the characters, locations and history behind the story is a real bonus.

PRICE: £119.99 WEIGHT: 176g STORAGE: 2,000 books (plus micro SD card)

BATTERY LIFE: Eight weeks

CHARGING: Two hours

VERDICT: Kobo has become a genuine rival to Kindle but with the Aura it's hard to fathom why the company charges so much for it ★★★★★

Reviews by the *Soldier* team

IT'S no wonder e-readers will be at the top of many Christmas lists this year.

Whether you are a casual or serious reader, these gadgets can make immersing yourself in your favourite novel or daily newspaper convenient and enjoyable anytime, anywhere.

They are not only portable and light but a lorry load of publications can be stored on just one of these remarkable handheld devices.

In addition, their virtual bookmarks and dictionaries ensure you never lose your place or thread.

Most dedicated e-readers have a non-reflective e-ink screen that looks very similar to actual paper, even in bright sunlight.

Some models also have back-lit screens that, their makers claim, allows reading in conditions ranging from bright sunlight to a total blackout.

Their long-lasting batteries also run through thousands of page turns.

Usability is something to consider before buying. Most of the versions available now offer adjustable fonts, a built-in dictionary and annotations that enhance their convenience, enjoyment and usefulness.

But not all offer a touch screen, which enables you to navigate around your books and pages more easily.

Additionally, you may prefer a model equipped with expandable memory if you like to stock your entire library on it.

Most versions are equipped with Wi-Fi or 3G connectivity and integrate with a store where you can browse thousands of titles and download new books instantly.

Amazon is currently the dominant player in the market with a range of Kindle e-readers matching various budgets, from the £69 basic to the £169 Paperwhite with 3G.

Kindle owners have automatic access to Amazon and the company's lending library, where you can borrow one book for free per month from 300,000 selected titles. Customers also receive free cloud storage.

Many other manufacturers let you purchase e-books from anywhere that offers open-platform items (such as Kobo, WH Smith, Tesco, Sainsbury's or Foyles).

With the number of models on the market expanding all the time it's hard to know where to start so the *Soldier* team pitched some of the best-selling models against each other.

The basic Kindle offered superb value for money with a matt screen and Wi-Fi connectivity, its Paperwhite 3G sibling was more pricey but upgraded, the Sony Reader showed off sleek looks and a built-in cover and the popular Kobo Aura, which already has an enviable reputation despite being relatively new to the market, offered a slightly more lightweight option.

Read on for the low-down on how each individual e-reader fared when the team put it to the test. ■

top gear



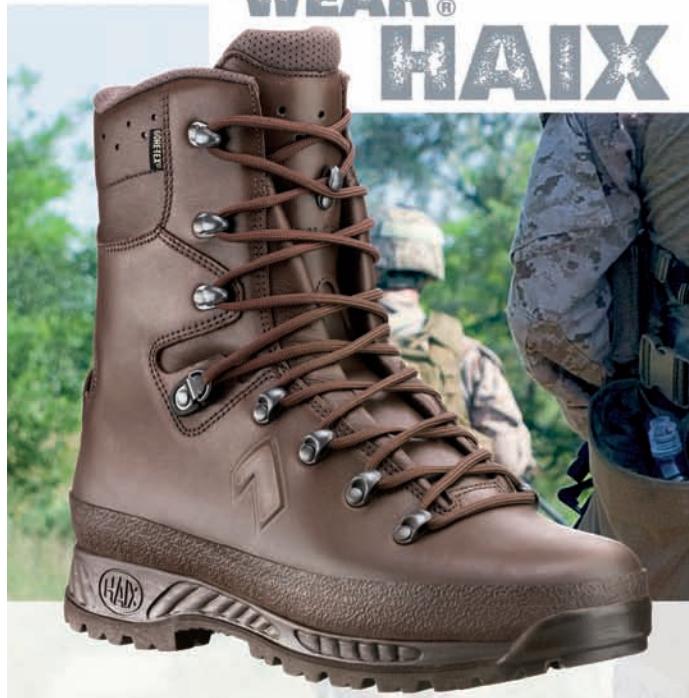
PICK OF THE MONTH:

LIGHT READING

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SELECTING THE RIGHT ALTERNATIVE
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SOLDIER SPORT

EDITED BY RICHARD LONG PICTURES BY GRAEME MAIN AND STEVE DOCK

Downhill dominance:
Pte Brian Anderson (Para)
was the star of the show
for the Army at the Inter-
Services Downhill Mountain
Biking Championships. Read
about his and the team's
achievements on page 87...



KITING'S HIGH FLIERS

THE Army's next generation of kitesurfers gave an encouraging performance on the water at the annual Inter-Services showdown in Westward Ho!

Despite seeing the Royal Air Force lifting the overall crown, the soldiers dominated the novice category with Maj Andy White (AAC) taking gold and LCpl Gerald Copley (R Signals) securing bronze.

Pte Jessica Hunter (RLC) was third in the female event and Capt Simon Warren (RE) ensured the success continued as he was crowned freestyle champion.

As well as staging the Inter-Services, Westward Ho! played host to a training camp for the soldiers and a number of newcomers took to the beach for the first time.

"We had 20 to 25 guys here this week, which is two or three times as many as last year," said Warren, who is also secretary of Army Kitesurfing.

"The sport is booming and the UK is absolutely brilliant for this.

"As we draw down in Afghanistan there will be more time available for adventurous training and that is the reason why a lot of people join up.

"We have overseas trips planned and we can do this anywhere along the British coastline.

"It's the kind of thing that a lot of people see on the television or

internet and then want to come and have a go at."

The Army team is happy to provide equipment for those wanting to try the sport and with events regularly advertised on their Facebook page and website there are plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Warren added: "We want to get as many people interested as possible with the long-term view of seeing them compete at the Inter-Services.

"For example, if a group of four guys get together they can come down and we will find an instructor for them. We also have all the club kit so they don't have to fork out thousands of pounds. It makes everything more accessible."

Maj Ross Wendover (RE), rear commodore of Army Kitesurfing, said the organisation's main focus is on developing young talent and with a new approach in place he is predicting a bright future.

"The days of hierarchy and this being an old boys' club are gone," he added. "It is all about novices trying something that pushes them out of their comfort zone.

"They are the bedrock of the sport. We want to get these young guys

qualified as instructors so we can take this to the next generation.

"It is an exhilarating discipline. It is skateboarding, wakeboarding, windsurfing and crossfit rolled into one. There is no sport like it in terms of acceleration of learning.

"As soon as you are on the board you can start jumps and routines. It is hugely addictive and the tricks just keep coming."

Cpl Gaz Fairbairn (RE) was among the newcomers this year and is

hoping to push himself at future Inter-Services competitions.

"I got into it through my girlfriend, it was a chance to get in the water and do something different," he explained.

"It is a young sport and there are a lot more people doing it now. I heard about the Army set-up through word of mouth and their Facebook page.

"I've done a bit of wakeboarding and surfing, any kind of board sport is going to help but there are different techniques to learn.

"I'm just here to train but I see it as a long-term commitment."

For more information on the team visit www.sailarmy.co.uk/kitesurfing or log on to the British Army Kitesurfing page on Facebook. ■

"WE WANT TO GET AS MANY PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE SPORT AS POSSIBLE"

IN PROFILE



Soldier's star man

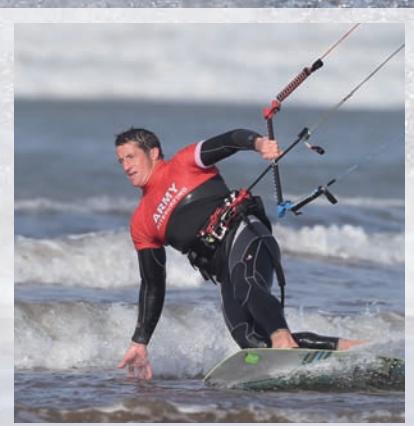
CAPT SIMON WARREN (RE)

WARREN triumphed in a field of almost 40 competitors that included two former champions.

The officer locked horns with RAF rivals Alex Ruck and Charlie Davies in the final, where his technical unhooked moves won the judges' favour.

"I've been waiting a long time to win this," he told *SoldierSport*. "The conditions were not great so I'm delighted with my performance."

"We are excited about our novices. LCpl Gerald Copley has just got on the board but he won his first heat and was third overall. He was buzzing and that is what we want to see."





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Down to business



ARMY riders produced a dominant display in the picturesque Welsh countryside to reign supreme at the new-look Inter-Services Downhill Mountain Biking Championships.

Pte Brian Anderson (Para) led the charge for the soldiers as he won the senior category in a time of 3min 7.32sec, with teammate LCpl Matthew Forster (REME, pictured below) finishing second.

The success continued in the veterans' event, where Maj Justin Revell (RLC) and WO2 Zak Needham (RE) celebrated an Army one-two, but hopes of a clean-sweep were dashed in the masters as Sgt Gareth Lake (RE) lost to Cpl John Bennett (RM) by just three tenths of a second.

Mountain biking is enjoying a boom within Service circles and the number of soldiers in action at the Revolution Bike Park in Llangynog showed the future of the sport is in safe hands.

"The team is the best it's ever been and we are now at full strength," said Sgt Steve Taylor (R Signals), Army Cycling Union (ACU) downhill secretary.

"Social media has played a big part. People did not really know about us but we now have a page on Facebook where we feed in all the race information and training days so we've recruited more riders."

"The ACU has also started to fund events like this. They have given us a grant which subsidises the entry fees and that helps a lot."

Taylor was responsible for driving a new format in this year's competition, which saw Forces athletes taking centre stage for the first time.

"The Inter-Services has previously been piggybacked onto civvy races but I did not like that," he explained. "We had enough riders to move away so that's what we have done. We now want to progress from here, with more soldiers taking part and guys getting podium finishes at national level."

As well as racing against their military rivals, the team competes in the British Downhill Series and also races in British Cycling ranking events.

Newcomers are welcome at any Army fixture, where they can borrow a bike and kit to sample the adrenaline-fuelled discipline first-hand. The team also benefits from a civilian coach, who can help riders make the improvements needed to succeed at a higher level.

Taylor said: "He comes to races to work with the guys. If anyone wants to look at something in particular he can help with professional tuition."

"That has been a massive coup."

Anderson (pictured above) is ranked tenth in his category at national level and has made rapid strides since returning to the sport.

"When I joined the Army I gave riding up but when I came home from Afghanistan I bought a bike," the champion said.

"Since then I have really got involved with the team. This is the biggest number of Armed Forces personnel I have ever seen at this race. The riders are out there but it's a case of them knowing about what is going on."

"I'm moving up to the expert category next year and that should help me push the Army forward as well."

For more information visit the British Army Mountain Biking page on Facebook or email ACUdownhill@gmail.com ■

KINGS OF THE CLAYS



Hot shots: From top, Sgt Colin Fiddy (1 Gren Gds, left) and Sgt Peter Meager (10 Trg Bn, REME) reflect on a successful day; Cpl Lee Forrester (R Signals) takes aim in the flush event; Sgt Mark Jones (REME, left) gets ready for action and Lt Col Ged Argyle (RLC) sets his sights on a target.

A SCORE of 90 points saw Maj Dean Martin (AGC (SPS)) take top honours at the 2013 Army Clay Target Shooting Championships.

The officer triumphed among a strong field of Service marksmen at Barbury Shooting School, with Cpl Kerry Williams (Int Corps) named women's high gun and the Royal Signals taking top honours in the flush competition.

The annual contest brought another successful season to a close and plans are already in place for a new structure in 2014 that is aimed at boosting the profile of the sport and attracting new members.

"Next year we will be introducing the Army League," said Lt Col Ged Argyle (RLC), chairman of the Service's clay target section. "That will provide structured training days and shoots where we will provide our own coaches."

"We want to take novice shooters and grow them so they can move up into the Army team."

"We already have six shoots and four training sessions planned for 2014, as well as a ten-day camp in Cyprus."

"Most military people enjoy shooting. It is all about weapon handling and the discipline that entails."

"It is very competitive and once you get started you find it is highly infectious."

"This is one of the fastest growing non-contact sports in the UK. It is all about us getting our message out there."

The Army competes in the Armed Services and Emergency Services League, which includes the fire service, police and prison service and is comprised of six shoots over the course of the season.

"Within that is the Inter-Services competition, which we have won for the past three years," Argyle added.

"Some of the guys are on the verge of national and international competitions. They are very good in this league and we would like to push them further."

"But the top competitors fire 5,000 cartridges a day and we cannot do that."

"We are still a minority. Other disciplines get funding for individual athletes and if we have someone shooting at that level we can go to the Army Sports Control Board and ask for some money."

Martin is also Army team captain and he was delighted with the standard being shown by competitors at Barbury.

He told *SoldierSport*: "This is our third time here and it has become a very popular event. It is great for guys to come and shoot at the varying targets."

"I'm very pleased with my performance, I tried hard to shoot as well as I can and it was a fantastic day."

"A lot of novices are now coming through and we are running hundreds of courses every year. It's really going from strength to strength."

As well as helping newcomers develop, Martin is introducing a new strategy to help the Service's top guns scale new heights in the future.

"In 2014 we will be looking at the sports psychology element," he said. "Our top 15 guys are scoring in excess of 80 points each time."

"We are looking to gain an extra five clays and want to stop losing silly targets, hopefully we can get someone in to help us achieve that."

"We will also be trying to push people for England selection. I'm sure there will be some bright lads coming through and they are the guys we will be looking at."

The Army Target Shooting Club is happy to provide the kit, equipment and coaching for any Serviceman or woman wanting to try the sport.

For more information on how to get involved contact Lt Col Argyle on military 94371 2050 or Capt Jason Wright (AGC (RMP)) on 94321 3706. ■

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In the fast lane: Race ace LCpl Dom Booth (REME) gets behind the wheel of his Elli Sport rally car

Driving ambition

RALLY driver LCpl Dom Booth (REME) is hoping to boost his experience behind the wheel when he lines up against the Royal Air Force's top prospects next season.

The Army ace will be competing in the rival Service's motorsport championship and plans to steal some valuable silverware from their grasp before deploying to Afghanistan on Op Herrick.

Booth formed the Elli Sport rallying team in 2011 but after an encouraging debut performance they suffered a major setback following a crash at the Flying Fortress event.

"In our first race we finished third in class, which was quite a surprise as we were still learning," he told *SoldierSport*.

"But after that we had a serious accident following a brake failure and had to completely rebuild the car."

Following an appearance at an Asda charity day the team returned to action at Castle Combe in September.

"It is a massive event in the rally world and we did quite well," Booth explained. "The car was perfect and there was only one other vehicle on the track that could catch us."

The 25-year-old boasts a strong family history in motorsport and one of his first

memories is of sitting in the pit lane with his father.

As a youngster he started servicing cars for his uncle and at 16 he gained his navigator's licence, which saw him taking to the track at a number of major events.

"In 2011 I decided to go it alone," Booth added. "I bought my own car and it went from there."

"Having next to no budget and work commitments makes it tough, but my unit [6 Theatre Logistic Regiment (LAD)] has been really supportive."

"We are getting everyone from young craftsmen who have been in the Army for six months to ten-year corporals involved."

"Whatever unit I have been at I've spread the word and the lads want to get their spanners out and have a go."

"Next season I will be competing in the RAF championship and we're going to do the best we can to take the fight to them. My aim is to create an Army stage that will run alongside it so we can have a dual championship."

"But it's all about getting the awareness out there as we do not receive any funding. If anyone wants to join us they are more than welcome."

For more details visit www.ellisport.webs.com ■



SPORT SHORTS

■ ENTRIES are being sought for the 2014 Army Indoor Tennis Championships, which will be held in Aldershot from February 5 to 7.

The tournament features men's and ladies' singles competitions and is open to all serving personnel (Regular and Reserves). For more details call Col Mike Thornley (RE) on 01793 314257 or email mike.thornley821@mod.uk



Picture: ModoJ.com

■ MOTORCYCLE rider LBdr Ben Brierley (5 Regt, RA) capped a sensational debut year in the sport by finishing tenth in his class at the World Championships Extreme Enduro event in Lagares, Portugal.

The soldier only started racing competitively in 2012 and after a successful showing at the Dusk til Dawn event in August he was offered a place at the elite competition.

"This was an enormous step up from what I was used to and a daunting event in comparison to riding around fields in my free time," Brierley said.

"Around 60 per cent of the route was either up or down rivers. Enormous hill climbs, log crossings, huge rock piles and even waterfalls were also a real test for me."

■ A BUMPER haul of almost 2,000lbs was landed at the Army Carpers' Fishing Festival at Walthamstow Reservoirs.

The seven-day event featured two matches, the first of which saw the GPG Germany team emerge victorious in the Service championship.

They recorded an overall weight of 243lb 10oz with Sgt Adam Croser (REME) catching the biggest fish – a 34lb 14oz mirror carp.

In the second contest the soldiers took to the lakes in a 48-hour inter-corps showdown, which was won by anglers from the Royal Engineers.

The Infantry took the pair's title and Sgt Barry Hope (REME) won the largest fish competition with a 34lb-catch.

Rovers return

ARMY drivers and crew have been testing themselves on the most challenging stages in the country during another highly competitive season with the Armed Forces Rally Team.

Cpl Gari Hazelby (REME) was leading the field ahead of the closing rounds of the 2013 campaign and the Reservist was delighted to be in pole position after a long association with the outfit.

"I have had a great year," he told *SoldierSport*. "We have been fortunate to race at major events like the Sunseeker and Jim Clark Rally, which was absolutely brilliant.

"I'm now looking to finish the season as the top driver."

Hazelby (pictured below left) started out in the service crew and when one of the Land Rovers was declared a write-off he agreed to do the repairs – but only if he could drive it afterwards.

"It's all about being part of a team and the camaraderie that comes with that," he said.

"Even though we are competing

against one another we are still teammates and help out when we can.

"I have spun off twice this season and the guys have pulled me out so I could carry on.

"In normal circumstances it would be the end of my rally but that is what we do for each other."

The team boasts six Land Rovers that are crewed and driven by personnel from the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

They compete on stages of the British Rally Championship, where they race head-to-head and against civvy drivers in their class. They also attend events such as the Goodwood Festival of Speed, where Maj Alan Paramore (RLC) took the prestigious Driver of the Day award this year.

"The season has been very successful," said manager Steve Partridge, who served in the RAF for 40 years. "We have experienced guys who have reached a good standard

and the newcomers are developing really well. For their inexperience they have put in some impressive times."

Fresh talent is given a chance to shine and the set-up organises selection days ahead of each season for personnel to get involved.

"Anyone can join the team at any time in the year," Partridge added. "They can work as crew or in a management role and during the season

there may be an opportunity to go in the vehicle as co-driver or even driver.

"They can come in as total novices with no previous experience or skills. All we need is enthusiasm and commitment; we can then give them the guidance and training.

"Some guys have gone on to race with the Army and RAF in various vehicles from Peugeots to Subarus.

"This is a great stepping stone."

Visit www.armymotorsports.co.uk/ disciplines/rally for more details. ■

"ALL WE NEED IS ENTHUSIASM AND COMMITMENT"





SPARKLING SPEIGHT

Rugby Union Remembrance Match

Combined Services 34 – Baa-Baas 28

AHAT-TRICK from the outstanding LBdr Sam Speight (RA, pictured) fired the Combined Services to a 34-28 victory over the world-famous Barbarians in rugby union's annual remembrance fixture.

The Fijian flyer took centre stage as the military men locked horns with the invitational side for the first time since 2010 in front of a bumper crowd at the home of Plymouth Albion.

A total of ten tries were scored on the night as both teams threw caution to the wind in favour of attacking play and a mission to entertain.

Speight opened his account in the 13th minute when the Baa-Baas lost possession from a chipped kick and the winger sprinted to the line after being given time and space on the left flank.

Services' skipper CPO Dave Pascoe (RN) missed with his conversion attempt and their opponents responded moments later as scrum half Alex Davies crossed following a strong forward drive.

Veteran prop Cpl Chris Budgen

(R Welsh) pounced on a defensive mistake to put MA Sam Laird (RN) in for a simple try but the Barbarians hit back with a quick-fire double.

Wing Alex Davis charged home following a break from Barry Davies before Laurence Ovens touched down from another strong forward surge.

But Speight stopped the rot on the stroke of half-time as quick hands from Pascoe and Pte Jack Prasad (Scots) allowed him to cross under the posts.

The momentum was maintained

after the interval as replacement LCpl Maku Koroiyadi (RE) gave the Services the lead before Chris Mayor collected a superbly weighted kick from Baa-Baas' fly half Dai Flanagan to score.

With their rivals holding a slender advantage the Forces stars dug deep and when LCpl Peceli Nacamavuto (RE) broke through the lines Speight was on hand to sprint home.

Mne Jack Foster (RM) sealed a famous win at the death after neat work from Mne Matt Tichias (RM). ■



LCPL APO SATALA: A FOND FAREWELL

AS well as providing tremendous support to The Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal the match proved to be a fitting finale for Army rugby stalwart LCpl Apo Satala (Scots), who leaves military life this month.

"Before the game I told the guys how important playing for the Combined Services is," he told *SoldierSport*. "I knew from the start what we were capable of, we just had to be patient and wait for our chance with the ball."

"This was the perfect way to go out. I have so many memories of Army rugby. I have played for Fiji; won a bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games and have captained my country."

"The sky was the limit and there is nothing stopping the guys following me from doing the same."



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Medics make move for new talent

THE Army Medical Services football team is looking for more players to join their ranks now the new season is in full swing.

With personnel spread across the breadth of the Army the squad needs healthy numbers to fulfil its commitments on the pitch, which includes campaigns in the Massey Trophy and Woolwich Cup.

"We want to get more people involved," skipper LCpl Levi Scarlett told *SoldierSport*. "There are a lot of guys in hospitals or individual units who

might not know about AMS football.

"It is difficult for us. Most of our guys are medics, nurses or doctors and it can be difficult to get time together, so the more players we have the better.

"We are also starting to get people from the Army Reserve involved, so if they want to come along they are more than welcome."

The side (pictured above in yellow) started the season with a 3-2 win over the Intelligence Corps and then claimed a 1-0 victory against the Royal Armoured Corps in Aldershot.

A headed goal from Pte Jamie Hill sealed the points but goalkeeper Sgt Mike Brewer produced a string of fine saves to keep their opponents at bay.

"We have got a decent squad and we are hoping to challenge for the division two title this season," Scarlett added.

"We also have a tour to Tenerife next year so there are lots of opportunities."

The team plays home games in Aldershot and usually trains the day before a match. For more information on how to get involved contact Capt Paul Dale on 07989 321312. ■



INTER-CORPS NETBALL

Corps celebrate surge in numbers

A RECORD number of teams took to the court for the annual **Inter-Corps Netball Championships** in Aldershot.

The Adjutant General's Corps proved to be the team to beat as they retained their title from 2012 thanks to an 11-5 victory over the Royal Logistic Corps in their final game.

With ten different corps represented at the tournament the sport is enjoying a boom within the Service and the Royal Engineers shone on their debut

as they claimed the division two title.

Further signs of progress can be witnessed in the form of Cpl Nordia Masters (AGC, pictured below centre).



The Army ace has forced her way into the Northern Ireland squad and is pushing for a place at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Her performances have also seen her shortlisted in the sportswoman of the year category at this month's Army Sports Awards.

SPORT SHORTS

■ FIGHTERS from the 1st and 2nd Battalions, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment will go head to head in a charity boxing event this month.

The clash at London's York Hall is the first time the two units have met in the ring and will feature nine bouts from featherweight to heavyweight.

The event, on Thursday, December 12, will support the Friends of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

For more information contact Capt Jamie Thomas on 0208 7813981.

■ JUDO star Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) secured a gold medal at the latest World Cup leg in Mauritius.

By taking top spot at the Africa Cup the 73kg player ended a recent run of bronze-medal finishes and claimed his first win in the format in four years. His next event is the Abu Dhabi grand prix.



■ THE Row2Recovery team returns to the water this month to compete in the world's toughest race – the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge.

Covering 3,000 nautical miles, the event sees crews rowing from La Gomera, in the Canary Islands, to Antigua while battling 40-foot waves, tropical storms, sleep deprivation, sweltering heat and the psychological stresses of working in a dangerous and unpredictable environment.

Injured soldiers LCpl Cayle Royce (LD, pictured) and Cpl Scott Blaney (Gren Gds) will take to the boat alongside Capt Mark Jenkins (RAMC) and Capt James Kayll (LD).

Royce had both legs amputated above the knee after he stepped on an improvised explosive device, while Blaney also lost a leg in a bomb blast.

"I am immensely proud that two of my crew are attempting this row following life-changing injuries suffered in Afghanistan," Kayll said.

"Ocean rowing is an extraordinary activity for any able-bodied person and for Cayle and Scott the challenge will be ten times more difficult. I am full of admiration and in complete awe of their courage and determination."

The race starts on December 2 and will take approximately six weeks to complete. For more information visit www.row2recovery.com



Grand slam: The Infantry returned to action in Grantham and cruised to victory against the REME

Cream of the court

Inter-Corps Basketball

Division 1 Final: Inf 76 – REME 55

Division 2 Final: RE 67 – AAC 62

Women's Final: RLC 52 – AGC 27

ARMY basketball showcased its current strength in depth with an eagerly fought **Inter-Corps Championships** in Grantham.

The Infantry made a spectacular return to the court as they claimed the division one title with a 76-55 win over the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, while the Royal Engineers downed the Army Air Corps 67-62 to claim the division two crown. In the women's final, the Royal Logistic Corps, featuring Cpl Kim Holden (pictured right), overturned a first quarter deficit to defeat the Adjutant General's Corps 52-27.

"We came here with a young, developing squad and this is the first time we have played together," said loggies skipper WO2 Wendy Eagle (4 LSR). "The team went from strength to strength and they have really bonded during the week."

"We had a full squad for this final and that meant we were able to rotate players. We had people who could come on and do a job and that really helped."

The Infantry, spearheaded by the outstanding LCpl Bradford Duncan (1 RRF), took total command of their clash with the REME and after opening a 27-15 lead at the end of the first quarter they never looked like losing.

"I only picked the squad about a month ago," said player-coach Lt Ryan Wallace (Rifles). "I took them to RAF Cranwell this week so they could spend some time on the court and learn to play as a team, rather than as individuals."

"The REME had a couple of big guys who could crash the boards but we knew we had the speed to beat them."

"At the moment we are the only corps that does not have its own tournament so I'm looking to put something together. Hopefully we can come back next year with two or three teams."

Col Nick Byrne, chairman of the Army Basketball Association, was thrilled with the success of the competition and is

predicting a bright future for the sport. "The standard is getting higher," he said.

"We have lots of guys who have experience of playing on civvy street. We also have National League referees so the quality of officiating is also rising."

"We are in a very strong position and the Army has been men's, women's and under-23s' champions for the past two years running."

"For a lot of foreign and commonwealth soldiers this is their number one sport. More and more English guys are playing as well so there is a real interest at the moment."

For more information on how to get involved call WO2 Chris Shaw (AGC (SPS)) on military 94273 8241. ■



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Final word



Spr Charlie Smith (RE)

By travelling to Africa not only do you get a sun tan you also get a change of scene. The training has been similar to what it is like in the UK but the weather is obviously very different and we have to cater for that. It's good to get away as a battlegroup and get stuck into an exercise without becoming distracted by everyday life in England.



WO2 Matt Yates (7 Para RHA)

This training gets the lads to integrate while on a difficult exercise. Working in tough conditions, out of a Bergen is good for getting back to contingency as opposed to Afghanistan operations. The younger soldiers won't have experienced anything like this before so it's excellent for their development.

Pte Liam Sands (Para)

In Kenya we've come across things you wouldn't experience in the UK, so that has tested other skills on top of soldiering. We've seen all sorts of different insects and there have been a few climatic injuries. If you're in the Airborne Task Force you could be deployed anywhere in the world so it's good to get to places like this for training.



Pte Oliver Robakowski (Para)

It's very important to get used to the weather in all areas of the world. Working with mortars, the climate affects the ways the bombs bed into the ground so it's vital that we practise operating with them here.



Pte Andrew Ellis (Para)

Out here you must work with as little kit as possible because you've got to carry everything in the heat – including water. Operating in the high temperatures has been the hardest thing but that could happen when we're deployed.



While the 3 Para battlegroup undertook Ex Askari Storm in the scorching heat of Kenya we asked its troops what they got out of training so far from the UK



Lt Daryn Mullen (RE)

When training overseas you have to take extra care with your equipment. Things such as broken vehicles might be easily repaired at home but could cause a major problem in the field in Africa as there is no quick-fix solution. The environment is key to contemporary operations and we cannot simulate hot climates in the UK so it's vital that we come out to places like Kenya. This is probably the best place in the world to train.



LCpl Olivia Cadet-Trimmer (AGC (SPS))

By deploying abroad we get used to working in different environments and operating in the heat. It's good to be able to travel the world because that's what we were always told we would experience – it's one of the main reasons I joined the Army. The exercise out here has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life and it will be great to tell my family about it.



Pte Max Galtress (Para)

When exposed in the desert we have to be aware of both the climate and the ground. This environment really tests your admin and forces you to look after your kit. Interacting with other cultures such as the local tribes and the wildlife is amazing. If you came to war over here and were not aware of these aspects you would be in serious trouble.

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