

SOLDIER



DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

High-street chic meets hi-tech innovation in latest operational wardrobe

INSIDE: DOLPH LUNDGREN • NATHAN OUTLAW • IPADS

SERVICE HOTSHOTS AIM HIGH

Ops inspire change of pace at military shooting event



GUNNERS ON THE CHARGE

Royal Artillery find their range on Exercise Flying Rhino



PECOC STRUTS ITS STUFF

Futuristic equipment project adopts modular kit approach





SSAFA 125

FIRST IN  LAST OUT



“I can’t thank SSAFA enough for setting the group up. It helps just knowing other mums are in your situation and that you are not totally on your own.”

Karen's eldest son Lee, 22, was killed by a sniper while serving in Iraq. His loss was devastating for the close knit family and Karen was left feeling isolated and unable to talk about how she felt. Joining the SSAFA Forces Help Support Group for Bereaved Families with her other son Ryan gave them both the chance to meet other people with similar experiences.

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SOLDIER

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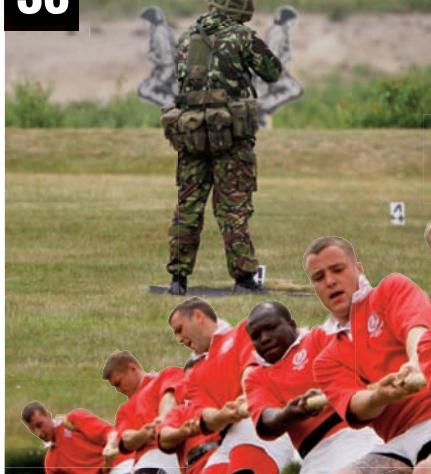
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Cover picture (left): The latest Army kit alongside Next's trendy Autumn/Winter Collection. Visit www.next.co.uk

Background image: British troops take control of the skies over the Czech Republic during this year's Ex Flying Rhino

Picture: SSgt Ian Houlding, RLC





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ARMY



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"You were a fool to bring it here... I say it's some kind of infidel booby trap."

● Bag of tricks – Pages 27-33

Bagging up the bad news

FOR members of the national press looking to score cheap points against the Army, soldiers' clothing has often provided the ammunition they needed.

From lacklustre boots to bulky backpacks, it was not that long ago that troops' equipment was making the news for all the wrong reasons.

Being cynical journalists ourselves, it was with slight scepticism that *Soldier* accepted an invitation from the Defence Clothing Team to take a peek inside the latest version of the Black Bag.

The holdall, so said the experts, contains all of the clothing and kit personnel need when deployed on operations. Not only that, but the team claimed that many of the bag's contents are top-of-the-range, name-brand items that should stop the trend of troops buying their own gear.

Convinced they were writing cheques their bags could not cash, we headed to Bath to check things out for ourselves and it did not take long for our doubts to be blown away.

Entering the conference room where the holdall's innards were laid bare, the sheer scale of the kit soldiers receive was staggering.

With the gear spread out over four tables, we were given a tour of everything from underpants to body armour, boot brushes to head torches.

Any questions about quality not matching quantity were dispatched in similarly short order.

Nothing makes it past the bag's zip without first being given the green light by serving soldiers with operational experience.

Likewise, the Defence Clothing Team are increasingly ensuring that everything they procure is manufactured by the brightest lights from the commercial industry.

As our cover – made possible thanks to the kind people at Next – suggests, troops on ops now receive gear that is as stylish as it is practical. Turn to pages 27-33 to judge for yourselves.

Staying with operations, we also took a trip onto the ranges at Pirbright and Bisley to examine how traditional Army shooting competitions are evolving as a result of front-line feedback from Op Herrick (Pages 38-41).

Driven by members of the Operational Shooting Training Team, contests at the annual Central Skill at Arms Meeting now take in aspects including casualty recovery, ammunition carrying and weapon transitions to provide entrants with a much more relevant experience.

Elsewhere in this issue, we caught up with the forward air controllers responsible for bringing the Armed Forces' aerial power to bear as they were put through their paces during Exercise Flying Rhino in the Czech Republic (Pages 47-49).

Of course, all soldiers have to get to theatre in the first place and for many that journey begins at the Joint Air Movement Centre in South Cerney. *Soldier* took a trip to the terminal to see how the facility has improved (Pages 50-51).

And as professional a job as today's troops do on ops, there is no denying that the sweetest moment of the tour is returning to greet loved ones and enjoy some home-cooked food.

Celebrity chef Nathan Outlaw is well aware of the value of a good meal and sets out his perfect homecoming line-up on Pages 53-55 and also serves up the chance to win a stay at a top boutique hotel in Cornwall.

Hopefully that line-up will give our media friends some positive food for thought. ■

'The sheer scale of the kit that soldiers receive was nothing short of staggering'



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Picture: Richard Watt

Hands on: Defence Minister Peter Luff takes a look at a Mastiff armoured vehicle, which was introduced as an urgent operational requirement

Op Herrick kit tops minister's agenda

AFGHANISTAN will continue to be the "overwhelming priority" for future kit developments for a long time to come, according to the new Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Training.

Speaking during an interview with *Soldier* at MoD Main Building, Peter Luff said he was impressed with what he had seen of the current range of gear.

But the MP for Mid Worcestershire pledged to visit Op Herrick in the near future to personally speak to troops and gauge their opinions.

He explained: "What I am being told is that [the equipment] is very good. But I will be going to theatre and one of the questions will be 'is this line that it is very good actually true'?"

"I'm inclined to think it is, but I need to hear it from the horse's mouth."

"We've all got friends and relations

out there and they say things are coming along quite fast in the quality of kit the troops are getting.

"Public perceptions do lag quite a long way behind reality in everything. People judge things on what they heard a year or two ago – those memories linger on and it is very true of kit."

"It has got better, a lot of lessons have been learned, but that doesn't mean we can't make further improvements."

Mr Luff, whose father was a sergeant in the First World War and served alongside Lawrence of Arabia at Gallipoli, praised Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) for its work in developing new equipment as part of the urgent operational requirement (UOR) process.

The politician has called for the MoD to try and achieve a "constant blitz" of media outlets to highlight the successes

of the life-saving innovations the system comes up with.

He said: "One bad decision will always trump the 99 good decisions and we have to do more to trumpet the good decisions."

"UORs, achieved by DE&S, delivering kit to our people to make life safer is a fantastic success story and we have to talk about it more."

The Conservative MP also praised the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme. During his time in Parliament, Mr Luff has twice deployed on the programme, which places politicians with Service units to allow them to get a taste of military life.

The minister told *Soldier* that he believes the continuation of the initiative is "vitally important" as it gives those in power a greater empathy with the work of the Forces.

"I can't praise it highly enough," he said. "It's vital because, of all MPs, few of us have experience of the Forces. Look at the 1950s and 1960s, almost all of us would have had experience. [The scheme] doesn't make you an expert, but it gives you an understanding."

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THE LENGTH IN DAYS OF EACH OF DEFENCE MINISTER PETER LUFF'S DEPLOYMENTS WITH THE ARMED FORCES PARLIAMENTARY SCHEME, WHICH HELPS POLITICIANS GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SERVICES



TERRITORIAL ARMY SOLDIER CPL HOWARD BROWN (27) PROUDLY WEARS HIS SERVICE OUTFIT DURING THIS YEAR'S UNIFORM TO WORK DAY. THE EVENT, WHICH IS HELD TO COINCIDE WITH ARMED FORCES DAY, GIVES VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL THE CHANCE TO WEAR THEIR MILITARY ATTIRE WHILE WORKING ON CIVVY STREET. CPL BROWN, OF 151 LONDON TRANSPORT REGIMENT, RLC, DONNED HIS COMBATS AS HE CARRIED OUT HIS DAY JOB AS A TECHNICIAN FOR SOUTH WEST TRAINS IN LONDON.

NEWS IN BRIEF

POLO players paid tribute to personnel wounded in Afghanistan at the prestigious Archie David Cup.

The Guards Polo Club used the event to raise money for the Household Cavalry's Operational Casualty Fund, which provides financial support to injured soldiers and their families, and the relatives of those who have died on active service.

The fund was launched in May and hopes to raise a total of £1.5 million by October 2011.

THE Prince of Wales headed a star-studded guest list as the Airborne Forces marked their 70th anniversary.

Prince Charles was joined by dignitaries including Chief of the Defence Staff ACM Sir Jock Stirrup for a celebratory dinner at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

The Airborne Forces came into being on June 22, 1940 when Sir Winston Churchill introduced a force of 5,000 paratroopers.

The modern force, Colchester-based 16 Air Assault Brigade, is due to deploy to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 13 this autumn.

AN online museum dedicated to telling the stories of Scotland's Service veterans has been launched.

Remembering Scotland at War, which has been set up by Museums Galleries Scotland, aims to collect personal accounts about the military from former soldiers as well as from civilians.

To explore the exhibition, log on to www.rememberingscotlandatwar.org.uk

EIGHT potential soldiers got their Army careers off to a soaring start after taking their Oaths of Allegiance on top of Ben Nevis.

The trainees, from the Adjutant General's Corps, Royal Logistic Corps, The Parachute Regiment and 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, were led up the 4,400-metre mountain by Army careers adviser Maj Steve Leslie.

BRITISH officer Lt Gen David Bill got a first-hand look at the Nato Training Mission in Iraq during a high-ranking visit to Baghdad.

Lt Gen Bill joined international colleagues, among them the United States Army Europe's commanding general Gen Carter Ham, on a tour of facilities including the Ar Rustamiyah Military Academy.

'Unwelcome' freeze hits soldiers

SERVICE personnel will be hit with a two-year pay freeze under terms announced in the Government's emergency budget.

The new policy will be introduced from April 2011 and will affect all military personnel, except those earning £21,000 or less per year, who will receive a pay rise of at least £250.

Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir David Richards said the freeze, which applies to Service and civilian staff, was "unwelcome" but stressed that it did not reflect the value of the work undertaken by the Armed Forces.

He added: "I recognise this to be a necessary measure to ensure we return public finances to a better place from which we can all derive benefit.

"There is a need also for other tough choices to be made in the months ahead.

"Though painful, this pay freeze in no way reflects the importance of the work you are all undertaking across

the spectrum of operational and other vital supporting tasks and, indeed, this is reinforced by the doubling of the Operational Allowance for those deployed to qualifying areas.

"I welcome also that the salaries of the most lowly paid will be protected. Your contribution remains highly valued by the nation, the Government and me."

There will be no impact on the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body award of two per cent, which was announced in March and applied from April.

The MoD will be working closely with the Treasury and Cabinet Office on the implications of the decision and other elements of remuneration, including charges.

The recently announced measure to double the Operational Allowance will remain in place to recognise the contribution being made by members of the Armed Forces who are serving in locations that attract the bonus.

Big cat pack set to grow

MORE than 140 new Jackal patrol vehicles will be making their way to Afghanistan after the MoD awarded a £45 million contract to boost numbers on the front lines.

Contractors Supacat-Babcock will deliver the enhanced 2a variant of the vehicle, which features an updated cab design with integrated mine blast protection.

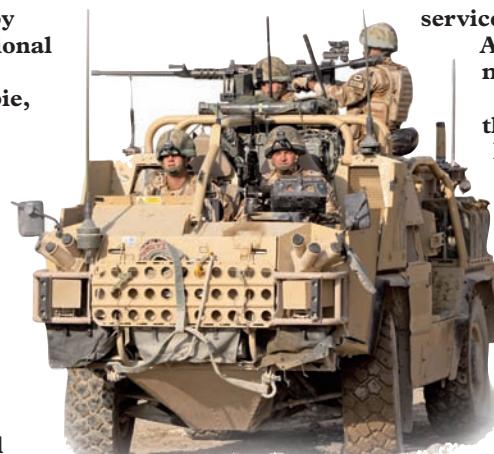
The upgrades were driven by direct operational feedback and Roger Gillespie, Babcock's equipment solutions managing director, believes the new system will be of great benefit to soldiers in southern Afghanistan. "The Jackal

vehicle has been a resounding success and the additional Jackal 2as will further enhance the operational capabilities of our troops in theatre," he said.

Supacat managing director Nick Ames added: "This order is a further endorsement of the performance of Jackal on ops."

The new arrivals bring the number of Jackals in service with the UK's Armed Forces to more than 400.

Production of the 2a started in February and followed the delivery of a UOR contract placed with Supacat-Babcock for 120 Jackal 2s and more than 70 new 6x6 Coyote tactical support vehicles.





Changing the guard: British forces have passed responsibility for security in Kajaki to United States soldiers (inset) four years after first moving into the area

Main picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock, RLC; Inset: MoD/Crown Copyright

Dam fine job brings Kajaki troop change

BRITISH troops have handed responsibility for Kajaki to their United States counterparts after a successful four years there.

The move follows an influx of American soldiers into Afghanistan and will allow UK forces to deploy to other areas of Helmand province.

Maj Gen Gordon Messenger, the Chief of the Defence Staff's strategic communications officer, insisted that British soldiers were not giving up Kajaki, which is home to a strategically-important hydroelectric dam.

He said: "British forces are redeploying from Kajaki with their heads held high in the knowledge that they changed the area for the better.

"The increased security that they have provided in partnership with Afghan personnel has allowed vital work to take place on the dam.

"More access to power will mean that facilities and businesses continue to grow and local people can get back to

the business of farming their land.

"US forces are now ready to build on this work and ensure that further progress is made in Kajaki."

British personnel first took charge of security for Kajaki in July 2006, protecting the dam from attacks by insurgents and allowing it to produce electricity for significant parts of Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

The generation of power has remained under the control of the Government of Afghanistan throughout the ensuing four years.

Two turbines – one of which has

recently been refurbished using money from the United States Agency for International Development – are currently in operation at the dam.

A third turbine, which was delivered to the area in a 180km convoy as part of Op Oqab Tsuka in September 2008, will deliver power to an additional 1.9 million people when it is installed.

The surge of troops into Helmand will see 30,000 International Security Assistance Force personnel and 10,000 members of the Afghan National Security Forces based in the province by late 2010.

KAJAKI BY NUMBERS

- 200:** The number of civilians living in Tangye now. None resided there in 2006
- 100:** The number of vehicles involved in Op Oqab Tsuka
- 51:** The dam's power output in megawatts once the third turbine is installed
- 33:** The total power generation capacity of the Kajaki plant at present

3 THE ESTIMATED VALUE, IN TRILLIONS OF POUNDS, OF VAST MINERAL RESOURCES – INCLUDING GOLD, IRON, COBALT, OIL, GAS AND COPPER – LYING LARGELY UNTouched IN AFGHANISTAN. THE COUNTRY'S MINES MINISTER WAHID SHAHRANI PAID A VISIT TO LONDON TO TRY AND ENCOURAGE SOME OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST MINING COMPANIES TO INVEST IN HIS NATION

GOOD DRILLS

LBDR BEN PARKINSON

REMARKABLE paratrooper LBdr Parkinson fulfilled a personal ambition by returning to the air for a skydive four years after losing both legs in an explosion in Afghanistan. The 26-year-old completed a tandem jump with Sgt Phil Collett at RAF Weston-on-the-Green in Oxfordshire to raise money for Ben's Challenge. For more details or to make a donation, visit www.benschallenge.com

DE VERE VENUES

AN exclusive hotel chain is showing its support for soldiers by offering up stays in a choice of 25 UK locations for just £1 per night. De Vere Venues are hand-picked for their relaxing locations and beautiful grounds and the offer is open to all personnel returning from ops as well as rear party staff. Visit www.keepitshush.co.uk for full details.

CYBER CYNICS

LAST month's interview with "Golden Balls" David Beckham following his three-day tour of Afghanistan whipped some of *Soldier's* 6,000 Facebook fans into a bit of a frenzy. Ignoring the footballer's goodwill, several contributors accused him of using the trip as a PR opportunity. Read some of the comments on page 67 or join the debate by logging on to www.tinyurl.com/soldiermag

CHARITY SCAMMER

A TEENAGER who spent money he had raised for Help for Heroes on computer consoles and loans to friends has been given a 12-week suspended prison sentence. Avon Magistrates' Court also ordered Sean Sait (19), of Kineton Road, Wellesbourne in Warwickshire, to pay the Services charity £400 compensation after he pleaded guilty to the theft of three cheques and fraud.

BAD DRILLS

Court makes rights ruling

COMMANDERS on active operational service should not be subject to legal action over human rights issues, the Supreme Court has ruled.

The decision came after the MoD appealed to the legal body when the High Court and Court of Appeal ruled in favour of Catherine Smith, who claimed the Government had breached Article One of the European Convention on Human Rights in failing to prevent the death of her son.

Pte Jason Smith died from hypothermia while based at a British camp in southern Iraq in 2003.

The Supreme Court upheld Mrs Smith's argument that full investigative inquests compliant with human rights legislation should be held for all Service personnel killed abroad.

Chief of the Defence Staff ACM Sir Jock Stirrup extended his sympathies to Pte Smith's family and welcomed the clarification on how human rights laws apply to the military.

He said: "The Supreme Court's judgement upholds our view that it does not make sense to apply the law to overseas operations in the same way as we do in the

United Kingdom.

"Within the context of these sometimes dangerous missions, commanders at all levels are committed to the safety of the men and women they lead.

"We will continue to do everything we can to keep our people from harm by providing the best possible equipment and training.

"I am convinced that this judgement is in the best interests of our Armed Forces and our country's capacity to make a difference in the world."

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said that supporting troops on operations was a "fundamental responsibility" of the Government rather than an obligation that should be created by law.

The Conservative MP also pledged to repair the Military Covenant and gave his backing to personnel serving overseas.

"Common sense has prevailed and it is of course right that commanders' orders given in the heat of battle should not be questioned by lawyers at a later date.

"It would have been absurd to try to apply the same legal considerations on the battlefield that exist in non-combat situations," he added.

Medical marvels Herrick-bound

Clinical teams serving in Afghanistan are set to receive a boost to their life-saving equipment with the introduction of new mobile digital X-ray machines.

Defence Equipment and Support bought the kit under a £2 million contract with Gloucestershire-based Xograph Healthcare Limited.

The deal involves three new machines – the Solo mobile C-Arm, the DRagon light mobile direct digital radiography system (pictured) and the MobileDaRt Evolution motorised mobile direct digital radiography system – all of which will offer a quicker diagnosis for troops injured in the line of duty.

Sqn Ldr Martin Coleman, lead radiographer from the Centre for Defence Imaging, said: "The acquisition of this fleet of direct digital X-ray equipment will further improve the capability of the Defence

Medical Services to deal with the sick and injured when deployed on operations.

"During major trauma, where rapid clinical intervention becomes the key component with regard to saving life and limb, the ability to provide diagnostic images within seconds plays a vital role and this is what these machines deliver.

"They will allow us to provide this rapid imaging wherever we require it, be that in a tent, in a custom-built hospital or in a surgical facility aboard a ship."

Each machine will have the ability to produce an X-ray image of a casualty within three seconds of exposure and will replace the traditional method of wet film processing.

They will also be able to send images using wireless communications, which will avoid the use of trailing cables around patient trolleys and allow clinicians to view images from anywhere in the medical facility.





Future force: A computer-generated impression of General Dynamics UK's proposed Scout vehicle

New Scout to lead the pack

A HI-TECH fleet of armoured vehicles could be in service by 2015 after the MoD signed a £500 million contract with a defence firm.

General Dynamics UK has been awarded the deal for the demonstration phase of the Specialist Vehicles (SV) programme which will see the company produce new variants of the combat vehicle reconnaissance (tracked) (CVR(T)) series.

The first prototypes will be ready by 2013 with the finished models introduced by the middle of the decade.

Peter Luff, Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology, said: "Military commanders have stressed the importance of having a wide range of vehicles from which they can select the most appropriate for specific tasks.

"This contract is a major step towards providing an additional fleet of combat vehicles capable of undertaking operations in the most demanding terrain and fully incorporating lessons from current conflicts."

Under the demonstration phase contract, General Dynamics UK will produce seven prototypes, including the principal Scout reconnaissance vehicle, which will replace the Scimitar.

Variants including a recce armoured personnel carrier, to replace Spartan, and a repair and recovery model in place of Sampson will also be delivered.

All of the models will be built on the ASCOD SV Common Base platform which General Dynamics UK managing director Dr Sandy Wilson said will deliver a host of benefits.

He explained: "The MoD chose ASCOD SV because it guaranteed the best protection for British troops, the best value for money for the taxpayer and the best growth potential for the British Army to combat threats throughout the [vehicle's] 30-year life."

General Dynamics UK's Scout SV impressed the MoD thanks to the flexibility it offers compared to the much-smaller CVR(T) vehicle.

As well as providing improved protection, the modified ASCOD SV platform will include upgraded sensors and firepower and will be fitted with a new Lockheed Martin turret.

Master General of the Ordnance, Maj Gen Bill Moore, said: "This is a very good moment for the Army. Scout will provide a much-better capability to find and track the enemy, so necessary for successful prosecution of operations in the 21st century.

"Scout will also deliver improved situational awareness, increased firepower, more protection and enhanced mobility and it will be a key capability for land operations over the next few decades."

The scale of the final Scout order will not be decided until the Government has completed its Strategic Defence and Security Review.

More than 70 per cent of the manufacturing of the vehicles will take place in the United Kingdom, with as many as 10,000 jobs created or sustained as a result.

Dr Wilson added: "I am proud that this vehicle has been designed in Britain by British engineers."

42 THE LOAD-CARRYING POTENTIAL – WHICH CAN RISE TO 45 – IN TONNES OF THE ASCOD SV PLATFORM. IN ADDITION, THE MODERN DRIVE TRAIN IS BUILT TO LAST FOR THE ENTIRE 30-YEAR LIFE OF THE VEHICLES

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE nation's military might will be put on show later this year when a rejuvenated event comes to London.

ABF The Soldiers' Charity will be staging The British Military Tournament at Earls Court on December 4 and 5.

The show, which is a modernised version of the famous Royal Tournament, will feature re-enactments from famous battles as well as gun runs and massed bands.

Prince Charles has agreed to be a patron of the tournament, which will include 500 troops and 145 horses over two performances on each day, with all proceeds going to ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, the charity's chief executive, explained: "This will be a fantastic show for the public to enjoy and by attending they will also be providing invaluable support for the work we do helping injured Servicemen and women and their families."

Remaining tickets for the event are on sale now by following the links online at www.britishmilitarytournament.com

A MILITARY policeman who died in Afghanistan has been immortalised after the patrol base where he was stationed was named after him.

Sgt Robert "LD" Loughran-Dickson (RMP) had been mentoring the Afghan National Police when he was killed near Lashkar Gah last November.

British and Afghan comrades have paid tribute to his memory by renaming the compound he was working from as Checkpoint LD.

"He was embedded with the Infantry and he set off from here with members of the Afghan National Police on a patrol on the day he died," said SSgt Holly Turner. "All of our troops who come through Checkpoint LD, for as long as we remain in Afghanistan, will see that plaque and Rob will be a part of all their lives. That is fantastic and I think it will delight his family."

CELEBRITIES including Darren Day, Tim Healey and Frank Carson have teamed up to record the Queen song *No One But You (Only The Good Die Young)* and help raise vital funds for ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Guitarist Brian May has endorsed the single, which is available as a download, and all proceeds will go directly to the ongoing campaign to support serving and former soldiers and their families.

"I know and love this Queen song and I thought the lyric and sentiment behind it represented so well the heartache of loss and the pride we feel in what our boys in the Forces do for us," Day said.

"I am humbled by the sacrifices made for us and I am honoured to contribute to this record and to support the great work of ABF The Soldiers' Charity."

No One But You (Only The Good Die Young) is now available at iTunes, Amazon and other download sites.



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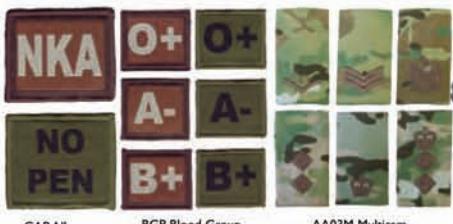
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NEWS IN BRIEF

A RETIRED soldier who set up a charity stall last November has raised £26,000 for Help for Heroes.

Mike Betts (74), who served with the Royal Hampshire Regiment for seven years, decided to support the cause after seeing injured Service personnel arriving home from Afghanistan.

"I had to do something to help so I set up a stall selling Help for Heroes merchandise and taking donations in the home of the British Army," he said.

"I never thought I would collect so much, but people are so caring about the Armed Forces."

Mr Betts' stall is open in the Wellington Centre, Aldershot, on Fridays and Saturdays.

PERSONNEL are being urged to further their careers by getting the IT skills they need to climb the ranks.

Computer qualifications offered through Learndirect are available to soldiers, their dependants and MoD staff at most barracks.

The flexible, online courses available at Army Learning "Torch Hub" Centres provide the IT skills essential for getting on in almost any Service job.

For more information on how you can improve your computer skills and your job prospects, visit www.torchhub.co.uk

THE Services community is being asked to stick the kettle on later this year for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help 2010 Big Brew Up.

The annual event takes place from October 4-10 and will see troops from Kandahar to Kensington and civilians across the UK getting together to support the charity.

Last year's fund-raiser helped the group, which is currently celebrating its 125th anniversary, make more than £100,000.

Director of fund-raising Claire Hoather said: "Our Big Brew Up is the perfect opportunity to get together with family, friends or colleagues for a cuppa and a slice of cake."

To register, visit www.ssafa125.org.uk, call 020 7463 9310 or email thebigbrewup@ssafa.org.uk



Naafi chief to answer soldiers' questions

THE head of one of the Armed Forces' best-known organisations is inviting troops to grill him on everything from prices to products.

Reg Curtis (left), the chief executive officer of Naafi, has agreed to provide *Soldier's* readers with honest answers to any questions they have about the company,

which has outlets at British Army garrisons around the world.

To put your question to Mr Curtis, who has previously worked at companies including Tesco and WH Smith, email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk by Monday, August 16.

The Naafi boss's answers will be published in next month's magazine.



Incoming: American personnel's arrival into Sangin will see Britain concentrate on central Helmand

Sangin to move under US control in key Afghanistan troop reshuffle

BRITISH Forces are to hand security responsibility for Sangin district to their American counterparts as part of a reorganisation of personnel in Helmand.

The move is aimed at creating a clear and equal divide of the province, with UK Servicemen and women operating in the central region and US troops based in the north and south.

In a statement to the House of Commons, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "In Sangin, UK Forces have made huge progress in the face of great adversity. The district centre has been transformed. Helmand as a whole is a safer place as a result of our endeavours and sacrifices there."

"I pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in Sangin and those who continue to serve there."

Significant progress has been made in the development of governance, the economy and infrastructure since British troops first arrived in Sangin.

The number of shops in the district's bazaar has doubled since last summer, local administrators are distributing grain and encouraging farmers to turn their backs on narcotics while major improvements have been made to the

key route between Sangin and Kajaki.

Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup said: "Our Service personnel can be enormously proud of the work they have done in Sangin and the significant progress they have achieved there.

"Sangin is a challenging area of Afghanistan and we leave it a better place. The experience our troops have gained there will be vital in the work they will continue in the important population centres of central Helmand."

As part of the reorganisation, 300 soldiers from the Theatre Reserve Battalion will temporarily deploy to Afghanistan to help with the transition.

The personnel, from 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, will return to Cyprus once the process is completed.

"The temporary deployment of the Theatre Reserve Battalion will allow the International Security Assistance Force to build on the significant progress we have already made in central Helmand," ACM Stirrup said.

"This reorganisation makes sound military sense and ensures that UK troops are deployed in the most effective way."

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IN MEMORIAM



CSGT MARTYN HORTON (34)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 23 – AFGHANISTAN



LCPL DAVID RAMSDEN (26)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 23 – AFGHANISTAN



PTE DOUGLAS HALLIDAY (20)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 23 – AFGHANISTAN



PTE ALEX ISAAC (20)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 23 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS serving with an Infantry battalion in southern Afghanistan have been remembering the lives of four comrades who died in a road traffic accident.

CSgt Martyn Horton, LCpl David Ramsden, Pte Alex Isaac and Pte Douglas Halliday, all of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, were killed when their vehicle rolled into a canal near Gereshk in Helmand province.

The four Servicemen were part of a police advisory team and were forming half of a two-vehicle convoy responding to an incident at a nearby checkpoint when the accident happened.

Secretary of State for Defence Dr Liam Fox said: "I was greatly saddened to learn of the loss of these four soldiers. Their work with the Police Development Advisory and Training Team, bringing on the Afghan police force, is pivotal to the success of operations in Afghanistan."

CSgt Martyn Horton, a 34-year-old from Runcorn, was in his 18th year in the Army having enlisted into 1st Battalion, The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment in 1992.

The veteran of Cyprus, the Falkland Islands, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan was promoted to colour sergeant last year and deployed on Op Herrick as second-in-command of 1 Mercian's reconnaissance platoon.

He then took charge of a team responsible for training, advising and mentoring the Afghan National Police in Gereshk.

His sister Caroline said: "Martyn lived for three things – family, Army and Liverpool. He loved fighting for his friends and family; he touched everyone he met."

Lt Col Andrew Hadfield, commanding officer of 1 Mercian, described CSgt Horton as "one of the very best".

He added: "He was a highly professional field soldier and he revelled in getting down and dirty and taking the fight to anyone who stood in the way of him or his men."

"But he was a friendly and amusing man, always looking for the fun in life. That he enjoyed soldiering so much meant that he was rarely without a smile, even under a helmet and with a rifle in his hands."

WO2 Anthony Higginbottom remembered CSgt Horton as being a "true professional Infantry soldier". He said: "He loved his job and always wanted to be in the best platoon. He was like a wildcat – he loved living in bushes."

The senior NCO's inspirational leadership was praised by LCpl Alexander Vickers, who said: "[CSgt Horton] is someone who I have always aspired to be like. Not a barracks soldier, he lived to be out in the field; confident, calm and commanding the natural respect of his men who would follow him anywhere."

LCpl David Ramsden, from Leeds, enlisted in the Army in 2002, joining 1st Battalion, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire.

He made a quick impression, deploying on operations to Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan and earning promotion to lance corporal in 2005.

The 26-year-old, who was a former Army Cadet, left the Service in 2007 but was deployed on Op Herrick as a Regular Reservist with 1 Mercian earlier this year.

Describing him as a man who lived life at 1,000mph, LCpl Ramsden's family said: "He was a normal young lad who would always cheer you up and often did things for a laugh."

Lt Col Hadfield said: "As an experienced hand he had an immediate impact on those around him, calming nerves and helping the junior men to cope with the demands of operational service."

"I am privileged to have had him under my command and know that he stood firm and struck hard to the last."

Fellow Regular Reservist Rgr Sammy Macauley recognised LCpl Ramsden as someone who made sure those around him lived life to the full.

He added: "The best thing about Dave was that he was always smiling. It didn't matter what the situation was, he would always boost morale with his smile."

Merseyside resident Pte Douglas Halliday had been in the Army for more than two years after completing basic training at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick in January 2008.

The 20-year-old immediately joined 1 Mercian and subsequently deployed to Northern Ireland, Kenya and Afghanistan.

The junior soldier's family recalled the "love and laughter" that Pte Halliday brought to their lives, adding: "Dougie was always the life and soul of the party and will be missed by all."

Lt Col Hadfield said that Pte Halliday was a "spirited man with a big heart" who had soundly beaten him at a video game just two days before his death.

He explained: "He was a fit and strong soldier and was willing to shoulder any burden to assist the team's performance."

Colleague Pte Thomas Daington-Rogers recalled his friend's "heart of gold", adding: "You will be sorely missed and never forgotten."

Pte Halliday's boldness and confidence made a lasting impression on 1 Mercian intelligence officer Capt Ben Stephens.

He said: "He completed all tasks set for him with a smile and aplomb. His positive nature was infectious and this will leave a hole in his team that will not be easily filled."

Troops have also been paying tribute to Pte Alex Isaac, who had shown "a high level of competence" throughout his career.

The 20-year-old, from the Wirral, joined Army Training Regiment Bassingbourn after school, graduating to the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick before moving into 1 Mercian in May 2008.

Lt Col Hadfield recalled Pte Isaac's desire to serve overseas with his mates. He added: "Alex was popular with all and respected for his work ethic and determined nature."

Pte Ian Williams said: "He was a great lad who always had a smile on his face even when the rest of us snapped as things got tough."

Lt Dave Payne described Pte Isaac as "one of the most complete soldiers" he has ever had the privilege of working with.

The officer added: "His determination and robustness were a testament to his character. He was always one of the first to show his hunger for a challenge, even in adverse situations."



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IN MEMORIAM



**BDR STEPHEN GILBERT (36)
4TH REGIMENT,
ROYAL ARTILLERY
DIED JUNE 26 – BIRMINGHAM**

A SOLDIER who was caught in an explosion in Helmand province while conducting a patrol with the Afghan National Army (ANA) died in hospital from his wounds.

Bdr Stephen Gilbert, from 4th Regiment, Royal Artillery, was injured in a blast on June 10 but lost his fight for life in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham on June 26.

The 36-year-old had spent three months in Nahr-e-Saraj district providing security to the local population and supporting the ANA.

He leaves behind his wife Jackie and sons Connor and Kristian. In a statement Mrs Gilbert said: "We as a family are so proud of Steve."

Bdr Gilbert joined the Army in August 1999 when he enlisted into the Royal Artillery and

was posted to 6/36 Battery, 40th Regiment (The Lowland Gunners). He started his career in the gun group before retraining as an observation post assistant. He was then selected to instruct at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate.

In January 2010 Bdr Gilbert was posted to 4th Regiment, Royal Artillery before deploying to Afghanistan in March.

Lt Col Chris Squier, commanding officer of 4 RA, said: "Bdr Stephen Gilbert was a rising star. A fit, robust Scotsman, he was a man of great compassion and moral purpose."

Battery sergeant major WO2 Paddy Prout added: "From the moment Steve arrived I knew we had struck gold; of him it really was true to say 'he was the best'."



**CPL JAMIE KIRKPATRICK (32)
101 ENGINEER REGIMENT (EOD),
ROYAL ENGINEERS
KIA JUNE 27 – AFGHANISTAN**

THE "backbone" of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team was killed by small arms fire in Helmand province.

Cpl Jamie Kirkpatrick, of 101 Engineer Regiment (EOD), part of the Counter-IED Task Force, died in Nahr-e-Saraj district.

The 32-year-old, who was born in Edinburgh but lived in Llanelli in South Wales, leaves behind his wife Heidi and their 15-month-old daughter Holly.

In a statement Cpl Kirkpatrick's family said: "Jamie was a larger-than-life individual who was loved, loyal and loud."

Cpl Kirkpatrick, known as "KP", enlisted in the Royal Engineers in 1997 and was posted to 28 Engineer Regiment in Hameln, Germany.

Over the next six years he qualified as a Class 1 plant operator mechanic, was promoted to lance corporal and served in Iraq. He gained the rank of corporal in 2006.

For his deployment to Afghanistan Cpl Kirkpatrick was attached to 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) and was a member of the Joint Force EOD Group.

Lt Col David Southall, commanding officer of the C-IED Task Force, said: "His diligence, coolness under pressure and total confidence in his abilities always shone through and his actions undoubtedly saved lives."

Sgt Scott Docherty added: "During any task I could ask for a piece of kit or something to be done and it was already there or already done."



**TPR JAMES LEVERETT (20)
D (THE GREEN HORSE) SQUADRON,
THE ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS
KIA JULY 5 – AFGHANISTAN**

THE Royal Dragoon Guards are mourning the loss of an "extremely tough and resilient soldier" after he was killed in an explosion.

Tpr James Leverett, of D (The Green Horse) Squadron, died after his Viking armoured vehicle was struck by an IED in the Nahr-e-Saraj district of Helmand province.

The 20-year-old was helping to provide security for the building of Route Trident, which will link Lashkar Gah with the economic hub at Gereshk to give Afghan locals an opportunity to travel and trade more freely.

Maj Denis James, officer commanding D Squadron, described Tpr Leverett as a "man of the highest quality" and said he was to be recommended for promotion to lance corporal.

"He was great company, had a wicked sense of humour and was totally suited to life in the regiment," he added. "Levy died a soldier, fighting the enemy. He was an incredibly brave man, and his spirit and deeds will inspire this squadron for the remainder of the tour."

Colleague Tpr Kieran Collinson said: "He was a kind and caring person who looked after his own and would always help those in trouble."

Tpr Leverett leaves behind his parents, three brothers and his girlfriend Tiffany, who is due to give birth to their first child in September.

A family statement read: "James was strong-minded and determined. Whatever he set his mind to, he kept on trying until he achieved his goal. We will miss him so much."



**PTE THOMAS SEPHTON (20)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
DIED JULY 5 – BIRMINGHAM**

AN explosion in southern Afghanistan has claimed the life of a Serviceman who was "courageous and selfless to the last".

Pte Thomas Sephton, of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, was on patrol in the Nahr-e-Saraj district of Helmand province when he was caught in a blast on July 4.

The soldier was evacuated to Camp Bastion before being flown to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, where he died of his injuries the following day.

The 20-year-old, who was from Warrington, enlisted in the Army in 2008, joining 1 Mercian's mortar platoon in 2009 and serving in the Falkland Islands and Kenya before deploying on Op Herrick.

Lt Col Andrew Hadfield, commanding officer of 1 Mercian, said: "[He] was not a particularly big man in terms of size, but he had a big heart and was full of fun and energy.

"He punched above his weight in every way, whether militarily, in sporting activities or by being a great friend and comrade."

Pte Charles Emin said the pair were "like brothers" and that Pte Sephton had sacrificed himself for his comrades.

He explained: "He saved the lives of his section on two occasions and on that tragic day he saved my life and gave his own."

Cpl Darren Lighfoot, who served with Pte Sephton in the mortar platoon, added: "It was an honour knowing him and he will be missed."



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IN MEMORIAM



BDR SAMUEL ROBINSON (31)
5TH REGIMENT,
ROYAL ARTILLERY
KIA JULY 8 – AFGHANISTAN

AN improvised explosive device claimed the life of a fiercely-fit soldier who was on his fourth operational tour of Afghanistan.

Bdr Samuel Robinson, of 5th Regiment, Royal Artillery, was on a patrol to ensure freedom of movement for residents in Sangin when the blast happened.

The 31-year-old joined the Army in 1999 and had been selected as a Royal Artillery special observer after successfully passing the patrol course in 2008.

On a previous deployment he had been a member of the brigade reconnaissance force and played an active part in Op Panchai Palang in June 2009.

After a short turnaround in the UK he

returned to Afghanistan in May and was second in command of a surveillance and target acquisition patrol from 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery.

Lt Col Richard Hayhurst, 5 RA's commanding officer, said: "This courageous man held the respect of all that knew him. He was the perfect role model for the rest of the regiment."

Patrol commander Sgt Wayne Turnbull recalled: "He never asked for anything but gave everything; looking after his subordinates and disregarding his own needs was the way he worked.

"Bdr Robinson wasn't just my second in command but my friend and brother and he will be dearly missed."



MAJ JAMES BOWMAN (34)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES
KIA JULY 13 – AFGHANISTAN

THREE British Servicemen were killed during a premeditated attack by a rogue member of the Afghan National Army in Helmand province.

Maj James Bowman, Lt Neal Turkington and Cpl Arjun Purja Pun, all of 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, died in the strike at a patrol base in Nahr-e-Saraj.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox said: "The despicable and treacherous act which has taken the lives of these three brave men will not dent the resolve of the colleagues they leave behind."

Maj Bowman joined the Army in 1999, commissioning from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst into 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry before deploying to Northern Ireland.

After spells at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick and in Paderborn, Germany, the officer served in Iraq on Op Telic 3 and took charge of the mortar platoon on his return.

He then deployed to Sierra Leone and to the Ar Rustamiyah Military Academy in Iraq before joining 1 RGR in May last year ahead of their deployment on Op Herrick 12.

Lt Col Gerald Strickland, the battalion's commanding officer, said: "The tragedy of his loss is beyond words. Since his arrival in Afghanistan, he led his company deep into enemy-controlled territory again and again.

"I learnt very quickly out here that I could rely on him implicitly and that he would unflinchingly head straight towards danger if that was what was required."

Sgt Manoj Gurung described Maj Bowman as "a true hero" to all members of 1 RGR's A (Delhi) Company, adding: "He led from the front without failure. He was a very generous man and was so kind to everybody he met and worked with.

"We have so many fond memories of him which will never be forgotten."

Lt Neal Turkington, from Northern Ireland, attended Sandhurst after graduating from Imperial College London in 2007, commissioning into 1 RGR in August 2008 and subsequently completing the platoon commanders' battle course in Brecon.

The 26-year-old deployed to Brunei with the battalion's A (Delhi) Company, continuing his education by completing a three-month language course in Pokhara, western Nepal.

A keen adventurer and traveller, the junior officer completed a trek through Nepal to raise

money for The Gurkha Welfare Trust before returning to the jungles of Brunei.

After deploying on Op Herrick 12, Lt Turkington proved to be a decisive leader as his platoon played a key role in A (Delhi) Company's counter-insurgency campaign.

The officer's family said he had felt "honoured and privileged" to have served with the courageous and loyal men of 1 RGR.

They added: "[Neal] was relentless and steadfast in his pursuit of those causes he believed in with his passion for making a difference whatever the circumstance."

Lt Col Strickland recalled Lt Turkington as a man whose "integrity and raw ability" had earned his comrades' respect.

Rfn Sanjaya Babu Rokaha added: "His knowledge led us on a better track and his role was like a parent to us. I feel like I have lost my beloved friend as well as my commander."

Cpl Arjun Purja Pun, from Nepal's Magdi District, passed the gruelling Gurkha selection process in 1995 and had previously deployed to Kandahar on Op Herrick 7.

Always aspiring to improve himself, the senior NCO was promoted to corporal in 2003 and completed a host of courses, becoming an instructor in mine awareness and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence.

He leaves behind two children and wife Durga, who said: "Arjun Purja Pun was a tremendous husband. He was proud to be a soldier and died doing a job he loved."

Lt Col Strickland remembered the 33-year-old, who was on Op Herrick 12 as a battlefield casualty replacement, as a "true Gurkha". He added: "Steadfast and loyal, he was true to his regiment to the very end."

Maj Simon Archer, who worked with Cpl Pun while he was an instructor at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, said: "He was a consummate professional; intelligent, determined and brave.

"He was also a very good leader who knew how to get the best out of his men, especially when the situation demanded it. More than this, he will be remembered for his true Gurkha spirit and his ever-present smile."

Sgt Buddhibahadur Gurung added: "He sacrificed his life among his friends doing the job he loved. Even though he is not with us, his memories will always be."



LT NEAL TURKINGTON (26)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES
KIA JULY 13 – AFGHANISTAN



CPL ARJUN PURJA PUN (33)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES
KIA JULY 13 – AFGHANISTAN

IN MEMORIAM



SGT DAVID MONKHOUSE (35)
THE ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS
KIA JULY 17 – AFGHANISTAN

A DEDICATED father who led a colourful military career was killed by an improvised explosive device in Helmand province.

Sgt David Monkhouse, of The Royal Dragoon Guards, was on a patrol with the brigade reconnaissance force (BRF) in Nahr-e-Saraj District when the blast happened.

The 35-year-old leaves behind mother Bobby, sister Deborah, partner Fiona and “the love of his life”, daughter Daisy-Twinkle.

In a statement, his family said: “For David, the Army was his life, second only to his daughter. He was the ultimate father and friend to Twinkle.”

Sgt Monkhouse joined The 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards in 1992 and had

served on four tours of Northern Ireland as well as one in Iraq.

He had qualified as a regimental combat medical technician and had volunteered to be the BRF’s principal medic on Op Herrick 12.

Lt Col James Carr-Smith, commanding officer of The Royal Dragoon Guards, said: “Selection was fierce but ‘Bob’ was more than up to the challenge.”

Maj Marcus Mudd, officer commanding 4th Mechanized Brigade BRF, added: “Cool and effective under fire, Sgt Monkhouse placed himself where the fighting was at its fiercest in order that he could best treat casualties.”

“He was an exceptional soldier and he will not be forgotten.”



SSGT BRETT LINLEY (29)
11 EOD REGIMENT,
THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
KIA JULY 17 – AFGHANISTAN

A BOMB disposal expert whose actions saved many lives on Op Herrick died in an explosion.

SSgt Brett Linley, of 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps, was clearing a route in Nahr-e-Saraj District when a device detonated.

The 29-year-old joined the Army in 2001, qualifying as an ammunition technician in 2002 and spending the following years working in several counter-IED roles. He qualified as a high-threat IED disposal operator in March 2010 before deploying on Op Herrick 12.

Lt Col David Southall, commanding officer of the Counter-IED Task Force, said: “SSgt Linley was a man of courage and composure – his loss has shaken us all.”

“Brett faced the IED threat daily, but despite the risk his heroism was without fuss or fanfare. Such quiet and unassuming modesty endeared him to all.”

Lt Col Gerard Strickland, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles Battlegroup, added: “He was a true hero who knew the risks of his job but never hesitated to step forward into danger.”

Cpl Andrew Harrison, of 11 (EOD) Regt RLC, recalled: “Every time we set foot on the ground with Brett leading the way, we knew we were in safe hands.”

“Always first to crack a joke and raise a smile, he was an inspirational man to work with and it has been a privilege to serve alongside him.”



CPL MATTHEW STENTON (23)
D (THE GREEN HORSE) SQUADRON,
THE ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS
KIA JULY 21 – AFGHANISTAN

TWO courageous soldiers were killed by small arms fire as they tried to rescue a colleague who was wounded in an insurgent attack.

Cpl Matthew Stenton, of The Royal Dragoon Guards, and LCpl Stephen Monkhouse, of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, were providing security for the building of Route Trident in Lashkar Gah when the incident happened.

Secretary of State for Defence Dr Liam Fox said: “Their comrades all speak of their unflagging enthusiasm for their work and cheerful outlook. They will be sorely missed.”

Cpl Stenton started his military career after leaving school and he attended the Army Training Regiment (Harrogate) before joining RDG in 2004.

The 23-year-old had completed two tours of Op Telic in Iraq and deployed on Op Herrick 12 as a Viking commander.

Lt Col James Carr-Smith, commanding officer of RDG, said: “He cared passionately for the soldiers under his command and he would rightly insist that their needs were paramount, no matter what the circumstances.”

“It was typical of Cpl Stenton that on the afternoon of July 21 he was yet again looking out for those more junior than himself.”

Colleague Cpl Nathan Stead added: “Matt was without doubt the most outstanding soldier I have ever met. He was a true friend and a joy to be around.”

Cpl Stenton leaves behind his father, stepmother and sister Charlotte.

A family statement read: “Matthew died how

he lived his life, surrounded by his friends. We are so proud and it comes as no surprise to hear he died trying to help one of his comrades.”

LCpl Monkhouse, of Greenock in Scotland, joined 1st Battalion, Scots Guards in Germany in 2004 and was immediately deployed as a Warrior driver to Iraq on Op Telic 5.

After a brief spell with B (Support Weapons) Company as a mortarman, he joined the pipes and drums and went on to pass his class 3 and class 2 drummers courses and represent his regiment and battalion in Moscow, the USA and at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

The junior NCO was selected as a member of the commanding officer’s tactical group for Op Herrick 12 at the beginning of July.

Speaking of LCpl “Monkey” Monkhouse, Lt Col Lincoln Jopp, commanding officer of 1 SG, said: “He was the heavy machine gunner of our lead vehicle and had not only mastered that role but was also our expert on detecting improvised explosive devices.”

“Monkey died coming to the aid of a guardsman who had been shot. He did what every soldier hopes he will have the courage to do if the need arises: he laid down his life for his friend.”

The 28-year-old leaves behind his mother, Linda, son Brandon and younger siblings Allan, Ashleigh and Stacey.

In tribute, his family said: “Although Stephen died in very tragic circumstances, it is comforting to know that he died doing a job he loved – being a soldier.”



LCPL STEPHEN MONKHOUSE (28)
1ST BATTALION,
SCOTS GUARDS
KIA JULY 21 – AFGHANISTAN

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NEWS IN BRIEF

A FURTHER £189 million is being made available to help cover the cost of providing new equipment for Service personnel in Afghanistan.

The money will pay for a range of kit including ground-based surveillance and communications systems; Osprey body armour and helmets; light and heavy machine guns; more night vision equipment and better-protected logistics support vehicles.

The proposals, which were announced in a statement to Parliament by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox, bring the total extra funding provided for the mission in Afghanistan to £256 million since June.

"This underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring our Forces have all they need to deal with the ongoing threat in Afghanistan," the minister said.

"The equipment will help our personnel accomplish their vital training of the Afghan security forces."

A WEBSITE that gives soldiers detailed information about everything from money and career options to home support and Army opportunities has been relaunched.

The easy-to-use resource at www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk highlights the benefits of Service life in comparison to civilian life.

Using the fresh site, personnel can access information to help them make important decisions on their futures.

TROOPS who miss out on Rest & Recuperation (R&R) because of transport delays or operational reasons will be compensated with additional post-tour leave.

The changes apply to all soldiers deployed for six months and take immediate effect.

To reduce the burden on space on flights, personnel sent on short tours will now be posted for less than four months so that they no longer qualify for R&R breaks.

2 THE NUMBER OF ARMY CADETS WHO RECEIVED THE ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO FLY WITH THE RED ARROWS AS PART OF THE CADET 150 CELEBRATIONS. THE DUO ENJOYED A ONE-HOUR FLIGHT OVER LONDON FROM RAF SCAMPTON

A JOINT-SERVICE initiative to improve the lives of Fijian soldiers in the British Forces has been launched.

The Fijian Support Network (FSN) has been set up to provide information to personnel and their relatives and to ensure they are well integrated within the Services.

Maj Rodney Harwood, SO2 families, said: "The network is a conduit for information, a signpost for the community and an important sounding board for the chain of command.

"Life can be complicated when you need to apply for things like driving licences and National Insurance numbers,

Front-line feedback

LESSONS being learned on overseas operations are helping to shape state-of-the-art training and doctrine thanks to the British Army's Force Development Training (FDT) programme.

The scheme is a key component in the Service's aim to recruit only the best applicants and ensure they receive the finest ongoing education throughout their time in the military.

Speaking exclusively to *Soldier* at MoD Main Building, Lt Gen Paul Newton (pictured), commander FDT, explained that it is essential to continuously learn and adapt to fresh challenges in the modern warfare environment.

"When the Chief of the General Staff started Operation Entropy he was putting down a marker. It was not a case of more of the same," he said.

"Warfare is and will remain the area of uncertainty. We need people to be ready from the moment they join.

"The reality is that we will have to fight in places that are not of our choosing, operating in a highly-congested battle space and we will be drawn into the urban area."

Lt Gen Newton has called on soldiers of all ranks to come forward with their suggestions for how to improve their training.

He said: "We are always open to ideas. We have 110,000 Regular soldiers and 33,000 in the TA and they all have

views that we would like to hear.

"There is the ability to engage in dialogue and try to open a debate to learn from people, irrespective of rank."

Using feedback from personnel in Afghanistan, the FDT team ensures that doctrine is kept up-to-date and is incorporated into training received by personnel already in theatre as well as those awaiting deployment.

Maj Nicholas Ridgway, Lt Gen Newton's executive officer, explained that operational feedback plays a large part in the team's work.

He said: "We get the brigades coming back from theatre and suck the information from the people that were on the ground.

"The soldiers have tried things in Afghanistan and on occasions found it was not the right way to do it – the lesson is identified and incorporated in training.

"The moment an IED goes off, analysis begins and the process of bringing the lesson into training starts."

Much of the team's work has been uploaded to the Army Knowledge Exchange. Available on the Army intranet, the system has been created as a one-stop shop for doctrine, with updated documents uploaded frequently as situations change.

"We require people to learn and use the body of knowledge that we create," said Lt Gen Newton. "People need to be able to prepare for the complex environment all of the time."

Welfare network launched for Fijian personnel

but we can work together more closely in support of each other."

The FSN will work with the Army's welfare department to take information on serious matters forward to Government departments and press for change.

Speaking at Deepcut to an auditorium full of Fijian personnel from the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, Col Peter McCall (RLC) said: "This is a very significant group and we should use it.

"I would encourage soldiers and their families to talk to the people who work in welfare. If at any time you feel the system is not working, you must speak up."

One aim of the FSN is to break down

any language barriers that exist by disseminating information to the Fijian community in an easily-understood way.

Capt Tai Saukuru (RLC) said: "The FSN is the forum we are trying to establish to act as the link between Fijians and the welfare support networks across the MoD.

"The key piece for us is that we minimise the easily-solved problems that are handed to the high level, at the same time as highlighting helpful information to the Fijian community."

For information about welfare, immigration and other matters, visit www.army.mod.uk, www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk or www.ukvisas.gov.uk



Picture: BAE Systems

A CONCEPT version of a stealthy remote-controlled plane has been unveiled by the MoD. The early demonstrator of Taranis, named after the Celtic god of thunder, will be used to test the possibility of developing the world's first fully-autonomous unmanned combat air vehicle. The futuristic aerial asset would ultimately be capable of carrying out precision strikes against targets at long range – even in another continent – while under the control of operators on the ground. Speaking at the unveiling ceremony at BAE Systems in Lancashire, Minister for International Security Strategy Gerald Howarth said: "Taranis is a truly trailblazing project. It reflects the best of our nation's advanced design and technology skills and is a leading programme on the world stage." Companies working on the Taranis project include BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, Qinetiq and GE Aviation.

Claims boost for injured troops

THE period soldiers have to apply for compensation for injuries suffered on duty has been increased.

From this month, troops can make claims covering seven years of service.

The extension of the previous five-year limit has been introduced as part of the recommendations made by Lord Boyce during his review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, said: "Making these changes demonstrates the Government's commitment to injured personnel.

"Crucially, nobody will lose out as a result of these changes."

In addition to the increased time scale for injured troops, the limit for bereaved family members to make claims has been extended from one year to three years.

To reflect the increase in Armed Forces pay, the bereavement grant payable to deceased troops' relatives has been increased by £5,000 to £25,000 for Regular personnel and up to a maximum level of £37,500 for Reservist soldiers who are not members of a pension scheme.

To raise queries or to ask for advice about claims, contact the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency on 0800 169 2277 or visit www.veterans-uk.info

NEWS IN BRIEF

A MEDICAL regiment is revelling in its success after achieving a clean sweep in three prestigious Army shooting competitions.

Soldiers from 253 (North Irish) Medical Regiment blew away the competition at the 102 Logistic Brigade Skill at Arms match at Sennelager Training Centre.

Next up, the Ulster-based troops defeated 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment in the prestigious Northern Ireland Skill at Arms Match at Ballykinler.

The regiment's Reservist soldiers then went on to win the Army Medical Services Territorial Army Patrol Competition for the first time in their history.

A spokesman for the regiment said: "Notwithstanding these successes, operational focus was never far from the minds of the men and women of the regiment with a successful tour on Op Herrick 11 and continuous realistic training for forthcoming operations."

DAVID BECKHAM'S recent short-term deployment to Afghanistan inspired last month's spine line competition.

Just like Golden Balls, the names on the cover – Geri Halliwell, John Barnes, Jeremy Clarkson, Gethin Jones and Katherine Jenkins – are all celebrities who have visited troops on operations.

We have again teamed up with Jelly Belly, www.jellybelly-uk.com, to offer up one of the company's selection boxes of gourmet jelly beans.

To enter, tell us what links this month's names. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by August 31.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£13,568	TWO MEN IN A BOAT ARMY doctors Capt Hamish Reid and Capt Nick Dennison (both RAMC) became the first people in history to row non-stop and unsupported round the British mainland.	Help for Heroes and ABF The Soldiers' Charity www.rowforheroes.com
2	£13,000	IRON MEN EX-Grenadier Guard Robert Creighton and brother Oliver competed in various endurance events. Robert's latest challenge saw him tackle the CowMan Half Iron Man competition while carrying a domestic fridge.	Help for Heroes www.helpforheroes.com
3	£2,843	UNBELIEVABLE TREKKERS FORMER Royal Artillery man Rob Hallewell led a team along the Cotswold Way. The 102-mile trip included sleeping under the stars and eating ration packs.	Help for Heroes www.justgiving.com/trek-for-heroes



The ORIGINAL GOURMET JELLY BEAN

THE BIGGER PICTURE

SOLDIERS from B Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles take part in a foot patrol in the village of Walizi in Helmand province.

The troops have been providing protection for sappers from 4 Armoured Engineer Squadron during the construction of Route Trident, a new road designed to increase freedom of movement for residents and link outlying patrol bases.

Building work was started during Op Herrick 11.

Picture: Sgt Ian Forsyth, RLC





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BAG OF TRICKS

THIS UNREMARKABLE HOLDALL
PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN SUCCESS
ON OPS. *SOLDIER* DELVED INSIDE
TO FIND OUT WHY...





Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

IT WAS during the start of Op Telic in 2003 that British soldiers were first labelled "Borrowers".

Deployed to Iraq, a country whose climate and terrain requires specialist equipment to overcome, personnel arrived in theatre before the supply chain could crank into gear, leaving them attired in a mixture of green and desert camouflage.

Concerned over the quality and appearance of other items of clothing, including all-important footwear, the troops began to look enviously at their international colleagues and it was not long before they were earning their cruel nickname by trading bits of kit.

But fast forward to today and the boots are most definitely on the other foot. Seven years of front-line experience have helped the Armed Forces learn valuable lessons about what soldiers do – and do not – need on operations and it is now other countries casting jealous glances at Britain.

Such a turnaround has only been possible thanks to Defence Equipment and Support's Defence Clothing and Personal Combat Equipment Teams.

The joint-military and civilian set-up is on a non-stop mission to update and refine the clothing and gear that soldiers are given ahead of deployments.

The fruit of their labour – the Black Bag – speaks for itself.

The giant holdall, which is issued to all theatre-bound troops, contains a wardrobe's-worth of clothing covering everything from underpants to combat shirts as well as useful everyday items including a multitool and a head torch.

And such is the quality of the kit, Defence Clothing Team Chief of Staff Lt Col Matthew Tresidder (RE) hopes it will put an end to soldiers parting with their own cash to kit themselves out for ops.

"The Black Bag came into being in 2003 when it was identified that troops going to Iraq needed additional items added to their standard kit," he explained during an interview with *Soldier* at the team's Bath headquarters.

"It has continued to evolve and is now very comprehensive. Of course soldiers will always want to personalise their kit and might think there is something better out there, but my advice is that before you spend your very-hard-earned money, have a look at what you actually get in the bag because you have much better things to spend your cash on.

"Soldiers simply shouldn't need to buy their own kit and the day they feel that they don't need to buy anything else is the day we will have

achieved what we set out to do. I think we are 98 per cent there."

The contents of the Black Bag – laid bare for you over the following pages – are worth a staggering £3,000. By comparison, new recruits receive £800 of kit when they join the Army.

Starting with essentials such as anti-microbial underwear and socks, the holdall's innards contain complete sets of shorts, trousers, t-shirts and combat shirts as well as camouflage gear in the new multi-terrain pattern design.

The latest generation of Osprey body armour and combat helmet are also included, while the footwear options provide a perfect example of just how far the Army's clothing has come.

Instead of the unpopular boots from Op Telic 1, soldiers now get to choose their preference of winter and summer boots from market-leading manufacturers Lowa and Meindl. Smaller footwear made specifically for women's feet has been included and there are even sandals for use around camp.

And although the Defence Clothing and Personal Combat Equipment Teams are the ones who source the new gear, everything that finds its way into the bag only does so after being given the go-ahead by the soldiers who will be using it in battle.

Lt Col Tresidder explained that his team deploys to theatre every four-to-six months to talk to troops at forward operating bases about what kit works, what does not and what they would like to see added.

Further feedback from post-operational reports is also taken on board by those responsible for filling the Black Bag.

"You can guarantee a soldier will give you the benefit of their wisdom and we always do our best to listen," the officer added. "It is them that have to fight with the kit and thankfully soldiers are very rarely shy in telling you what they think.

"We find that the views are almost always positive, but I don't think that's surprising when you consider where we have come from since 2003 – it's phenomenal.

"Everything in that Black Bag has been trialled and approved by the Infantry Trials and Development Unit which is staffed by personnel just back from operations. They give us their opinion on whether kit is good and fit for purpose.

"All of this comes at a cost but there isn't a budget – if something is needed then the money is there.

"The greatest compliment I have received was from a hardened corporal who

described the bag as 'a big warm hug from the Army'."

The constantly-refreshed kit list for the Black Bag is devised with as much attention to form as function.

Many of the items – Lowa boots, Karrimor SF day sacks, Silva head torches and Blackhawk knee pads, for example – are designed and made by the commercial industry's leading lights and have been included because they are the very best examples currently on offer. Other gear, such as the Gerber multitool, is so advanced that it is not yet available commercially in this country.

It may not quite be haute couture, but the Black Bag's contents represent the best of their type and Lt Col Tresidder hopes that will further reinforce the message that soldiers do not need to buy their own personal kit.

"I'm personally really pleased that we are giving guys top-of-the-range equipment – things like Lowa boots, you just don't get any better than that," he said. "The teams seek constant feedback from the front line to

see what people need and what is working. That brought about the change in knee pads and the extra pouches for the body armour.

"We're very conscious that soldiers need to look professional – they are there presenting an image to themselves, to the people they are working with and to the enemies they are up against.

"When you see a soldier on the front line in the new camouflage, the boots and the other kit they definitely do look the part."

From being the butt of a lot of jokes on their arrival in Iraq in 2003, British soldiers can now stand tall knowing that their kit is just as good – and in most cases better – than their international counterparts.

Their skills and bravery may speak for themselves, but personnel can be assured that they now have the wardrobe to match. ■



Above, Mix and match: A soldier pictured with both temperate and desert combat clothing and equipment during Op Telic 1

Picture: Cpl Paul Jarvis, RLC

Left, Geared up: The Black Bag's line-up includes improvements such as new camouflage clothing, a larger patrol pack and upgraded body armour

T MAY LOOK UNREMARKABLE ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT OPEN THE ARMY'S OPERATIONAL BLACK BAG AND THINGS START TO GET INTERESTING.

INSIDE THE RUGGED CASE IS EVERYTHING A SERVICEMAN OR WOMAN NEEDS TO SEE THEM THROUGH A SIX-MONTH TOUR OF AFGHANISTAN, FROM HI-TECH UNDERPANTS TO THE VERY LATEST INCARNATION OF THE LIFE-SAVING OSPREY BODY ARMOUR.

WO1 MARK DAVIES (RLC), CUSTOMER SUPPORT OFFICER (ARMY) WITH THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAM, IS SO IMPRESSED WITH THE CURRENT LINE-UP THAT HE HAS URGED SOLDIERS NOT TO WASTE MONEY PURCHASING THEIR OWN KIT.

"THE AMOUNT AND QUALITY OF WHAT YOU GET NOW IS BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE," HE SAID. "MOST OF IT IS THE BEST YOU CAN GET SO THERE IS JUST NO POINT IN BUYING OTHER BITS AND PIECES.

"THINGS HAVE REALLY COME ON AND THAT'S GOOD BECAUSE IF THE GUYS HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN WHAT THEY ARE WEARING, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FIGHT BETTER."

WO1 DAVIES GAVE SOLDIER A GUIDED TOUR OF THE BAG'S CONTENTS, INCLUDING A FIRST LOOK AT THE LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE KIT LIST...



THE FIRST NEW CAMOUFLAGE DESIGN FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS FEATURES PROMINENTLY IN THE BLACK BAG.

THE MULTI-TERRAIN PATTERN KIT WAS INTRODUCED IN APRIL AND WAS CREATED IN JUST 12 MONTHS. COMBAT CLOTHING AND THE MATERIAL FOR OSPREY BODY ARMOUR ARE NOW BEING MADE USING THE NEW DESIGN.

Lt Col Matthew Tresidder, Chief of Staff of the Defence Clothing Team, said: "We now have a world-class product in the new design."



FROM ITS VERY FIRST INCARNATION IN 2006, OSPREY ARMOUR HAS COME A LONG WAY.

THE LATEST OSPREY MARK FOUR VERSION SEES THE PROTECTIVE ARMOUR PLATE MOVED INSIDE THE VEST TO MAKE IT MORE STREAMLINED AND RUBBERISED SHOULDER PADS ADDED TO STOP BACKPACKS FROM SLIPPING.

A NEW LINING HAS ALSO BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO IMPROVE AIRFLOW AND KEEP SOLDIERS COOL IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE.

Dr Alan Hepper, from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, said: "The whole design is based on the threat the guys face and what is being thrown at them."



WHETHER SOLDIERS ARE ON A MISSION OR BACK AT BASE, A HEAD TORCH IS A SMALL BUT VITAL PIECE OF KIT.

RECOGNISING ITS IMPORTANCE, THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS HAVE INTRODUCED A MODEL THAT COMES WITH MILITARY-SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS.

"WHEN YOU TURN THE HEAD TORCH ON IT GOES STRAIGHT TO RED WHICH IS VITAL IF YOU ARE ON OPS," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "IF YOU NEED IT TO, IT GETS BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER."



PROTECTING EYESIGHT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS SUCH AS THE SUN AND DUST AS WELL AS FROM ENEMY FIRE AND SHRAPNEL FRAGMENTS IS IMPORTANT AND THE BLACK BAG MORE THAN STANDS UP TO THE TASK.

INCLUDED IN THE HOLDALL ARE BALLISTIC PROTECTIVE SUNGLASSES AS WELL AS COMBAT GOGGLES. SOLDIERS WITH AN OPTICAL PRESCRIPTION GET TWO SETS OF LENSES WHICH CLIP ONTO THE INSIDE OF THE EYEWEAR.



KARRIMOR SF ARE ONE OF THE LEADING BACKPACK MAKERS IN THE WORLD, SO IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT THE NEW 45-LITRE PATROL PACKS ARE DESIGNED AND CRAFTED BY THEM.

THE PACK CONTAINS A HINGED UPPER POUCH TO ALLOW FOR BULKY ITEMS TO BE SECURELY STORED AND ADJUSTABLE STRAPS TO STOP IT SLIPPING OFF THE SIDES OF BODY ARMOUR.

"INDIVIDUALS WERE ISSUED WITH THE 30-LITRE PATROL PACK, BUT WITH THE SHAPE OF THE BODY ARMOUR AND BECAUSE THE GUYS ARE CARRYING MORE WEIGHT AND DOING DIFFERENT ROLES, IT WASN'T REALLY FIT FOR FUNCTION ANYMORE," SAID WO1 DAVIES.

"KARRIMOR SF WERE GIVEN FEEDBACK FROM THE SOLDIERS AND THEY CAME UP WITH THIS NEW DESIGN. IT'S A MOLLE (MODULAR LIGHTWEIGHT LOAD-CARRYING) SYSTEM SO IT'S INTERCHANGEABLE WITH DIFFERENT ITEMS AND ALSO COMES WITH A DRY BAG."



TROOPS' TRENDS PLAYED A PART IN THE INTRODUCTION OF 23 NEW POUCHES FOR THE LATEST OSPREY BODY ARMOUR.

THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS NOTICED SOLDIERS WEARING A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT POUCHES AND NOW ISSUE NEARLY TWO DOZEN TO EVERY SERVICEMAN OR WOMAN – UP FROM JUST THREE OR FOUR WITH OSPREY'S FIRST GENERATION.

"THEY GET THE COMPLETE KIT AND IT IS UP TO THEM AND THEIR ROLE WHAT CONFIGURATION THEY WEAR THEM IN," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "THERE'S A MEDICAL POUCH WITH TOURNIQUETS AND FIELD DRESSINGS WHICH IS SMALLER THAN THE CURRENT ONE."

45L PATROL PACK

WEBBING POUCHES

OSPREY BODY ARMOUR

MULTI-TERRAIN PATTERN KIT

HEAD TORCH

KNEE PADS

EYEWEAR



AFTER RECEIVING POOR FEEDBACK ABOUT THE CURRENT KNEE PADS, THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS UPPED THE ANTE BY PROCURING INDUSTRY-LEADING EXAMPLES FROM BLACKHAWK.

"THEY ARE MORE ROBUST AND THEY LOOK GOOD TOO," EXPLAINED WO1 DAVIES. "IT MAKES IT MORE COMFORTABLE FOR THE GUYS WHEN THEY ARE KNEELING ON THE GROUND."



MOBILE HYDRATION SYSTEMS SUCH AS THE ISSUED CAMELBAK HAVE REVOLUTIONISED THE WAY SOLDIERS KEEP UP THEIR FLUID INTAKE ON OPS.

CONSTANT USE CAN LEAD TO THE DRINKING TUBE BECOMING DIRTY OR BLOCKED, SO THE BLACK BAG NOW CONTAINS A SIMPLE CLEANING KIT. "HYDRATION SYSTEMS GET CLOGGED UP IN THEATRE, SO WE WENT TO INDUSTRY AND PROCURED THESE KITS," EXPLAINED WO1 DAVIES.



MULTITOOLS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, BUT MANY COMMERCIALLY-AVAILABLE MODELS ARE PACKED WITH FEATURES THAT ARE OF LITTLE OR NO USE TO SOLDIERS ON AFGHANISTAN'S FRONT LINES.

THANKFULLY, THE BLACK BAG'S VERSION HAS BEEN PROCURED WITH MILITARY SERVICE IN MIND.

"AGAIN WE REALISED THAT PEOPLE WERE BUYING THEIR OWN SO THIS WAS BROUGHT IN," CONTINUED WO1 DAVIES. "IT HAS A GOOD, SOLID BLADE AND SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS THAT SOLDIERS WILL USE. IT CAN ALSO BE ATTACHED TO THEIR KIT."



THE NATURE OF OPS IN AFGHANISTAN MEANS THAT SOLDIERS' BOOTS DO NOT STAY PRISTINELY CLEAN FOR LONG. DUST, WATER AND GENERAL DIRT COMBINE TO CLOG UP THE VENTS, SO THE BLACK BAG NOW CONTAINS A PURPOSE-MADE TOOL FOR RESTORING FOOTWEAR TO ITS FORMER GLORY.

"THE BOOTS CAN CLOG UP QUICKLY, ESPECIALLY IF THE GUYS ARE JUMPING IN AND OUT OF IRRIGATION DITCHES. THE FINE SAND AND DUST ADDS TO THE PROBLEM AND SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN USING DIFFERENT THINGS TO TRY AND CLEAN THEM, BUT THEY WEREN'T VERY EFFECTIVE," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "THIS BRUSH HAS DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS WITH NYLON FIBRE AND METAL BRISTLES TO CLEAN THE BOOTS THOROUGHLY."



TORCH



WHILE HEAD TORCHES HAVE A HOST OF USES, THEY ARE NOT IDEAL FOR SEARCHING IN NOOKS AND CRANNIES. THE BLACK BAG'S CONTENTS COUNTER THIS THANKS TO THE GERBER TORCH. "IT IS ESPECIALLY HANDY FOR SITUATIONS LIKE VEHICLE CHECKPOINTS WHERE YOU NEED TO BE THOROUGH," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "IT'S SMALL AND RELIABLE AND IT HELPS REDUCE THE WEIGHT ON THE INDIVIDUAL."

UNDERWEAR

HI-VISIBILITY BELT



THE ARMY'S OLD-STYLE BULKY TOWELS TOOK UP A FAIR AMOUNT OF SPACE IN SOLDIERS' BAGS, SO THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS HAVE INTRODUCED SMALLER, LIGHTER ALTERNATIVES.

"SOLDIERS GET ISSUED TOWELS IN TRAINING, BUT IN COLDER WEATHER THEY JUST WON'T DRY FAST ENOUGH," EXPLAINED WO1 DAVIES. "WE NOW HAVE QUICK-DRYING TOWELS MUCH LIKE THE TRAVEL TOWELS YOU CAN BUY ON THE HIGH STREET."



UNDERWEAR FROM CIVVY STREET FAILS TO COPE WITH THE RIGOURS OF OPS, SO TROOPS ARE NOW ISSUED WITH ANTI-MICROBIAL PANTS WHICH CAN LAST LONGER WITHOUT NEEDING TO BE CHANGED.

"THE MATERIAL WICKS AWAY SWEAT SO IT CAN BE WORN FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "ALSO, IT DRIES QUITE QUICKLY WHEN YOU WASH IT. NORMAL BOXER SHORTS FALL APART SO THESE ARE VERY USEFUL. THE WARM WEATHER SOCKS ALSO WICK AWAY SWEAT."



FOOTWEAR

FOOTWEAR IS ONE OF THE MAIN ITEMS SOLDIERS SPEND THEIR OWN MONEY ON, BUT THE TOP-OF-THE-RANGE BOOTS INCLUDED ON THE KIT LIST SHOULD SIGNAL AN END TO THAT TREND.

THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS HAVE TEAMED UP WITH MAJOR MANUFACTURERS LOWA AND MEINDL TO PROVIDE THE COMPANIES' BEST-SELLING BOOTS.

FRONT-LINE TROOPS GET TO CHOOSE TWO PAIRS FROM EITHER MAKER, WHILE FOOTWEAR WITH ALL-IMPORTANT VAPOUR-PERMEABLE COATING AND VIBRAM SOLES IS GIVEN TO PERSONNEL DEPLOYING ON WINTER TOURS.

BOOTS MADE SPECIFICALLY FOR WOMEN'S FEET AND NEW SANDALS ARE ALSO INCLUDED.

"PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES AND, PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, ONE BRAND WILL USUALLY FIT BETTER THAN THE OTHER SO WE GIVE THEM A CHOICE," EXPLAINED WO1 DAVIES.



ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN TO MILITARY BASES IN AFGHANISTAN WILL HAVE SEEN INTERNATIONAL TROOPS WEARING A HI-VISIBILITY BELT.

WITH THE EQUIPMENT NOW A REQUIREMENT, THE DEFENCE CLOTHING TEAMS HAVE SOURCED BELTS TO BE INCLUDED IN ALL BLACK BAGS.

"HAVING ONE OF THESE ON THE MAJOR BASES MEANS PEOPLE CAN BE SEEN AT NIGHT," SAID WO1 DAVIES. "IT HELPS REDUCE ACCIDENTS."

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THEFTFORD THEATRE

OPTAG TRANSFORMS RURAL PASTURES
INTO AN AFGHAN WAR ZONE



Poacher's rest: Soldiers from the Royal Anglian's Quick Reaction Force take a break at Sindh Kalay Patrol Base after returning from an incident at Stanford training area's mock Afghan village Picture: Mike Weston

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Mike Weston

EXPLOSIVE devices are littered across open spaces and the bustling market place holds a constant threat of deadly insurgent attacks.

The enemy walks among the innocent Afghan villagers beneath the high concrete walls and through narrow alleyways.

The scene is Afghanistan but the location is Stanford Training Area (Stanta) in Thetford, where the British Forces' Operational Training Advisory Group (Optag) leaves nothing to chance in preparing soldiers for war with the Taliban.

The Norfolk site has been a proving ground for Army personnel deploying on operations since 1942 but following a £14 million investment by the MoD, the 30,000-acre space has become an ultra-realistic "mini-Helmand".

Soldier joined 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment on exercise as they provided security to the local population and reacted to ever-changing scenarios.

Explaining the nature and purpose of the serials at Stanta, Maj Steve Taylor, OC Optag, said: "The training is nowhere near as kinetic as it was when preparing for Northern Ireland, but it's much more realistic to what's going on in Afghanistan."

Every nine months up to 9,500 Service personnel work through the Herrick-specific exercise overseen by the Optag specialists.

Subject matter experts are drafted in at the end of each operational tour to impart their knowledge and update the training. The vivid experiences of 11 Light Brigade are the basis for the current mission rehearsal package.

Making up the local population are 80 Afghans and 150 ex-Gurkhas from security firm G4S, with interpreters providing a language link to the soldiers.

"The infrastructure we have at Thetford has improved hugely in the last two years," added Maj Taylor.

"It's about security for the local population – that's the underlying principle. We've got to exercise among the people."

With the smell of Afghan food wafting into the concrete-clad compounds and the sun beating onto a dusty floor, any ideas that East Anglia was a strange place to prepare for Afghanistan were extinguished.

The Poachers are now based at Dhekelia in Cyprus and will serve as the Theatre Reserve Battalion. They will be on five days' notice to mobilise for Op Herrick 13 as part of 16 Air Assault Brigade.

At Stanta there are different scenarios replicating the varied commands of hybrid warfare, including requirements to patrol among the people in an urban environment.

After completing what was scheduled as a routine mission into the fictional village of Sindh Kalay, Pte Chris Steel (2 R Anglian) said: "We went through the marketplace

and had a suicide bomb attack with multiple casualties. The civilian population was running round screaming and there were two males who lost limbs.

"It was quite a shock and it really helped us to get used to such an incident – you don't know how you'll react when you see it for real but this was as good preparation as you can get."

Outside of the relative safety of the soldiers' bases, no step is deemed safe and the correct procedures must be obeyed at all times to avoid stepping on an IED.

Optag team member SSgt Adie Stone pointed out that troops are forced to learn their skills and drills the hard way.

"There are IEDs laid everywhere across the exercise area and the devices used for training are made exactly as they would be in theatre.

"The only difference is they don't cause injury and just make a loud bang."

"If soldiers use correct procedures the devices won't go off – if they don't then there will be an explosion and they would be dead or injured."

Less than a mile from Sindh Kalay, troops from 7 Battalion REME taking part in a combat logistics patrol were informed that a Merlin helicopter had been shot down.

This was unexpected but required immediate action. The screams of injured personnel could be heard over the radio and as medics arrived on location, limbless casualties – actually scenario actors from Amputees in Action – added to the realism.

SSgt Keith Tandy, chief medical instructor, explained: "We assess each of the team medics here using realistic scenarios.

"They are working with loss of limbs and we are using life-saving theatre procedures which they have to use under pressure.

"The whole exercise is an inoculation to what's happening in theatre.

"The main focus of the scenario is to extract the casualties as quickly as possible while reacting to any indirect or small arms fire coming from the enemy.

Maj Taylor added: "The insurgents are a very cunning opponent and we have to prepare for them."

As the injured men were rushed from the burning helicopter, a deafening explosion mimicking a rocket-propelled grenade strike was heard and insurgents hiding in the woods unloaded their guns.

"The effects for explosions and injuries are Hollywood-esque but it's not over the top, it's to simulate real situations," said Maj Taylor.

With advice continuously fed back from Optag personnel in Helmand province, a cross section of Afghanistan has been deposited on a secluded corner of rural England to show troops what to expect.

The Optag exercise at Stanta is taking the surprise element out of a war that changes by the second. ■



Main picture, Band aid: A combat logistics patrol from 7 Bn REME deal with a casualty from Amputees in Action

Bottom left, Local knowledge: An Afghan tradesman during the exercise at Sindh Kalay village, Stanford Training Area

Bottom right, A bit of advice: A briefing between Optag staff and members of 2 R Anglian during the exercise in Norfolk





OPTAG ON TOUR

- A permanent team of six Optag personnel is based at Camp Bastion gaining “eyes on” and feeding information back to training on a day-to-day basis
- The Camp Bastion Training Centre, opened in October 2009, also provides updates to soldiers’ skills while they are on operations

- Counter-IED continuation and battle exercises are provided
- Optag experts teach Servicemen and women how to use new equipment delivered to theatre as Urgent Operational Requirements

ETHOS OF OPTAG AT STANTA

- Serials are command-led
- Understand drills using “train-the-trainer” methods
- Work in worst-case scenarios
- Focus on the least-experienced soldier
- Tailor exercise to respond to the exact threat in theatre



SURE SHOTS

Herrick lessons give historic shooting contest operational edge

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR sharp-eyed marksmen serving in Britain's Armed Forces, there is no greater proving ground than the ranges at Bisley and neighbouring Pirbright.

The Surrey facilities have hosted generations of soldiers keen to show off their shooting prowess by dropping to their belt buckles and patiently delivering ultra-accurate shots into targets hundreds of metres away.

But while the sharp-shooting set's actions retain a place in the centres' folklore, their contemporaries need to display an increasingly-different set of skills to earn entry into the crack-shot elite.

Up-to-the-minute lessons being brought back from southern Afghanistan's front lines are redefining Bisley's outlook and the changes were brought into sharp focus during the 2010 Central Skill at Arms Meeting (Centsam).

The annual event for the best Service shooters is shunning its old-school static serials in favour of action-packed, quick-fire versions inspired by the battle-winning techniques being used on Op Herrick.

Maj Clem Clemson, an incoming member of the Operational Shooting Training Team based at the Army Rifle Association's (ARA's) headquarters at Bisley, is continuing a drive to use the latest feedback from theatre to make small arms tuition and competitions as relevant as possible.

"Operational experience is driving everything we do," he explained. "I don't think the standard of shooting in the Army has slipped, but where we struggle is in finding the time to do the live-firing training.

"It's important that we do find the time because marksmanship will only get more essential in the future.

"To use a golfing analogy, Tiger Woods is the best player in the world because he practices, but he put his clubs down for a couple of months and was nowhere near that level when he came back."

Examples of Centsam's transition into the here and now were not hard to come by when *Soldier* attended the Army Operational Shooting Competition (AOSC) during the event's opening week.

Where historically contestants would lie down in the prone position before taking their time to zero in on distant targets, the AOSC adopts a much more physical approach. >>

Several individual contests now require soldiers to fire from kneeling and standing positions to mimic the situations they will encounter in Helmand province.

The long-established Parachute Regiment Cup has been tweaked to make it operationally-relevant. Teams now have to complete a casevac with a 75kg dummy over 300 metres and carry ammunition tins along the range during the frantic move-and-fire shoot.

The claustrophobic nature of the modern battlefield has also been taken into account with the introduction of a close-quarter marksmanship (CQM) match.

The discipline tasks personnel with advancing to combat along a 100-metre range, switching from rifle to pistol for the final sections to simulate what they would have to do if their weapon malfunctioned.

And new targets have been introduced to help train soldiers to improve their aim.

Maj Peter Cottrell (PWRR), chief instructor operational shooting and marksmanship, explained: "This is very intense – you have rushed magazine changes, the transition from rifle to pistol and so on. The methods we use are designed to give soldiers a real test."

"You can't just lie down on the ground waiting for a target to pop up anymore because that is just not realistic."

"The idea with the new targets is to hit a central area of mass. They are smaller and so are the scoring areas, so we are putting a lot of pressure on people to hit them."

After grappling with the new targets, personnel progressed on to the second half of the CQM match which challenged them to advance onto a series of moving objects and engage them from both standing and kneeling positions.

Range officer WO2 Jason Adewole (SASC) said that the updated set-up tests soldiers' ability to adopt different stances and carry out their drills with minimal command.

He added: "The guys are honing their skills and working on their accuracy. Once they have that they can take it into theatre and the rest should fall into place."

"The targets move and the guys need to be able to bring on the skills they have already got and engage them using the methods they have been taught."

"We need them hitting those targets with the minimal amount of rounds."

While Centsam is the jewel in the ARA's crown, the Operational Shooting Training Team's workload does not drop off outside the competition period.

Members of the team regularly travel to different units to provide train-the-trainer packages in the latest techniques.

WO1 Lee Jenkins (SASC) visits brigades to deliver expert coaching ahead of their deployment to theatre and the senior soldier hoped that his sessions, combined with refreshed contests like the AOSC at Centsam, are making the art of shooting enjoyable.

"The guys see the things like the transition between weapons and it rekindles the love for shooting," he explained.

"Getting people's interest back is important and I think we are making inroads into getting back to basics and really concentrating on making soldiers better at shooting."

Competition to become a member of the Army 100 – the Service's top shots each year – or even claim the Queen's Medal for being the best of the best remains as high as ever at Centsam.

But long-distance accuracy is only half of the story. Those firing in anger in Afghanistan require physical robustness, mental agility and absolute mastery of their weapons and the dedicated members of the Operational Shooting Training Team are ensuring that those vital skills are honed to perfection. ■



‘The methods we use are designed to give soldiers a real test’

AT HOME ON THE RANGE



Cpl Gary Coleman



Pte Callum Simpson

"Centsam is quite useful as it makes you a more confident soldier. This is my third year here and it is now much more operationally-relevant, which it needs to be. We have to wear body armour when we are in Afghanistan so we should wear it here as well."

"I'm still in training and this is really good experience. It's stressful because we are doing so much and have to learn a lot. Some people think it's easy but it's really not. This will give me good experience and I'm sure we have shot more rounds than anyone else in Phase Two."



Low down: Soldiers at Centsam now have to shoot from several different positions, including crouching





TACTICAL TARGETS

As well as modernising Centsam, the brains behind the event have changed the range furniture. In addition to the traditional Figure 11 – the charging soldier – and the head-and-shoulders Figure 12 (pictured middle right), the close-quarter marksmanship contest now includes two head-and-torso targets (right). The targets are designed to improve accuracy by forcing troops to aim at a smaller area.



FIRE-POINT FLASHBACK

1874 – Organised competition shooting was welcomed to the Regular Army with the introduction of inter-regimental rifle matches.

1874 – Army VIII formed to select the Regular Army's team to compete in the Inter-Services matches – the pre-cursor to Centsam – organised by the National Rifle Association.

1893 – The Army Rifle Association (ARA) was founded after the amalgamation of the inter-regimental matches and the Army VIII Club. The group's objective was to "promote interest in small arms shooting for Service purposes". Practices were designed to make soldiers more effective on the battlefield.

1908 – Figure targets were introduced into ARA matches.

1967 – Matches were fired on an electric target range for the first time. The ARA was registered as a charity.

1968 – The Army Target Rifle Club takes on its current name. The group, which is sponsored by the ARA, runs competitions for full-bore and small-bore target rifles and pistols, air rifles and pistols and shotguns.

1974 – A moving target match was introduced. The ARA was officially recognised by the Army Board and provided with public funding.

1981 – The Army Target Shooting Club was formed.

1982 – Two night shooting matches were introduced for the Infantry.

1986 – Firing in respirators was brought in for a number of Centsam matches, including a new march-and-shoot discipline.

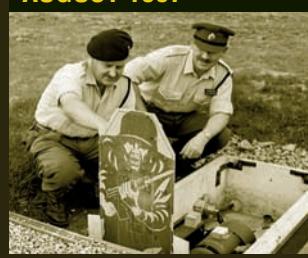
2009 – The Army Operational Shooting Competition was introduced at Centsam. Casualty recovery and the wearing of 15kg of personal kit were also brought in.

AUGUST 1946



Army crack shots test their shooting skills on the ranges at Bisley in Surrey

AUGUST 1967



The country's first electrical target system is introduced at Ash Ranges

NOVEMBER 1995



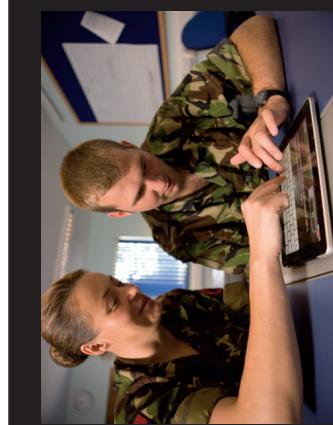
An automatic marking system is formally opened at Pirbright

JULY 2009



Casualty recovery serials are introduced for the first time





Ldr Fiona Mason (19 Regt RA)

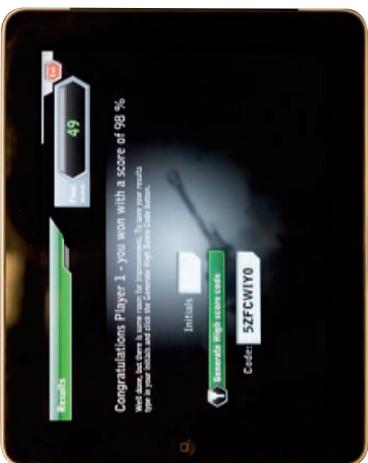
"WE've been shown what will be on it and have completed a basic mission and I thought it was very good. I don't have an iPhone, but this felt very natural – I knew what to do with it straight away. With PowerPoint everyone just sits there, but if you have one of these and an instructor as well it will make the lessons easier and more enjoyable and you will learn more. In a classroom, if you don't know something some people might not want to put their hands up but this gives you feedback straight away. Also, this will make revision a lot better. If you're back in the block you might not want to look through all the pamphlets, but with this it's all there and set up and you can tell if you're getting things right."

Ldr Adam Lilleley (29 Cdo Regt RA)

"I THINK it's great. I have an iPhone and this is just as easy to use. You can sit down and go through the missions on your own or as a group and that will bring your skills up. If there's a weak person you can also help to bring them up to standard. The iPad tells you what the correct procedures are if you go wrong and you can search for specific things by name and find them in seconds. It also means you don't have to carry the pamphlets around with you."

GUNNERS GET FIRST BYTE OF THE APP

New life for lectures as iPad prepares for service



OUTSIDE of operations, few things strike fear into the hearts of soldiers like dimmed lights, the soft whirr of a projector and an instructor with a knowing glint in his eye.

For as innocuous as the occurrences may seem, British troops enrolled in the Services training system know they signal the start of a process ominously known as "death by PowerPoint".

The teaching of key skills and drills using lengthy slideshows is an age-old Army tactic. But the good news for those falling asleep at the back of the lecture hall is that things are about to change.

Staff from the Royal Artillery's Training Development Team (RATDT) in Larkhill recognised the need to reinvigorate their delivery and are pioneering a move away from whiteboards and towards Apple's shiny new iPad.

The group were among the first in Britain to receive the hand-held computers and have masterminded the development of an interactive application to help gunners learn all-important fire control orders and provide instructors with a means of assisting them to do so.

Currently in a testing phase due to run until the end of September, the hi-tech educational system promises to bring lessons to life by making them much more interactive. Maj Rich Gill (AGC (ETS)), of the Army's Training Development Branch, explained: "The problem before was that we had a course that was purely PowerPoint.

"That's the usual training solution and it has its place, but the guys here asked how we could make it more engaging and immersive.

"The current generation want to be engrossed rather than sitting back in their chairs and being talked at. To make that happen, we needed a platform that was mobile, able to be moved between classrooms and that people were able to interact with."

The decision to adopt the iPad for the software was only made after careful consideration of the competition.

Nintendo's DS console proved to be too small and the latest generation of ultra-mobile PCs were marked down for not being robust enough or ergonomically suitable. The Apple's device, however, ticked all the right boxes. The tablet offers ten hours' continuous use and a crystal-clear, intuitive touch screen, while its lack of USB ports – combined with hardware and software encryption – makes it an extremely secure platform.

For WO2 Charlie Lewis (RA), of the Royal School of Artillery, the iPads' undeniable good looks and novelty value came a distant second to its technical ability. "The reaction we get with the iPad is people thinking it looks cool for 30 seconds, but after that they get straight into using it," he said. "The moment they touch the screen they realise how simple it is to use.

"We would be concerned if people picked up the iPad and just looked at it as a gimmick. The fact that they look at it but are then immediately immersed in the content lets us know we have got it right. The initial reaction is phenomenal.

"Twenty two years ago I was taught fire control orders by a senior NCO who put 600 slides on a projector. Two years ago it was the same, just on a computer.

"You will never replace one-to-one instruction, but this gives us a new and attention-grabbing way to convince soldiers to keep learning."

The fire control orders application, which was developed with the help of specialist firm Line Communications, has interactivity at the core of everything it does.

Instead of simply reading information from a series of screens, students get to rehearse specific missions either on their own or as part of teams.

Multiple-choice tests are included and troops receive instant feedback on what they have done right or wrong, which communication information systems specialist WO2 Nathan Stevenson (RA) said will help boost the effectiveness of the training.

"You can set each group off on the same mission at the same time and that brings out the strongest and weakest students," he explained. "You can then get them to work together to bring each other up to the same standard.

"E-learning can be seen as sitting in front of a computer screen and having information fed to you, but this solution allows a student to ask an instructor a question there and then and get feedback if they get something right or wrong." The benefits the iPad will bring to the Army will not just be confined to the classroom. Placing parts of the course onto the gadgets rather than reams of printed pamphlets – students currently receive 12 hefty binders of photocopied paper – holds obvious financial and environmental benefits. Students can also take the consoles back to their accommodation after class to complete homework and carry out revision and, by uploading the information onto the Defence Learning Portal, the refreshed training can be viewed by anyone with access to the Defence Intranet – including those on operations.

For a generation of soldiers as comfortable with touch screens as they are with rifles, deploying cutting-edge technology into Service learning is a move that could eventually make "death by PowerPoint" a thing of the past. And with the Training Development Branch already actively working on a number of other projects to bring the latest hi-tech innovations into the classroom, the future looks bright.

"The Army has gone from being heavy and robust to agile, but the training solutions haven't followed yet," concluded WO1 Neil Fowler, RATDT regimental sergeant major instructor. "This gives us an immersive system that is flexible enough to be used anywhere in the world" ■



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FLEXIBLE FORCE

ADAPTABLE EQUIPMENT AT THE HEART OF FUTURISTIC OPERATIONAL KIT PROJECT

Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

A n ambitious overhaul of troops' personal kit based on a groundbreaking modular system has been unveiled.

Experts from Defence Equipment and Support's Personal Combat Equipment (PCE) team have been working hard to create a fully-integrated

line-up covering everything from body armour and backpacks to boots and gloves.

The result is a futuristic package known as the Personal Equipment and Common Operational Clothing (PECOC) project.

"It's a modular system that has been developed to work together," explained WO1 Dave Sharp of the PECOC trials team. "For example, the glasses work perfectly with the helmet and you can also use pouches which can be added on."

"We are trying to integrate all the kit, making it work together as a better system. It has also got to work with the vehicles and sighting systems."

The equipment list for PECOC encompasses ballistic and sensory protection; load carriage; clothing; footwear; gloves and sleeping bags.

Different operational environments and extended deployments were taken into

account during the design process and the PECOC team only finalised the hi-tech update after analysing initial trials and receiving feedback from soldiers.

"It's due to come into service in 2012 and we will know if it's going to go through in January," added WO1 Sharp. "The idea of PECOC is to make us a better fighting force."

As well as providing a high level of modularity, weight distribution was one of the key concerns for the PCE team, which decided that several lighter components were better than one heavy load pulling a soldier down.

PECOC encompasses this aim with the inclusion of a load-carriage system integrated with the assault vest and close-fitting fragmentation and bullet-proof plate.

Troops taking part in missions of up to two days will receive a specially-made backpack, while those heading out on the ground for longer periods will deploy with a larger Bergen optimised for heavier loads.

Lt Col Andrew Macdonald, chief of staff with the PCE team, said: "Our challenge is to make it as light as possible while maintaining protection. The aim is to allow soldiers maximum flexibility. They need to be able to mix and match equipment for their roles and tasks for the day."

"We wouldn't expect to see any two soldiers wearing the same combination of kit and we want to give maximum flexibility and the ability to carry kit when it suits the soldier."

Personal combat equipment which is easily customised, comfortable and allows for speed on foot for extended periods tops many soldiers' operational wish lists. With PECOC, that is exactly what they could get. ■

'WE ARE TRYING TO INTEGRATE ALL THE KIT, MAKING IT WORK TOGETHER AS A BETTER SYSTEM'

Modular military: Cpl Simon Mercer (1 R Anglian) wearing integrated kit from the PECOC project at the Millbrook Proving ground during Defence Equipment and Support's DVD event

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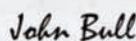
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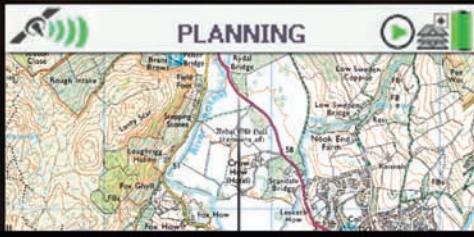


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Space control

**Ground troops link with aerial
assets for Czech challenge**



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: SSgt Ian Houlding

THE ability to fly aircraft at 1,000mph in an airspace littered with 45kg rounds being fired from the ground is a skill British Forces have had to master in Afghanistan.

The role of the Forward Air Controller (FAC) in coordinating such precise integration between air and land forces is vital and requires intensive training.

Such an impressive education starts in the classroom, but mastering the art of calling air power towards the enemy on the ground requires more practical experience. Luckily for those learning their trade, the large-scale Exercise Flying Rhino, held in – and over – the Czech Republic, is on hand.

The three-week programme – the British Army's largest land-air military exercise – is carried out by 1st (UK) Armoured Division and the Royal Air Force, using one-third of the Nato ally's airspace.

Commander Royal Artillery 1st (UK) Armoured Division, Brig Richard Haldenby, overseeing this year's exercise, said: "It's the largest FAC training we have

and we are here to prepare for Afghanistan, working on air-land integration.

"Ten years ago air-land control was the sole preserve of a few special cases but now people are used to working with the air – it's not an 'us-and-them' culture."

The fast-paced European deployment saw more than 2,000 UK troops linking up with military personnel from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, Slovakia and the United States in an operational environment.

On one occasion three AS90 self-propelled guns sped into position ready to cause devastation anywhere within their 24.7km range, while the RAF's supersonic Tornado GR4 fleet were on standby to fly into action.

The trainee FACs, operating with front-line troops, were required to coordinate the assets safely.

Bdr Craig Underwood (17 Battery, 26 Regt RA) said: "I take fast air on to the targets. The exercise is geared towards getting people like me combat-ready and it's a great opportunity to go live."

"It gives me the skills to be ready for

combat and without them I could not deploy in the role, so it's a very good thing for my career."

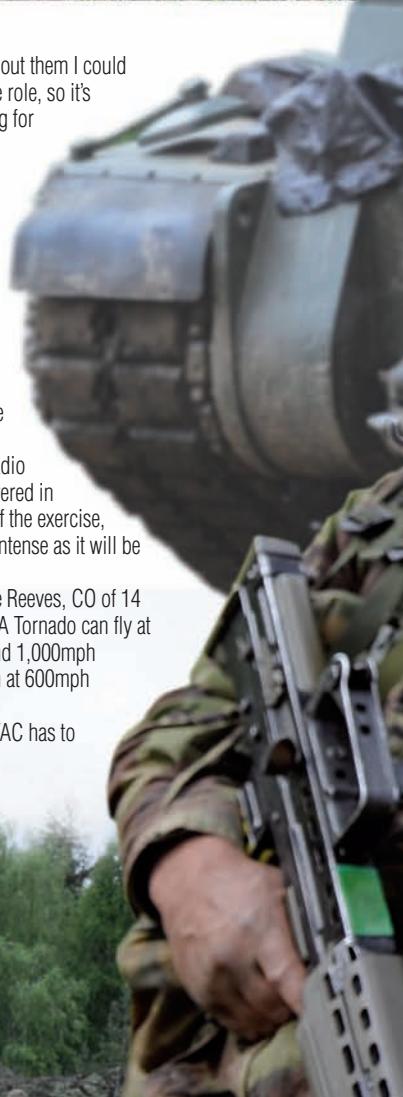
A total of 96 FACs from the different nations were taught in the Jince military training area, with 29 from the UK set to deploy on Op Herrick in the near future.

With 1,077 radio commands delivered in just two weeks of the exercise, training was as intense as it will be in a war zone.

Wg Cdr Steve Reeves, CO of 14 Sqn RAF, said: "A Tornado can fly at a speed of around 1,000mph and can fly in at 600mph at 100ft."

"So an FAC has to

An FAC has to think quickly and be able to deconflict the fire from the ground





think pretty quickly and be able to deconflict the fire from the ground."

Explaining the nature of his role, Lt James Well (159 Battery, 26 Regt RA) said: "It can be quite high pressure but you practice so much before you're allowed on operations that it is no more stressful than normal."

"The entire focus of the training is to ensure there's no extra pressure on us."

Mimicking the situation in Helmand province, a battlegroup HQ was set up at Náměšť Airbase with operatives working at computers providing real-time information to soldiers on the ground.

State-of-the-art software and other digital technology was also used to provide intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance without actually launching unmanned aerial vehicles into the sky.

Speaking about the relationship between Army and RAF personnel within the battlegroup HQ, Maj Matt Murphy (RA) said: "The joint HQ really has been excellent and has been invaluable in learning a lot from each other – we have learnt to understand how the Tornado operates and the RAF now

understand a lot more about the land environment we possess.

"The language of the two forces is completely different so this has been an opportunity to learn what we are both talking about, which is obviously a good thing for everyone involved."

The goal at the heart of Ex Flying Rhino was improving battle-space management, with slick communication and efficient partnership between the Army and RAF the ultimate aim.

Sgt Maj Col Ryan (12 Regt RA), an expert in the field, was called in to advise 20 Brigade on using the different skills to maximum effect.

"Everything we do in Afghanistan is to do with battle-space management – getting guns firing as things move through the airspace has to be watertight. It's a moving beast and

very complex. In the past air may have been working separately to land but now the RAF and the Army have never worked as closely since World War Two."

Such a unified effort was imperative to the logistics of the exercise with 32 aircraft, 600 vehicles and thousands of Servicemen and women being moved into the training area.

With FACs acting as the eyes and ears on the ground and seamless communication between all personnel, the exercise showed that the distance between land and sky is not that great after all. ■



Above left, Eyes on: Members of a fire support team on Ex Flying Rhino

Main picture, Friendly forces: Czech Gripen aircraft and multinational ground troops worked closely together during the training package in the Czech Republic

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

VERSEAS travel invariably starts with a long wait at an airport terminal before passengers finally board their plane and take to the skies.

In the military there is no exception to this rule and, if anything, serving personnel traditionally spend longer in departure lounges than the average tourist as they wait to embark on their latest operational deployment or training exercise.

Utter the words Joint Air Mounting Centre (JAMC) and a soldier's mind would immediately be flooded with thoughts of impending boredom as the prospect of spending hour after hour in a miserable transit base hits home.

But this crucial facility in South Cerney, Gloucestershire, has made major investments in recent times to improve standards and ensure personnel arrive and depart with minimal disruption.

"In the old days we had an eight-hour reporting time which involved lots of waiting with very little to do," Flt Lt Arnie Arnison, part of the Royal Air Force movements team, explained.

"But in the last 12 months we have seen significant changes in the processes and facilities which have resulted in a much shorter passenger experience at the JAMC.

"We have refurbished the ablutions and transit accommodation and have made improvements to the welfare facilities.

"Much work has been undertaken to ensure passenger reporting times are minimised. Those times now start at four hours prior to departure. In the past we were looking at six to eight hours and we have minimised things wherever possible.

"It is one hour in excess of the reporting times at Brize Norton but you get a free meal and you are taken directly to the aircraft steps, which is a real bonus."

Soldier saw first-hand evidence of the changes during a behind-the-scenes tour of the site.

Giant screens displaying Sky Plus television channels hang from the walls while a book library featuring a selection of reading material is free for soldiers to use.

Entertainment is available thanks to a table tennis and pool table and visitors can send and receive emails by logging on to two pay-as-you-go internet terminals.

Hot snacks and refreshments are also available at the centre's kiosk and further improvements to the welfare services are on the horizon.

Additional internet terminals, which will be free to use, are in the pipeline as is a games console area and improved audio and visual equipment, all of which will be funded with help from ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Troops from 29 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps and movement personnel from the RAF work together to operate the JAMC, with support from RAF police based at Brize Norton.

The centre covers the check-in, baggage and security processes for units of 30 or more soldiers and, once completed, they are taken directly to the runway, where they board their plane for departure.

Air transport liaison officers from 29 Regt RLC are also embedded within the terminal at Brize

Norton to assist passengers on a 24/7 basis.

Flt Lt Arnison said: "It is to relieve the pressure caused by large volumes of operational and exercising passengers with baggage and equipment at the airhead.

"We have the sufficient space and facilities to do the job here. It is all about relieving pressure at the terminal.

"Once passengers are processed they go directly to the aircraft steps, they do not set foot in the Brize Norton terminal."

The JAMC processes between 16,000 and 18,000 tri-Service personnel a year, a figure that is spread over 300 flights.

And the tempo is particularly quick during operational deployments.

"During the RIP [relief in place] we process between 2,000 and 3,000 Op Herrick passengers, depending on where the brigade is based and also the use of regional airheads," Flt Lt Arnison explained.

"Over the RIP more Op Herrick passengers are processed at the JAMC than any other military terminal. We do two operational flights a day as well as one exercise flight, so it is quite busy."

But the process does not always run smoothly. Earlier this year staff had to deal with problems caused by the heavy snow and ice as well as disruptions from the volcanic ash cloud crisis.

The JAMC was heavily involved in a contingency plan that saw passengers travelling to Spain via coach and ferry before boarding flights to Afghanistan.

They also processed freight that was flown to Haiti to help the relief effort following the earthquake disaster in the country.

Another key function of the site is its ability to deploy high-readiness forces across the world.

To plan for this, 29 Regt RLC takes part in Exercise First Flight twice a year, a mission rehearsal that ensures preparations are in place and well-practiced for such deployments.

All-in-all, the face of the JAMC has changed dramatically and those involved have a clear focus on what the centre has to deliver.

"The old days of coming here 12 hours before flying are long gone," said WO2 Jez Shazell of 29 Regt RLC.

"We are now 100 per cent passenger focused. The infrastructure has changed for the better and reporting times have come down."

"People now realise where this place sits in the mounting process. Troops are aware they have to come through here and we are trying to make it as painless and easy as possible." **xx**

Below, Loadmaster: LCpl Natalie Watkins (29 Regt RLC) helps to process the inevitable baggage pile at the Joint Air Mounting Centre in South Cerney



CHECKING IN

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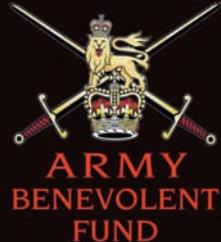
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Come
dine with me



Top chef Nathan Outlaw
conjures up a feast fit for Britain's
homecoming heroes



Interview: Andrew Simms

NO matter how talented the Army chef or the quality of the rations at their disposal, home-cooked food features on the most-missed lists of the majority of those serving in the forward operating bases of Afghanistan.

With a combat medic as a cousin, this appetite for fresh fare is not lost on Michelin-starred Nathan Outlaw who believes that Britain's fighting men and women deserve to be served up the very best of British on their return to home soil.

"I think there's a lot of truth about troops being passionate about their food and they must miss it," the chef told *Soldier* from the kitchen of his intimate and eponymously-named restaurant at the St Enodoc Hotel in Rock, Cornwall.

"My cousin has been a medic in the Army for nearly ten years now and always tells me the sort of dishes he craves when he is away, and when I appeared on the BBC's *Great British Menu* a couple of years ago I spent some time with

group of submariners and got a good idea of the sort of food Service personnel enjoy."

With this inside information in mind, *Soldier* recruited Outlaw – fresh from winning the south-west heat of this year's series of *Great British Menu* – to devise a homecoming feast fit for Herrick's heroes.

The mouth-watering fruits of his labour, a ten-course taster menu, feature opposite.

"I tried to imagine the sort of meal that I would want after being away for a long time and the sort of dishes that would mark a celebration," said Outlaw, who followed his father's footsteps into a professional kitchen and developed his pan-frying prowess under the tutelage of Gary Rhodes and Rick Stein. "There is a sense of nostalgia in a lot of the menu."

"All of the dishes featured are great on their own but by making the portions smaller they can all be enjoyed together. Cooking everything would take a real effort but when you have been away from family and friends for so long, what better way to mark your return home than by inviting

everyone round for a real celebration of the nation's favourite British dishes?"

The seafood specialist was quick to stress that troops' hunger for home while on operations should not be seen as egg on the faces of those Service

chefs in theatre who "work wonders with the resources available to them".

"I've taken part in a few competitions in which I have come up against guys in the Forces and their standard of cooking is always brilliant," said the 32-year-old. "I've got some good friends who served as chefs and really enjoyed it.

"One of them, Kevin Viner, used to help train Army chefs in Aldershot and went on to get a

Michelin star, while another served in the Royal Navy for 15 years and now has his own restaurant and is doing very well for himself. I'd recommend it [a career in military catering] to anyone."

Indeed, had it not been for the offer of a job in a top hotel, the man being hotly-tipped by guides and peers to become one of the UK's best chefs could well have found himself in a field kitchen.

"I'd picked up a few leaflets [on joining the Army] and was considering it, but I got given the opportunity to go to London and train and took that over going into the Services," he said.

Despite the possibility of an Army career going up in smoke, Outlaw's chosen path has not been without its similarities to a life in uniform.

"You have to make a lot of sacrifices to succeed," he added. "[Being a chef] is hard work and often means being on your feet for 18 hours a day. There are much easier ways to make a living.

"There is a lot of discipline in good kitchens, which are not too dissimilar to some aspects of the Army," he added. "There is a hierarchy and when you are training you quickly learn that the chef is the boss and whatever he says goes."

Now the general in two kitchens, Restaurant Nathan Outlaw and the Seafood & Grill, the champion of British cuisine described his command style as "organised and relaxed".

"I'm a big softie in the kitchen," he said. "I believe you should lead by example. I work as hard as everyone else and try to pass on all that I have learned over the years.

"Being calm and organised under pressure is key. If you can't keep your cool in a situation where every customer comes in within the space of half an hour, you are going to churn out terrible food and the customers are going to be upset."

It is a calmness that Outlaw says he would be delighted to demonstrate to soldiers.

"Would I cook for our troops in Afghanistan? Too bloody right I would," he concluded.

A quick glance at the culinary cache opposite suggests that there would be few dissatisfied diners if he did. ■



Banquet for the brave

British vegetable broth with garden herb dumplings

A heart-warming, nostalgic soup will bring comfort to anyone who has been on a long operational tour and the addition of small garden herb dumplings give this dish a great British aroma.

The best thing about a broth is that it can be made in advance and benefits flavour wise by doing so.

Adding seasonal vegetables to any type of stock base will produce a really flavoursome broth.

Tip: To source the best ingredients for this opener get friendly with a few allotment owners and keep your fingers crossed that they have grown too much!

Seafood cocktail

No British menu would be complete without a prawn cocktail – made with fresh and juicy prawns it is one of our best dishes. I like to make a few tweaks from the traditional recipe by using lobster, crab, baby gem lettuce and adding a touch of fresh basil, but you can make it with any salad leaf you fancy.

Tip: It's worth the effort of making your own mayonnaise for the Marie Rose sauce using really fresh free-range eggs and some great British virgin rapeseed oil.

Fish and chips

It goes without saying that in the culinary stakes there is nothing more British than fish and chips and with a little extra effort it is a dish worthy of any celebration. First of all pay a bit extra for the fish – go to a good fishmonger and ask for some line-caught cod or pollack, use a really good ale to make your batter and add a hint of English mustard to fresh mayonnaise for the tartare sauce.

Make your own chips using maris piper potatoes, simmering them in salted water until they start to break at the edges. Drain them and let them cool on a tray before cooking them in hot oil until golden and crispy.

Mushy peas you either love or hate, but if you want to make your own it's really easy. Take some dried marrowfat peas and cover with water. Add a few teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda and leave overnight in the fridge.

To serve, place all the ingredients into a pan and simmer until the peas are broken up and cooked, then season with malt vinegar and a little salt.

Tip: Sprinkling a little sea salt over the fish an hour before cooking will draw out extra water, firm the fish up and give a nice chunky finish when cooked.

Fish pie

When I say fish pie, I don't mean a dish full of leftover fish pieces. Let's do this the right way and get down to the fishmongers and ask for some undyed smoked haddock, super fresh scallops, salmon or sea trout and some cracking prawns.

Make yourself a really nice white sauce, but instead of milk use some fish stock in which the smoked haddock trimmings have bathed.

Chop up a few shallots and a clove of garlic, pick some fresh curly parsley and chop that too. I usually put some hard-boiled eggs in fish pies but for this taster menu I'd use a few boiled quail's eggs instead.

To top off the pie make some fluffy mash using maris

piper potatoes, some unsalted butter, double cream and cheddar cheese. Build the ingredients into individual dishes and place in a hot oven until golden.

Tip: Keep things simple and serve with some nice buttered leeks and carrots.

Beef and horseradish

Not a traditional plate of roast beef with all the trimmings, but a super, simple recipe using the finest fillet of beef.

Take a fillet with plenty of fat marbling and season with salt and black pepper. Heat a frying pan big enough to hold the whole fillet and sear all over until golden in colour. Allow the fillet to cool and then cling film tightly and place in the fridge.

To serve, slice the beef thinly and plate alongside watercress dressed with lemon and oil and a spoonful of mayonnaise and creamed horseradish.

Pork, apple and bubble and squeak

Perfect crispy pork belly with an acidic apple puree, which cuts through the melting fat, is the supreme meat and fruit combination.

To make the accompanying bubble and squeak, boil some charlotte potatoes, blanch some cabbage and dice some onion and garlic. Using oil or pork fat, fry the onion and garlic for a few minutes before adding the potatoes, then season with a bit of salt and pepper and add the cabbage. Remove from the frying pan and mix and mould into little cakes. Fry off before serving.

Tip: Place the pork belly in a roasting tray and cook in a hot oven at 220C for 40 minutes before turning your oven down to just below 100C and cooking for a further two hours or until the meat is falling apart.

Lamb with mint sauce

Lamb chops are a great hands-on eating dish, are easy to prepare and simply delicious. Make your own mint sauce by hand-chopping the mint and putting it in some white wine or red wine vinegar with a touch of sugar and salt. Serve with some fresh new potatoes, cooked with a little mint and tossed in butter, and some fresh peas and broad beans.



Tip: Ask your butcher for some hogget chops – from a lamb over a year old – which have a stronger, more mature taste and more importantly are bigger in size.

Welsh rarebit

No menu is complete without cheese and instead of a selection at the end of your meal, why not include this classic? Welsh rarebit is basically cheese on toast, but this is not any old cheese on toast – it has a couple of British favourites in it in Worcestershire sauce and beer.



Serve on a piece of brown bread with a refreshing celery, pickled walnut, apple and watercress salad finished off with a mustard and honey dressing.

Tip: Use good quality cheddar and strong ale so the flavour really comes through.

Trifle

If I go to a party and there is no trifle on offer then I am not happy – it is my ultimate dessert. Sherry trifle is the classic, but you can make any variation as long as the custard is good, the fruit is in season and the jelly is set.

My personal favourite is raspberry and elderflower. Start by making an elderflower jelly using elderflower cordial, water and sugar and set it with gelatine.

Next, make fresh custard using duck eggs, milk and vanilla sugar and add a bit of corn flour to thicken.

Whip up some double cream and sprinkle with plenty of fresh raspberries.

Finish with hundreds and thousands because no trifle is complete without them.

Apple crumble and cinnamon ice cream

To finish off a great menu you need a great dessert and apple crumble is the most popular in the UK.

Apples at their best and great crunchy crumble, what more could you want?

Well how about some cinnamon ice cream? Apple and cinnamon is a marriage made in heaven.

Tip: Cook your crumble mix off before you put it onto your apples. Mix some flour, oats, butter, demerara sugar and ground cinnamon and lay and bake on a tray.

CONTRARY to the old adage, there is such a thing as a free dinner and, thanks to the generosity of the St Enodoc Hotel, in this case two free dinners.

Home to Nathan Outlaw's exquisite eateries, the St Enodoc Hotel, which is quietly tucked away in Rock on Cornwall's rugged north coast, is offering one lucky *Soldier* reader and their guest the chance to eat, sleep and relax in comfort.

Our prize winner will enjoy two nights in a double room (estuary view if available), a three-course set menu for two in the Nathan Outlaw Seafood & Grill each evening and a full English breakfast each morning of their stay*.

To stand a chance of winning, tell us on which estuary Rock stands.

Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by August 31. Usual rules apply

www.enodoc-hotel.co.uk
www.nathan-outlaw.co.uk

* Prize not available during school and bank holidays

01 SIMPLY THE BECKS

IT was May 2010. It had been six weeks in the planning, but even up to the last day CSE was not sure it would go ahead. But, on the morning of Friday, May 21 it became very real indeed when CSE entertainment manager Angie Avlianios turned up at RAF Brize Norton with a very precious cargo.

It started small, but soon the buzz was tangible. Everyone was doing double-takes. Mobile phones and cameras were whipped out of pockets. Smiles of incredulity were spreading... yes, that really was David Beckham about to board the flight to Afghanistan.

"When we walked into the cookhouse in Bastion for breakfast on the first morning of the tour I was overwhelmed by the reaction," said Avlianios. "It's a rare thing to see our troops quite so animated and excited about any visitor. The looks

of excitement and delight at having such a superstar in their cookhouse were priceless."

The three days of Beck's visit were a blur of meet and greets; Q and A sessions; autograph signings; and posing for photos. "To see our heroes meet their hero and get so much from it was amazing to witness," said Avlianios. "David spoke many times about what an honour it was to meet the troops and visit Afghanistan and you could tell he meant every word.

"What came across was that despite his superstar status he's just a thoroughly nice bloke who genuinely cares about what the British Forces are going through. He really wanted to do his bit to boost morale and he did that in absolute spades."

And for the whole team it was a long-held ambition to get David out to Afghanistan fulfilled. Top that, CSE!



02 THE OSBOURNES

OZZY and Sharon Osbourne have long been supporters of our Armed Forces and have quietly undertaken several visits to Selly Oak and Headley Court. Their first visit together to Selly Oak caused quite a stir, especially with Ozzy being a local boy. The couple were literally mobbed as they walked through the corridors of the hospital.

"It took 25 minutes to move them 20 metres – and they hadn't even reached the military ward yet," said Avlianios.

"Sharon and Ozzy were both compassionate and engaging with everyone they met.

"They took time out to speak to everyone who wanted to meet them and were visibly moved by the stories they heard. It was one of those really special moments when you just know it has meant so much to all concerned."

Ozzy is apparently mad keen to get to Afghanistan in person, but that might be quite a risk-assessment form...



04 TUTU AND TIARA

IT was a tough year for Op Telic in 2005 and CSE struggled to get into theatre with any sort of entertainment. CSE needed to find some middle ground that would give a tough operational audience the impact of a big stage production, with the logistical ease of a one-man band. So they got together a quartet of top-flight comedians – Gina Yashere, Rhod Gilbert, Paul Tonkinson and Andy Askins. But they needed that bit of extra razzle-dazzle...

And they found her in the shape of Madame Galina. Fifteen stone of tutu and tiara, classically-trained in ballet... oh, and a bloke. This was a risky mission.

Show one – Al Amarah. The quality of the comedians was undoubted and they went down a storm. But as the moment for Madame Galina's entree approached, CSE boss Nicky Ness had her head in her hands, seeing her

career in Forces entertainment about to go up in smoke.

"A stunning run of stand-up wowed the audience, but then I thought 'and now comes the cross-dressing fat ballerina,'" she said. "I wondered what I had done."

As Madame Galina took to the stage all *Swan Lake*, there was indeed a split second of incredulity from the Para audience – and then a roar of approving laughter as the first – fairly filthy – gag kicked in.

"Reggie", a 23-year-old Glaswegian, was coaxed onto the stage to perform a pas de deux with Madame. Naturally he became a local hero.

As Reggie and Madame took their bows and left the stage, they were silently in absolute awe of each other.

Until, that is, Reggie said: "Naebody comes up here tae see us. Naebody. You was brilliant!"

03 FOBBED OFF

CSE Live Entertainment took the unprecedented step last year of sending some of its top comedians on Hostile Environment courses in the woods of deepest Hampshire. Their ambitious aim was to get the most undisciplined element of the showbiz world equipped to take comedy shows out to the Forward Operating Bases (FOBs).

Amazingly, the "talent" took the course seriously and passed with flying colours.

Comedian Barry Castagnola was among the first to be sent on a mission to entertain out at the FOBs. "After a tense helicopter ride I was at FOB Price, performing high up on the back of a flatbed truck, when I heard a burst of fire," said Castagnola. "Given my recent training, I hit the deck, all too aware that I was rather exposed, especially under spotlights.

"So there I lay with my legs crossed and my hands over my head as I'd been taught. And then I wondered why the audience were laughing at me hysterically. As the gunfire subsided, I raised my head and one of them kindly informed me that there was a shooting range next door and it was not enemy fire. It's quite hard to regain some dignity in a situation like that!"



05 BIRTHDAY HONOURS

COMEDIAN Toby Foster was doing a CSE show at Camp Bastion in February 2008. He was feeling a long way from home as it was his baby daughter's first birthday back in the UK.

"It was an odd day for me," said Toby. "But naturally you don't want to moan about anything because you're surrounded by people who are having a really tough time and who are away from their families for months on end."

"That evening, the gig in Bastion was fantastic. As we got to the end of the night, I was back stage thinking about the very different party I'd missed at home when I heard Doll, the singer in the band, tell the collected troops that it was my daughter Annabel's birthday. I swear I'll never forget the feeling of 700 people, all of whom were much more homesick than me, singing happy birthday to a little girl they'd never met, thousands of miles away."

"It's the best birthday present she's ever had and she didn't even know about it."

06 THE IRISH QUESTION

HOUSEHOLD name Ed Byrne did a CSE tour of the Falklands in 2004. As everyone knows, once you're down there, you're down there – there's no flight back the next day.

So, CSE and the local command found things to keep the talent amused. After seeing the penguins on Bertha's Beach, it was off to Onion Range...

"My one abiding memory of CSE is being shown how to use a General Purpose Machine Gun on the firing range," remembered Irish comedian Byrne.

The British Army showing an Irishman

how to use a gun. There was a definite air of "are you sure about this, sarge?". Luckily the troops realised Byrne was on their side.



08 BASTION MAYHEM



BRILLIANT covers' band Electric Mayhem have done many great shows for CSE. One particular show they remember was at Camp Bastion. The band were told that

their audience that night were troops who'd been out engaging the enemy until the day of the show.

From the first number by the CSE dancers, everyone had the feeling that something special was on the cards. CSE comic Toby Foster was the MC and his stuff was going down great and the lads were lapping it up. Next up was the amazing Terry Alderton.

Then it was Electric Mayhem's turn. From the first chord of *Take me out* by Franz Ferdinand to the final chord of *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Queen, the lads completely went for it, dancing as if they did not have a care in the world.

10 ENGINEER HURRAH

AND finally, a desperate despatch from comedian Kevin McCarthy, battling with the worst the Falklands weather has to offer in 2005. Here's his blog:

"Muster at 0600 to be at heli-ops by 0700, so no breakfast. Waited for weather to clear, eventually took off for Mount Byron, weather closed in and forced us to land at Fox Bay about 1000, still no breakfast. Only people around were a dozen Royal Engineers rebuilding a refuelling depot. By 1200, still no breakfast. Brokered a deal to swap a CSE show in the local hall for breakfast. No sound, no lights, 12 engineers and two locals in an empty community hall. The show was brilliant, the audience were brilliant and the breakfast was the best I have ever tasted. God bless the Royal Engineers!"

09 DREAM GIRLS

THE CSE dancers are, of course, a vital part of any CSE variety show and you can trace their heritage back to the Second World War. But today's dancers are a little more feisty. Ruth Trantor, a former CSE dancer herself, now head of Underwraps Dance Agency, remembers a precious moment.

"During a tour to the Falklands we were taken out to the ranges in our downtime. The rain was coming down in stair rods – you couldn't see your hand in front of your face and you certainly couldn't see soldiers.

"This really pompous sergeant stood with us bellowing instructions at the soldiers on the ground. We all had to stand there – miserable and freezing – whilst he humiliated the soldiers for various things, obviously playing up to us as his audience.



"At the end he turned to our group and asked if we had any questions. At the back of the group, a beautiful dancer raised her hand.

"The sergeant puffed up and said: 'Yes love, what is it you want to know?'

"The dancer's reply? 'What's the biggest animal in the world?' "

RANKED

TOP TEN CSE STAR TURNS



CSE Forces Entertainment is part of SSVC, the Services' charity which also provides BFBS TV and Radio, SSVC Forces Cinemas, SSVC Retail and runs the British Defence Film Library (BDFL). For more information go to www.ssvc.com/cse



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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.

● JUST a month or so after being informed that I had to have a stable belt for a parade, I have been told that I am not allowed to wear the item with Combat 95 uniform.

This follows a directive banning all but officers from wearing REME rank slides.

Individuals in my unit have wasted money on buying stable belts that we now cannot wear. Is the REME top brass going power mad or are dress regulations to blame? – Cfn S Prestidge, 101 FS Bn, REME.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: The wearing of stable belts with Combat 95 is a decision taken by the local commander under Army Dress Regulations. Likewise the wearing of privately purchased REME rank slides.

The CO of your battalion has directed that working belts and plain rank slides will be worn while in that form of dress as a number of TA soldiers in the battalion do not possess these items and he does not wish to enforce purchase. I suggest you raise your concerns through the chain of command and particularly the issue of being told to buy a stable belt for a parade.



"He sells them to us one week and now offers to take them back for half the price."



Picture: Sgt Ian Forsyth, RLC

Top table: Prime Minister David Cameron enjoys a Bastion breakfast during his recent visit to theatre

Cookhouse still a premier inn

● WRITE in response to the whinger criticising the catering contractors at Camp Bastion, "Chefs carved out of operational cookhouse" (June).

Having completed 22 years of service and previously been an apprentice chef, my son recently left the Army as a warrant officer.

Just seven days later he was back out in Afghanistan serving as a chef at Bastion 2 with KBR and is consequently one of the team responsible for the dramatic fall in "the quality and standard of food".

I think not. This is just a case of a whingeing pom. My son's standards didn't drop overnight because he became a civilian. He was and still is well respected by

the Army chefs in theatre who all continue to call him sir.

Throughout his military career, my son has served in many war zones as a soldier first and chef by trade and I don't believe he has let anyone down.

I served in the Royal Navy for 25 years, 17 of which were aboard submarines, and know the important role food plays in the upkeep of morale. I am sure most of those on operations are reasonably happy with the scoff being served up in difficult conditions.

I think a bit more gratitude wouldn't go amiss. – Brian Davies.

● Come dine with me – Pages 53-55

'Rule-makers not playing by the rules'

AS an AGC (SPS) Combat HR Administrator I take great pride in the way I have stayed true to the regulations laid down. Unfortunately it appears that the same cannot be said for the authors of our various allowances.

Joint Services Publication 752, paragraph 05.0221, states that Get You Home (Travel) (GYH(T)) rates "will be adjusted by the annual percentage increase or decrease in the Converted Leave Rate (CLR) of Motor Mileage Allowance (MMA)".

The annual percentage increase in the CLR of MMA was 10.77 per cent, yet there was no increase in the rate. Why is this? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: While the CLR is recalculated at the

beginning of each calendar year and published in the annual update to rates letter that takes effect from April 1, the GYH(T) rates are not updated until August each year. This has been the case since their introduction.

Exceptionally, and given the prevailing financial situation, it was reluctantly agreed by the Adjutant General, on behalf of the Army and the other Service Principle Personnel Officers, that last year's August uplift of the CLR of MMA would not take place and that the rates for GYH(T) were to be held at the 2008 level.

This decision was taken recognising that the allowance provides a contribution towards the cost of travelling home twice a month and is not designed to meet the full cost.

● IN an issue in which Forces foodies are given the thumbs up by celebrated chef Nathan Outlaw, *Soldier* are pleased to jump on the bandwagon and offer Brian Davies the chance to reward his son's service with a prize break for a family of four, courtesy of our partners at Pontin's.



As the author of this month's prize letter (above) he can welcome his son home from tour with a three- or four-night break for four in Pontin's Self-Catering Classic accommodation at a choice of four coastal Holiday Parks: Brean Sands in Somerset; Camber Sands in East Sussex; Prestatyn Sands in North Wales and Southport in the North West.

Terms and Conditions. 1. All places are subject to availability at time of booking. 2. Prize is for a one bedroom Classic apartment, for up to 4 persons (adult or child) to be taken by October 30, 2010, excluding dates between 31/07/10 and 28/08/10, Bank Holidays and special events. 3. Open to UK residents aged 18 or over, except employees of the Ocean Parcs Ltd and their families.

One pretty girl,
one night out - £50.
No condom ...



...18 years of
CSA payments?

HANDS ON SURVIVAL
USE A CONDOM



What's wrong with safe sex and sobriety?

ONCE again I found myself reading a thought-provoking article in *Soldier*; on this particular occasion Julie McCarthy's *Home Truths* column which raised the issue of alcohol, "Stopping drinking takes bottle" (June).

Friends and families of soldiers "done" for drink driving or getting into fights or other booze-related bother, resulting in court martial, loss of rank and pay or even dismissal, would maybe say there's too much of it.

Yet why is it that the quality of a social occasion is judged on the quantity of alcoholic beverages available? Are we as adults not capable of interacting socially unless we drink alcohol first?

At the barracks where I am based I have noticed that one of the two bars



(excluding those in the sergeants' and warrant officers' mess and officers' mess) is open to soldiers living on camp for a staggering 32 hours of drinking time over a five-day period.

In addition the Naafi, open seven days a week from early morning to late at night, stocks alcohol ranging from wine to whisky.

Given the above, it is easy for soldiers living alone to find drinking a comfortable companion.

I wonder what it would be like if the Naafi didn't stock alcohol, the bars' opening hours were limited and the only ale available was ginger. Would soldiers, famous for their good humour and natural sense of mischief, have fun anyway?

In the same issue there was a small, discreet advert regarding chlamydia which advised personnel to use a condom.

While we are all full of admiration for our soldiers – our heroes of war – and rightly so, it puzzles me why such courageous and physically-fit men, who are entrusted with the responsibility of weapons and ammunition, seem to shy away from the issues of drink and condoms.

Drinking is embraced with relish despite the negative consequences of bad breath, being overweight and judgement-impaired, while who knows why condoms, such an important piece of kit, are scorned upon. Julie is right, it takes bottle to stop



drinking, but it takes bottle to even talk about it.

I know from experience that both subjects touch a raw nerve with a man and are truths that don't want to be faced.

But dare I say it, both a beer belly and a tug-of-war over a condom are first-class passion killers.

Surely protecting yourself and your partner/s from sexually transmitted diseases and keeping yourself fit by limiting the amount of alcohol you drink are just as responsible actions as carrying a loaded SA80 on patrol in Afghanistan. – **Ms Christine Rodgers, BFPO 801**

Rocky return to service for Reservist

I WRITE this letter with great frustration. I am currently on a Full Time Reserve Service contract and decided to re-enlist as a Regular.

However, I was informed by Army Personnel Centre (APC) Glasgow that "the Army was fully-capped", "the Adjutant General's Corps (Staff & Personnel Support) (AGC (SPS)) wasn't recruiting" and I would have to wait until April 2011 to join – regardless of being a Reservist.

I was then advised to apply via the Armed Forces Careers Office where I live and was encouraged when I got there to see posters glued to the windows "shouting" that the Army was recruiting across all cap badges.

But on enquiring further I was informed that the Army was only interested in recruiting for the Infantry.

That same evening I found an advert for Combat Human Resource Specialists on a recruiting website and applied once again.

Just a day later I received a telephone call telling me what I had by then heard

umpteen times from different sources.

So, is the British Army still recruiting or not? And if so, why is the organisation not interested in taking on an experienced Reservist who has previously deployed on operations overseas?

And if the Army is not recruiting, why advertise to the contrary? – **Name and address supplied.**

Maj Katie Hislop, HQ Recruiting Group, responds: If you have previous Regular service (which your letter implies) then you are classed as a re-joiner if you wish to return on your original engagement into the Army.

The Service only has a limited number of vacancies for re-joiners each year to meet immediate manning requirements and this year those vacancies are limited to only a small list of pinch-point trades, those where there is a shortfall of trained soldiers with an impact on our operational effectiveness.

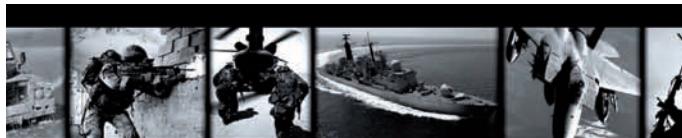
AGC (SPS) is not one of these trades

and therefore the answer given to you by APC Glasgow and the other sources that you quote was indeed correct.

There may be an opportunity to rejoin in the future when the British Army has vacancies in your trade and at your rank but at the moment there is no requirement for additional lance corporals and above in the AGC (SPS).

Recruiting candidates for the AGC (SPS) still continues as there are vacancies for newly-trained soldiers and therefore the literature/recruiting posters that you have seen and the Combat Human Resource campaign are not cases of false advertising, but marketing activity directed at new recruits who will join as private soldiers to meet the Army's manning requirements at that rank.

If you still wish to rejoin the Regular Army then you may be eligible to do so as an Infantry soldier or in another pinch-point trade (as advised by your local Armed Forces Careers Office).



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Incredible 'feet' of endurance

I HAVE just read your feature on this year's Forces March, "Marathon Man" (July), and want to publicly congratulate your assistant editor Joe Clapson for his personal achievement and full support for us soldiers.

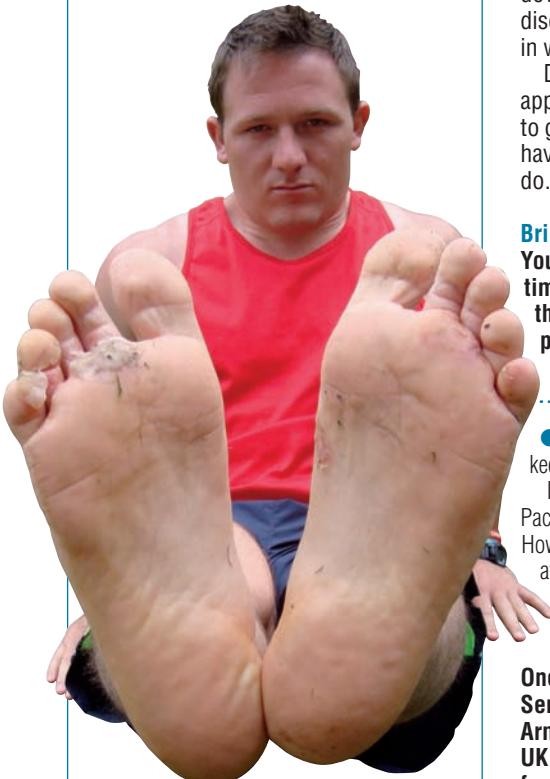
To run 131 miles over five days from Ilfracombe to Bulford is some challenge, even for the fittest of serving personnel.

The fact that Joe completed this endurance event with the Commando Logistic Regiment team in support of Service charities [Project 65] is nothing short of outstanding.

Not only does Joe represent the "soldier" through his excellent articles in the magazine but he genuinely supports us in what we do and cares enough to go through sheer hell to raise funds for our Service charities.

Joe we salute you, well done! — Capt J Rookes, 7th Armoured Brigade HQ (The Desert Rats).

Sole man: Soldier's assistant editor "G.I." Joe Clapson shows off his battle scars after his assault on this year's Forces March — the equivalent of running five marathons in five days. To sponsor Joe and his team visit www.justgiving.com/CLRforcesmarch



Picture: Graeme Main

Drugs put career in doubt

LAST December I was subject to Compulsory Drugs Testing (CDT) and tested positive for class C drug stanozolol [anabolic steroid].

Summoned to see my commanding officer in March, I admitted to having taken something for a period of three weeks in September 2009.

My CO took the view that he wished to retain me and wrote a statement, which was forwarded to the brigade commander, to reflect this. I am told that the commander endorsed the decision not to discharge me and that my case would be further considered by manning in Glasgow.

Since then I have heard nothing back down the chain of command. As with other disciplinary issues, is there a set time frame in which this process should be completed?

Due to the uncertainty I have started to apply for jobs on civvy street but am unable to give potential employers a start date as I have no idea what the Army is planning to do. — Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Your letter raises questions about the time taken to process CDT results and the follow-on action in the event of a positive test.

I can confirm that all action to date

● I'M in my last few years of service and am keen to settle my family down for the future.

It was my understanding that the Over 37 Package was designed for this very purpose. However, I have subsequently been told that is only available to those setting up home in the UK. Is this correct? — Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: One of the underlying principles of the Service allowance package is that the UK Armed Forces are normally recruited in the UK, which is regarded as the home base for Service personnel and their families.

has been within the mandated policy time lines. All CDT samples are tested and subject to the same common screening process with further analysis of samples when something is found.

Follow-on testing for steroids can take longer than for other illegal substances, which accounts for the period between your test in December and the notification of your positive result in March 2010.

The CO has up to three months to investigate and consider a case from the date at which he or she is notified of the result. This ensures that there is appropriate time to fully investigate the details, for example consultation with external agencies such as the laboratory which tests CDT samples, to ensure that the individual involved is dealt with fairly.

On completion of the investigation, an application for retention or discharge is submitted through the chain of command to the Directorate of Manning (Army). They will consider all relevant facts and, where necessary, seek advice from Personal Services 2 (Army), the Army's policy branch that oversees CDT, before reaching a decision. Strict criteria for retention must be satisfied. On average about 50 soldiers a year are retained following a positive result.

This applies to the Over 37 Package (section 8 of chapter 7 of Joint Services Publication 752) and you have therefore been correctly advised that it can only be used in conjunction with the settling of your immediate family at a selected place of residence in the UK.

Options have been considered in the past to extend this provision to enable settlement in other countries but they proved unaffordable. Given the prevailing financial climate it is extremely unlikely that funding could be found to extend the current entitlements.

'Will our cadets be kitted out with camo?'

IS the Army Cadet Force (ACF) going to be adopting the new Multi-Terrain Pattern (MTP) uniform?

In my opinion the introduction of the design provides an ideal opportunity to distinguish the ACF from the Army and give cadets something to aspire to.

If, however, the decision is taken to issue the uniform to cadets, I can foresee a situation where ACF members are wearing the kit before it has been issued to non-operational Regular Army personnel. – WO2 S Okopskyj, AFCO Plymouth.

Maj Allan Law, Log Sp Branch, HQ Land Forces, writes: The issue of Combat Soldier (CS) 95 clothing to the Regular

Army will continue until at least 2012 when a range in the new MTP camouflage will be introduced.

This will take at least two years and, after roll-out is complete, the MoD will have no further requirement for the current woodland uniforms, although it is likely that current stocks of CS 95 will be issued to exhaustion.

It is not cost effective to run two similar clothing lines and cadets will eventually be required to wear the new clothing in keeping with all other Regular Army and Territorial Army units. It is extremely unlikely that cadets will receive, or be given the authority to wear, MTP clothing before Regular Army and TA units.



"Not another set of combat clothing for me to wash. And what does MTP mean anyway?"

PS . . .

I WOULD like to thank Brig Mike Griffiths [DPS(A)] for his reply to my letter on the bias shown towards officers in respect of the honours and awards system, "Ditch the decoration divide" (July), but would like to make some additional points.

The brigadier claimed that the statistics I presented did not tell the whole story. However, the Queen's Birthday Honours list, published in the same edition of *Soldier*, showed that the officer corps

received a whopping 84 per cent of the awards given.

I am sure that past lists would reveal a similar trend.

As to his statement that four OBEs have been awarded to other ranks, four out of how many?

I would also question whether having one warrant officer on the Army's Lower Honours Committee is fair representation of the other ranks.

Finally, I agree with

Brig Griffiths that only other ranks can be awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM). However, the MSM [pictured above] has strict caveats for its award. The nominee must be a senior NCO with a minimum of 20 years spent in uniform, hold the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and have an exemplary service history.

No such restrictions are placed on the award of MBEs and OBEs.

In conclusion, I stand by my assertion that the honours and awards system is unfair. – SSgt M Aslett, DICS.

● Lack of Kiwi commemorative medals – Page 67



Puzzled by insurance business

I AM confused as to the MoD policy regarding car insurance and Motor Mileage Allowance (MMA) claims.

I have recently taken out an insurance policy with First Central Insurance who provided me with the cheapest quote.

However, the company does not cover members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces for business use which, according to my admin office, means that I can not claim MMA in the event of no other transport being available.

To do so I would have to purchase additional cover at a cost of £150 on top of my already extortionate premiums.

Surely if a covering letter can be supplied by an insurance company stating that it does not cover Service personnel for business use, soldiers should be able to claim MMA for the occasional journeys to courses that are a requirement for advancement in rank. – Cpl M Palmer, Brize Norton Courier Terminal.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: Your admin office is absolutely right – in order to claim MMA for a Service journey you must have business use motor insurance. This is a legal requirement, applying to the civilian community as well as to military personnel.

The solution you offer would simply reinforce the fact that the journey you wish to undertake is illegal. The details for using a private car and claiming MMA are clearly laid out in Joint Services Publication 752.

For attending a course, your unit must provide you with Service transport. This could be in the form of a hire car, particularly if you need to take a lot of kit with you, but you will need to present a case for this to be approved.

This only allows for journeys at the beginning and end of the course. If you want to take your private car then this is at your expense. The choice is yours.

Posting regulations miles apart

I WAS recently posted from Germany to the UK and was told that I could not claim Motor Mileage Allowance for the move.

Why is this the case when an internal move from one UK post to another does attract payment? – Pte C Butler.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Your question is tied up with the complex calculations that produce the Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) rates.

While in Germany you will have received LOA; this includes within it an element that is known as car buy/sell. This is provided on the assumption that you will sell your car in one location and purchase another car at your next location as a result of your assignment.

It therefore compensates you for the

"loss" you will make through these enforced sales.

The calculation also assumes that as it is the Army's responsibility to move you between these two locations, you will do so using Service means, which in the case of Germany is via the air trooping service.

For personnel based in Germany the calculation for car buy/sell assumes that they will serve there for two-and-a-half years and therefore the monies to cover this loss are repaid over this period.

At your level this equates to a total of around £1,000.

If, as in your case, you chose not to sell your car and not to fly by the trooper it is considered that you have been adequately compensated already for the costs of driving to the UK through your LOA.

PS...

I WRITE in response to Kerry of Chilwell Barracks who voiced her annoyance at soldiers and spouses criticising the standard and repair of Service Families Accommodation (SFA) in May's issue.

Having rented and owned properties before joining the Army I am well aware of the associated costs of both housing options.

What Kerry and others need to be reminded of is that civilians are not expected to move home every two years – whether in this country or overseas.

Those on civvy street also have the option to pick and choose where they want to live unlike serving personnel, who are told where we must live and in which house, regardless of the state of repair, facilities and location.

Kerry is correct in stating that SFA is considerably cheaper than civilian accommodation, but a civvy is not expected to go on frequent six-to-nine-month tours on which they are shot at on a daily basis and work long hours far in excess of a normal working week.

I love my job in the Army and I knew what I was taking on when I joined, but what I did not expect is to be leaving my family in houses that are sub-standard and inadequate for our needs.

Surely it is not unreasonable to expect a decent standard of accommodation for ourselves and our families when we get paid relatively little in comparison to those who do similar jobs for civilian companies abroad and could be expected to pay the ultimate price for our country.

Speaking of rent, if I was offered a nice house I would be more than willing to pay the extra money.

However, as I have only ever been allocated and lived in Grade 4 properties I don't know what a nice quarter is like!

Julie McCarthy recently wrote about military "cuckoos" [those who stay in Service properties after they are supposed to have vacated them] in her *Home Truths* column and having experienced the poor standard of SFAs in the UK, if I was given a Grade 1 house I too would be tempted to keep hold of it for as long as possible. – Name and address supplied.

Picture: Steve Dock



Herrick R&R issue up in the air

IT is my understanding that anyone deployed on operations for more than four months and one day (approximately 121 days) is entitled to one period of Rest and Recuperation (R&R) lasting seven days.

My unit [664 Sqn AAC] has deployed its personnel for 139 days with no R&R and no explanation of any workaround.

Rumour has it that we will get our R&R on returning to the UK, but nothing has been confirmed. Is this allowed and if so what happens regarding allowances, as we would normally still get Longer Separation Allowance (LSA) and our battle bonus for this period?

If the extra week does not count – as we would have operationally located out of theatre – some personnel will miss out on more than £200.

This situation is not a one off. All Apache squadrons deploying on Op Herrick now deploy for more than four months with no tour break and the chain of command has not explained why and what the policy on R&R is. This affects around 150 personnel from each

squadron every rotation. – Capt S Lunn, Flt Comd, 664 Sqn, Op Herrick.

Sqn Ldr L Shaylder, SO2 J1 Ops Cap/Dev, PJHQ, responds: The policy on R&R is laid down in Joint Services Publication 760, which states: "The decision to grant R&R rests with the in-theatre operational commander, who will consider a number of factors such as the threat, the operational requirement and minimum force levels, to determine the practicality of R&R.

"R&R is not leave and is to be taken at a time, location and for a duration specified by the operational commander. R&R may only be granted to individuals and units on periods of continuous operations in excess of four months."

While personnel are on R&R they are not entitled to LSA, additionally there is no authority for either allowance referenced to continue when personnel have returned from ops to the UK.

Unfortunately we cannot comment specifically on local Joint Helicopter Command arrangements.

Strip back spending on Service uniforms



"No tie again, Harrison... this has to stop. Where do you think you are? Still in the Army?"

AS an ex-Regular and Territorial Army soldier and now a Cadet Force school staff instructor, I am amazed to read such dribble on the thread of uniforms, be it officers concerned that they look scruffy or warrant officers determined to maintain high dress standards.

It's about time that these individuals were sent out into civvy street for a year's sabbatical so that they can see what the real world is like.

People seldom go to work in suits and ties any more (only the old colonel- and brigadier-type wear bowler hats) and yet they still get on and do the job they are paid to do.

Perhaps instead of providing new uniforms, the MoD should scrap the free issue of this clothing and offer a tax allowance which would require soldiers to pay for their own attire rather than constantly wasting public money on replacement kit ahead of parades.

Uniforms should only be issued on a genuine needs basis – there needs to be more accountability on this issue.

Furthermore, why not scrap the wearing of all headdress?

Just think how much could be saved if money didn't have to be spent on berets and badges. Come on MoD, get a grip on things. – David Morris, Rhondda.

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PS...

I FIND it quite disappointing that SSgt Martin would discourage members of the public from attending the repatriations of British Service personnel killed in action, "Shun media circus and respect fallen from afar" (June).

I am always touched to see so many people visiting Wootton Bassett to pay their respects to our fallen troops, particularly when friends and colleagues of mine have been repatriated and I have been unable to be there.

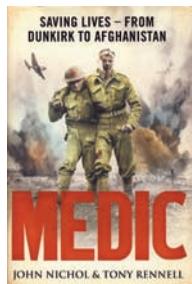
I see no reason why those who wish to do so should not be made welcome.

It doesn't come as a surprise to me at all that friends of those deployed or of those heading out on operations want to pay their respects.

And as for the issue of politicians making an appearance to secure a media moment alongside the military, that will always happen.

But politicians should attend repatriations. These individuals are, after all, responsible for making the decisions that send our soldiers on operations and it is only right that they acknowledge those who have lost their lives as a result.

As British soldiers we belong to the people of Britain and to the nation's political leaders, who in turn should invest time, effort and money into saluting the fallen. — *Name and address supplied.*



PERSONNEL at 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital (V) in Cardiff would like to publicly thank John Nichol, the former RAF Tornado navigator-turned-author, for helping us to raise money for Forces charities.

We cheekily asked if he would send us a signed copy of his new book, *Medic – Saving Lives from Dunkirk to Afghanistan*, but didn't expect to get a reply. How wrong we were.

Not only did he send us a limited edition copy of the book, signed by a dozen or so military personalities, including Sir Jock Stirrup, Simon Weston and Andy McNab, but also some framed Tornado prints and signed copies of his other titles.

His donations helped to raise more than £750, which will be shared by ABF The Soldiers' Charity and The Royal British Legion.

It is heartening to see that Mr Nichol is keen to actively support the soldiers he writes about in his books and I am sure he would not mind me mentioning here what a cracking read *Medic* – available in all good book shops – is. — *Capt John Morris, RAMC, 203 (W) Field Hospital, Cardiff.*

● **Memoirs of British Army's most-medalled – Pages 90-91**



Shooting star: England talisman David Beckham is shown the mounted heavy machine gun on an Army Lynx helicopter by LCpl Chandler (9 AAC), who said of the former Real Madrid and AC Milan man's visit "it's good morale for someone like that to come here". Picture: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC

Herrick hairdryer treatment

WITH England fans no doubt still smarting from seeing their side crash out of this summer's World Cup, David Beckham's cameo in July's issue of *Soldier* provoked some barbed comments from our Facebook fans.

While Allan "big up the Becks" McClure and Brenda Storey commended "Golden Balls" for visiting British Service personnel at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan ahead of football's showpiece tournament, others were less inclined to hail the actions of the former England skipper.

Perhaps considered guilty by association, Beckham, who missed England's dire display in South Africa through injury, was branded as being "just like all footballers, overpaid and underachieving" by Lola Kitty Loki.

On the attack, David Egner was dismissive of Beckham's three-day tour of theatre, stating "he's got nowt else to do, has he?"

He also suggested that the rest of the

squad should have gone with the former Manchester United man, been given a "tin hat and gun" and made to do "summat useful for their millions".

A sentiment shared by Mark Arnold who proposed that seeing all that soldiers do for less money a year than most footballers earn in a month would teach the players what "bravery, loyalty, comradeship and respect really is" and to "not demand it [respect] just because they kick a football around".

Mike Ashworth said that he would have been more impressed if Becks had chosen to leave "the PR team" at home.

"Personally I think the best way for any celebrity to do this [visit British personnel on operations] would be to do so completely anonymously," he added.

"That would give me a bit more respect for celebs."

Defending the LA Galaxy midfielder, Raymond Hamilton said: "At least David Beckham went to see what it is like out there for himself. Good on him, I say."



● **I WRITE** having read a number of letters in *Soldier* concerning the perceived inequality of the criteria for the award of the Golden Jubilee Medal.

While I have some sympathy for the disappointment voiced by your correspondents, at least most serving members of the UK Armed Forces were issued the decoration. It could have been worse. I missed out on all three of the commemorative medals awarded during the 36 years I have been serving.

Canada traditionally allocates only a handful of jubilee and commemorative medals to each unit and while a Canadian version of the Golden Jubilee Medal was struck, the vast majority of personnel did not receive it.

New Zealand and Australia's Defence Forces did not receive allocations of the Golden Jubilee Medal and did not strike their own.

I can only hope we fare better this time round [Diamond Jubilee Medal]. — *David Buck, Wellington, New Zealand.*

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Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

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

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

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

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

Until January 2011: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

Until September: Camouflage exhibition.

Free for the whole family at Imperial War Museum in Manchester. The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000.

August 6-8: Gloucestershire Steam and Vintage Extravaganza at Cotswold Airport. Discounted tickets available to buy online at www.steameextravaganza.com or on the gate. Public enquiries contact 01453 890891.

August 14-15: IMPS Military Show & Vintage Aircraft at the Headcorn Aerodrome, near Maidstone, Kent. Entry free to Service personnel on production of ID card. For vehicle entry contact M Dunlop on 01303 267271 or email mgdunlop@aol.com

September 4-5: The Battle of Britain Air Show. Imperial War Museum Duxford. For details visit www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

September 11: Troop Aid is holding a charity ball to raise funds at the National Motorcycle Museum, near Birmingham. Troop Aid aims to supply the basic essentials when casualties return from serving their country overseas. Tickets are £50 and include a three-course meal and wine. Call 07914 464507 or book online at www.troopaid.co.uk

September 18: Scarlet and Gold: A Concert by The Massed Bands of The Household Division, to be held at the Royal Albert Hall starting at 1930. Ticket prices range from £11 to £40 and are available from Royal Albert Hall Box Office by phone 0207 589 8212, email www.royalalberthall.com or by writing to The Royal Albert Hall Box Office, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AP.

September 23: Florence Nightingale Influence on Nursing. Speaker Gp Capt W Williams RRC, at the Chelsea College of Art, previously The Royal Army Medical College, London.

September 25: Rhythm Force 2010. Open-air contemporary music festival at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, featuring Status Quo, Hayley Westenra, The Soldiers, plus rock, pop and soul groups from the Corps of Army Music. Tickets costing £20 and £12.50 for concessions can be purchased from www.ticketmaster.co.uk or phone 0844 847 1742. Further details can be found at www.army.mod.uk/music/concert/default.aspx

December 4 & 5: The British Military Tournament will be held at London's Earls Court. Presented by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, it will bring together all the best elements of the world-famous Royal Tournament, incorporating them into a new show for the 21st century. Tickets cost £29 to £65 from Earls Court on 0870 903 9033 or email www.britishmilitartournament.com

SEARCHLINE

Are you an **artist, sculptor, craftsman or photographer?** If so, why not join the Army Arts Society? The aim of the society is to encourage and support all artists in the Army, both Regular and Territorial, especially those on operations. Membership is also open to retired Regular and TA personnel and their dependants. An annual exhibition will be held on October 27 at Leaden Hall School, Salisbury. Prizes ranging from £50 to £300 will be awarded in the competition. For further details about membership and entry, visit www.armyartsociety.co.uk

Neil "Mac" McNulty is looking for ex-members

of **79A "C" Company Army Apprentices** who attended the college at Chepstow between September 1978 and December 1980. It is proposed to hold a reunion in May 2011 if enough members can be traced. For further details email Mac at neil.mcnuity1@ntlworld.com or rmonrem-225-sqms@mod.uk or telephone 0121 541 4203.

The **Army Rifle Association** is a military body responsible for running courses and competitions in clay target shooting, target rifle and target pistol disciplines. Courses are available to soldiers at all levels. For information contact Rufus Kumar, courses clerk, HQ ARA, Hythe Lodge, Elcho Road, National Shooting Centre, Bisley, Surrey GU24 0NY, phone 94211 8085/8084 or 01483 798924 or email coursesclerkara@infantry-units.co.uk

Palestine. Were you there during the British Mandate? I am developing a website focusing on the experiences of Service personnel during this time. If you can help please email Sue King at hanorahkyork@aol.com

An ex-paratrooper and Para instructor and veteran from Iraq and Afghanistan, **Col Chester Wojcik**, lives in the Czech Republic and collects wings and badges from around the world. He is seeking correspondence with English collectors who have the same interest. Contact Col Chester Wojcik, J.Opletala 1634-78, Cz-43401 MOTS, Czech Republic (EU).

Chris Anderson, an ex-Queen's Regiment medic, now a staff nurse in Margate Hospital, is trying to write a book containing a collection of nursing/medical anecdotes and requires funny stories about military medical situations. Please send them to Chris by email at chris.anderson@ekht.nhs.uk or ca76@hotmail.co.uk

Warrant Officers' & Sergeants' Mess Worthy Down. Due to the amalgamation of the WOs' and Sgts' Messes, St Omer Barracks and Worthy Down, the amount of presentations held by the mess is being reviewed. Individuals who have made presentations to the Worthy Down mess and would like to have the item returned to them, should contact the property member on 01962 887395. Items to be disposed of will be sold in aid of a local charity.

The **Media Operations Group (V)** is a national TA unit based at Kingston in south west London. The group provides media ops support to the Army and Defence at home and on operations. Twenty-five per cent of the group is deploying on Op Herrick this year in roles including OC combat camera team, media escorts, media plans and in our rapid reaction reserve. If you work in public relations/communications, the media or advertising or you are a professional photographer or cameraman and you want to use your civilian skills in the military, apply now to the PSAO MOG(V) to join the selection day on September 10 at Kingston TA Centre. Tel 0208 481 3435 or email mog.psao@btconnect.com

REUNIONS

44 Parachute Brigade, Pathfinder Company, SADF: Reunion will be held at the London Club of the Rifles, 52-56 Davies Street, London W1K 5HR on September 16 at 1800. Email Steve Crump at steve@30degressouth.co.uk

Birgelen Veterans Association (BVA): Tenth reunion of the BVA will be held at the Cavendish Hotel, Torquay, from September 17-20. Applications will be restricted to the first 100 members. Apply by visiting the website at www.birgelenvets.org or to the secretary Cyril Harding, 14 Park Close, Abergavenny, Mons NP7 5SU.

NO. 825 HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

11 Sphinx Battery Association RA: Reunion to be held in the Queen's Hotel, Newport, South Wales on September 18. Further details from Mag Roberts on 07786 437037 or visit www.11sphinxbtyweb.co.uk

622 Squadron Army Air Corps: A reunion for personnel who served with the squadron while stationed in Munster. Function to be held in London on September 18. Interested personnel should log on to the 662 Sqn page by visiting www.armyaviation.co.uk

Royal Regiment of Fusiliers: Beating Retreat followed by a dinner dance at the Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry commencing at 1830 on September 18. Annual service at St Mary's Church, Warwick on September 19. Service starts at 1045 followed by march past in Market Place, Warwick. Open to past and present fusiliers, wives and partners also invited to attend. Further details from Maj (Retd) J Turquand, Area HQ, RRF, St John's House, Warwick CV34 4NF, phone 01926 491653 or email rffhqwark@btconnect.com

Glosters Band and Drums: Reunion at the TA Centre, Eastern Avenue, Gloucester GL4 3BD on October 2. Details from Neil Webb, 1 Oakhurst Close, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 2SS or phone 01452 855236.

Royal Horse Artillery Association: AGM and reunion will take place at the Victory Services Club and St John's Wood Barracks on October 2-3. Attendance is open to past and present members of the RHA unit. Details from R J Whiteway, The Hideaway, 18 Immenstadt Drive, Wellington, Somerset TA21 9TP, phone 01823 665650 or email rhaassn@hotmail.co.uk

Army Command and Staff Course 24 (1990): 20th reunion dinner on October 9 for students at the former Staff College Building, Camberley. Contact Chris Booth on 094641 8627 or 0208 744 8627 or email cos@hq.dcamus.mod.uk

129 Battery RA Old Comrades' Association: Reunion for all past and present members and attached personnel of the battery. Venue is the Central Club, Blackpool on October 22-23. For details contact williehenry885@hotmail.com or visit www.129dragonsoca.co.uk

COMPETITIONS

Army Cadet Force winners: WO2 G Baxter, BFPO 40; Cpl Calvert, RAF Akrotiri, BFPO 57.

Spine Line winner: Cpl Caulfield, BFPO 15.

Goggle winners: Sgt J Ellett, Welbeck DSFC; WO1 P Harley, HQLF ECI, Shorncliffe; WO1 N O'Leary, 101 Log Bde; WO2 M Aston, SEFIT(G), BFPO 39; Capt M Rodger, SO2 G7, HQ Infantry, Land Warfare Centre.

City of War winners: Maj A Fisher, DTC IT, MoD St Athan; J Furno, Reading; Cpl A Duncan, 5 Armd Coy, BFPO 22; J Keogh, 111 MI Section, BFPO 15; WO2 G Baxter, BFPO 40.

WW2 Lost Films winners: Sgt C Headland, BFPO 23; Maj C Powers, ITDU, Land Warfare Centre; B Haschker, Troisdorf, Germany; M Woods, Frimley; Susan Hunt, Plymouth.

Winter in Wartime winners: Lt C Lucas, Middle Wallop; W Baker, Grantham; C Roberts, Ringwood; Mrs P Griffith, Manchester; Pte P Sutton, 1 PWRR, BFPO 22.

Brothers winners: K Chapman, Glasgow; Cpl R Hood, 4 MI Bn; Mrs J Taylor, Waterbeach; D Myatt, DE, Sutton Coldfield; WO2 L Mather, DCRE, RAF Marham.



Picture: Graeme Main



TEN details have been changed on this photograph of the Army yacht *Challenger* taken during Exercise Transglobe. Circle the differences in the upper image and send the panel to **HOAY 825**, *Soldier*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by August 31.

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 October issue.

June competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Trp C Mancey**, MCTC, Colchester. Runners-up **Mrs R B McIntyre**, 45 AEC, BFPO 15 and **Std BM S O'Neill**, RMSM Kneller Hall, Middlesex, each win a £25 gift voucher.



HE may be making waves in politics at the moment, but Defence Secretary Liam Fox first cut his teeth in the medical profession.

Before moving into the corridors of power in Whitehall, the Conservative MP was a GP in Buckinghamshire and it was that – combined with a bit of time-traveller pop culture – that injected the first bit of life into this month's caption-off.

Mr Simon Harrison, of Wiltshire, got us off to a healthy start with his suggestion **"Hello, I'm the new Doctor"**.

Several of our comedy correspondents picked on the poor health of the Defence budget for their entries.

Among the best was Sgt Keith Chapman's (GSUOTC) **"Sorry Robert, but due to the Defence cuts we can only have one bottle of water each"**.

But our favourite came courtesy of Mr Gavin Hill (103 Bn REME), who noticed the



Picture: Graeme Main

"International Security Strategy Minister Gerald Howarth insisted that the Army's new multi-terrain pattern camouflage was no match for his stealthy shirt-and-tie combo."

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by August 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Sky Men* by Robert Kershaw.

bling surrounding the politicians.

His witty **"Right, I've got Cash your gold jiffy bags around the back – once we've blitzed this room the Defence budget will be back on track"** wins him a copy of *Helmet for My Pillow* by Robert Leckie.

Next up to the *Freeze Frame* plate is Minister for International Security Strategy Gerald Howarth.



Give mum some parental guidance

A SHORT time ago I was contacted by the mother of a new recruit and asked what was available to parents in the way of support and information when their soldier is preparing to deploy.

I was about to launch into the usual list, headed by the Unit Welfare Officer (UWO), when I sat back and thought for a minute.

This lady would probably have no idea who or what a UWO is, she is unlikely to know where her nearest HIVE [Help Information Volunteer Exchange] is and she certainly won't have someone living next door who is an old hand at this deployment lark.

There is a lot of information available from the MoD and individual units for family members – deployment guides, *Soldier*, ArmyNet and the AFF's *Families Journal* all provide information that is not targeted at spouses alone.

But there are a number of reasons why this information does not always reach families (spouses and parents alike). The primary one is that this communication relies on the soldier... yes, you.

Units and the Army as a whole cannot contact a family just because they want to. Just like any other employer they need the correct contact details and permission to do so.

There are personnel out there who do not want their parents

contacted – they joined the Army to escape someone or something and that must be respected. There are also soldiers who do not want their spouses contacted, but that's for another column.

So many times we hear from parents that "the Army didn't contact me" and I have a huge amount of sympathy, some families are let down by the system.

Lack of resources, even after operational uplift, often mean that a unit has to decide who they can effectively look after.

Others have to proactively seek out assistance or information and if they don't know where to start looking it can be a frustrating process. But again it comes

down to the soldier to check that the family and the unit have the information that they need to ensure that contact can be both made and maintained.

If the military system still fails them then there is definite cause for major concern and complaint.

Until my husband deployed I don't think I had truly appreciated the impact on parents when their son or daughter is away. Even when they've lived away from home for more than 20 years and been married for 16!

My mother-in-law phoned daily when he left. Initially I thought she was doing so to check I was coping, but three weeks in I realised that it was to help her adjust.

The only knowledge of the Army and of the campaign in Afghanistan that many parents have is what they see on the news or read in the papers.

Spouses have the advantage that they, in most cases, know the system and understand not only the terminology but also have people in the same situation to talk to.

This doesn't make the operational tour any less worrying for them but it does make it easier for them to switch off from media coverage and not believe everything that they see or hear.

It is assumed that many parents will get the support and information that they need from the internet but for many of a certain age that's just not an option.

Trying to distinguish one end of the web from the other could make an already stressful time worse. That's not to say there aren't some great sites out there for parents and family members.

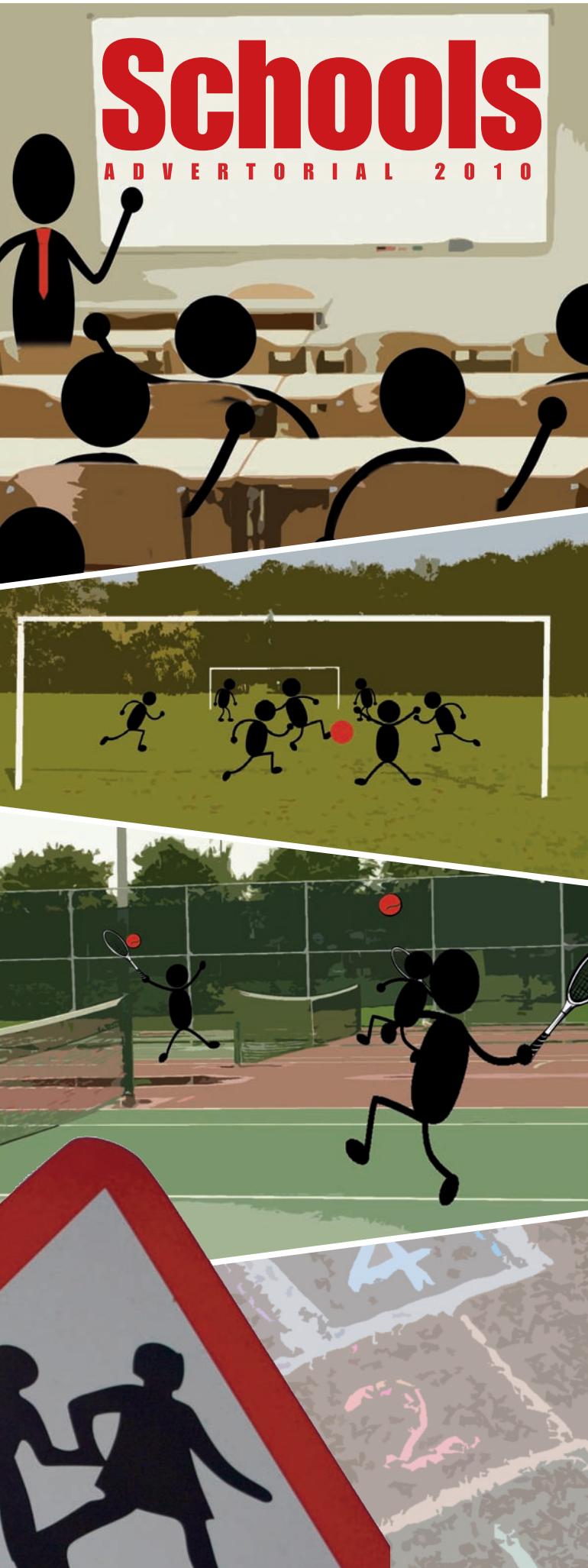
I have been really impressed by the emotional and practical support that families give to each other online.

So whether you're married or single, about to deploy or have just dropped into conversation that you're likely to go on operations in two years time, think about how your loved ones, wherever and whoever they are, will get the support and information that they will need. You are the key to a world of reassurance. ■

‘You are the key to a world of reassurance’



Close contact: A soldier from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment is welcomed home from operations Picture: Chris Barker



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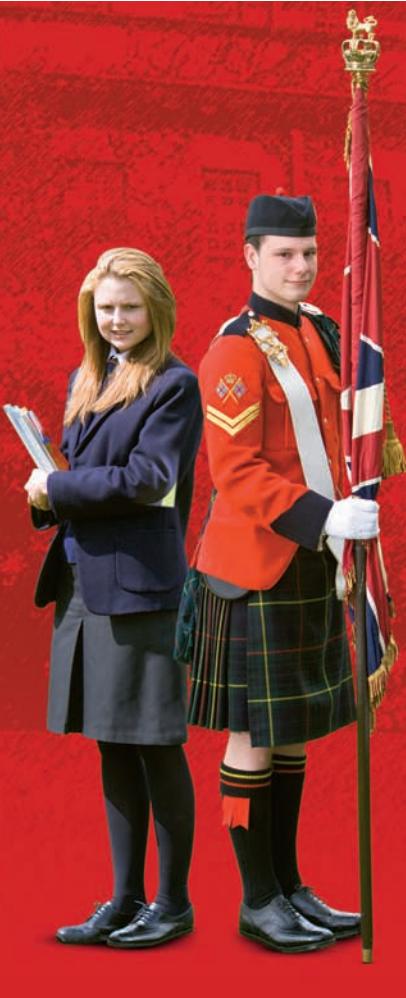
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www.armynet.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoveryppn.niceboard.com

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www.forceshomes.co.uk

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www.army.mod.uk

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www.baff.org.uk

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

www.armedforces.co.uk

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www.armywivesunited.co.uk

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

www.stff.mod.uk

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

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.bitecard.co.uk

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www.hmforces.co.uk

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www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.youtube.com/britisharmy

The Army's official video channel with lots of videos ranging from training to equipment.

www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equitation. Here you will be able to find the information and links you need to keep you up-to-date with what's going on.

www.nfassociation.org

The "Not Forgotten" Association for disabled ex-Service personnel aims to provide entertainment and recreation for war-wounded personnel to alleviate the tedium of their lives and give them something they can look forward to.

www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the Army.

www.facebook.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Facebook fan page

www.twitter.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Twitter channel for the distribution of news and information

www.squaddiewives.co.uk

Squaddie wives, British Army wives and girlfriends site for women only.

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The Army Cadet Force's official Facebook page.

www.honour-our-troops.org.uk

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MOD LINKS

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www.hive-bfg.co.uk

HIVE Information centres for the Tri-service communities.

www.hive.mod.uk

Provision of information to Services communities within UK and overseas

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website, carrying information ranging from corps and regiments, news, features, operations and deployment to kit, welfare and training.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to?

Are you Doing Alright?

www.armyaviation.co.uk

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

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www.erskine.org.uk

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www.nivets.org.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

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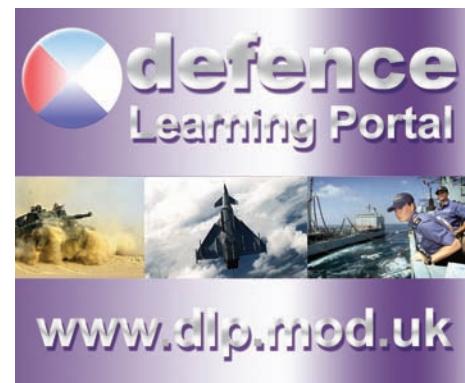
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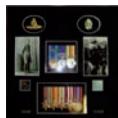
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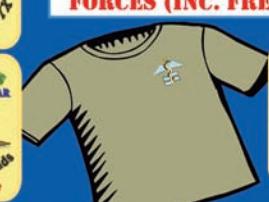
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Sly return: The creator of *Rocky* and *Rambo* delivers a fresh action knockout with *The Expendables* from Lionsgate Films

The heroes are back

Stallone assembles a Hollywood dream team for muscle-bulging extravaganza

Interview: Joe Clapson

THE proverb states "too many cooks spoil the broth" but as far as *The Expendables* is concerned "the more the merrier" is much more apt.

Take as many Hollywood action stars as you can squeeze on a screen, give them a Sylvester Stallone script and add explosions, car chases, gun fights, harbour attacks and burning buildings.

You will undoubtedly soon find yourself asking "how is this possible?"

Stallone, Jason Statham, Jet Li, Mickey Rourke, Dolph Lundgren, Bruce Willis and Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger all star in this special effects extravaganza.

Lundgren, a former member of the Swedish military and son of an Army officer, took time out from his tough martial arts schedule to talk *Soldier* through this summer's must-see movie.

"Stallone called me and said 'Hey Dolph, I've got this script I want you to read and check out the characters'. I read three pages and knew I liked it," said the 6ft 4in Swede.

"The list of names just keeps going. Originally

I think Stallone had two or three guys then it just kept growing – the more people he got the more other actors wanted to be part of it. It's pretty amazing when Arnold Schwarzenegger shows up."

Aside from the stellar cast and wall-to-wall muscle-fest, the film oozes a tongue-in-cheek coolness, with Tool (Mickey Rourke) as resident tattooist in a motorcycle garage and warplane pilots clinking beers while flying.

Humour plays a major part in the movie, with some unexpected comedic moments coming from actors usually better-associated with crushing skulls.

"Right away Stallone told me that my character is funny even though he is kind of crazy and over-the-top," said Lundgren.

"He wanted to do it in a funny way so that you laugh even though the character may do something nuts."

The fight scenes – utilising every kind of weapon – are up there with the best and Lundgren said that real punches were landed while filming.

"Jet Li smacked me a couple of times and that hurt," said the blonde colossus.

"You do have fake hits but if there's a slow-mo close-up you've got to get hit to show the impact."

Lundgren is aware of his target audience and

voiced his appreciation to lovers of the genre which has served him for 25 years.

"Soldiers are obviously a huge market for us as they are super action fans and have great collections – I can never believe how much they still watch," he explained

The man who played the legendary Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV* was full of admiration for British Service personnel.

"I'm impressed that soldiers are doing the job – somebody has to do it and I'm glad there are guys out there who are willing to," he said.

"If you step into the ring you know you are going to get hurt and in the military it's probably the same kind of attitude."

The father-of-two went on to compare the movie world with the live action on operations.

"I am humbled by the guys who do the real thing," he added.

"Hollywood is not real and we should look up to you guys, not the other way round."

They may not be able to hold a candle to the exploits of the genuine article, but Hollywood's wannabe soldiers certainly make an all-guns-blazing attempt.

● *The Expendables* is released in cinemas across the country on August 19. ■

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Bikini Girls on Ice out now

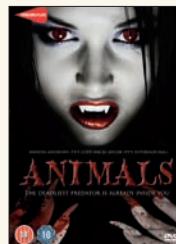
A COACH-LOAD of hot college girls on their way to a bikini car-wash fund-raiser break down at an abandoned petrol station on the outskirts of town. Stranded, they decide to wash cars, frolic with soap suds and, armed with nothing more than their bikinis, explore. Predictably, enter stage right a crazed killer petrol-pump attendant called "Moe" who likes ice and creating corpses. If your idea of fun is watching a bus full of bimbos in skimpy beachwear being menaced by a maniacal mechanic in the middle of nowhere – this one's for you. Otherwise it is a mundane and tedious teen slasher. Very average.



WO2 Ritchie Downing, 3 AAC

Animals out on DVD August 9

THIS film is a cross between a horror and an erotic thriller and is at times hard to follow due to poor use of flashback scenes and confusing screenplay. The storyline revolves around a couple, Vic and Nora, who transform between humans and animals, enjoy having sex and eating human flesh. Then there is Jarret who is the new human love interest of Nora and is transformed into an "Animal" by her. The plot follows the "animal stick together"; "animal falls for human" and "animal fights human/animal" route. On the whole *Animals* could be likened to an episode of *Supernatural* but with saucy scenes involved.



Daniel Crowder, ACF

The Foursome out now

THIS could have been great, but it is not. The director fails to introduce any subtlety, leaving little more than a long sit-com. First released in Canada in 2006, it was three years before *The Foursome* went straight to DVD in the UK; it isn't hard to see why. It is supposed to be a sporting comedy where old rivalries die hard. Kevin Dillon, winner of three Emmys and a Golden Globe for his role in the US TV-show *Entourage*, is the best this film has to offer, but he cannot compensate for the lack of talent around him and his performance is lost. As the predictable plot plays out, you will be longing for it to end.



Capt Dan Knowles, 35 Engr Regt



Dangerous Dolph: Precision sniper Gunnar Jenson serves alongside cigar-smoking, uber-macho combat experts to overthrow a ruthless island dictator

Robo Geisha out now

IT is impossible to convey just how desperately bad this paltry, subtitled, Japanese movie is. The film is loosely based around the story of how our heroine morphs from hero-to-zero in a robotic transformation from lowly housemaid to geisha assassin (it really is as bad as it sounds), all the time in competition with her older sister. I endured the whole thing in two painful sittings but I would advise against watching it. Think *Benny Hill* crossed with the 1970's cult *Monkey Magic* – truly dire. *Robo Geisha*'s budget undoubtedly ran to about £15 and they would have been better advised spending it on sushi.

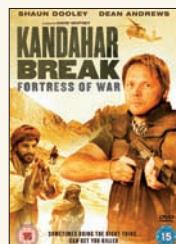


Capt Neil Johnson, AAC

Win... Kandahar Break

IN his debut feature film British director **David Whitney** has served up an action-packed take on the Afghanistan war, depicting the constant danger experienced by mine-clearance engineers. The film brings the reality of modern conflict and all it entails to the screen with thrills, suspense and an intelligent plot. In collaboration with Revolver Entertainment, *Soldier* is offering five readers the chance to win a copy of the DVD, which is out on September 13. To have a chance of winning, tell us who directed *Kandahar Break*. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: August 31



From Paris With Love out on August 2

ACTING legend **John Travolta** and **Jonathan Rhys Meyers** star as CIA agents who race against the clock to stop a terrorist attack in this adrenaline-fuelled thriller. James Reece (Meyers) is desperate for action and jumps at the chance to take on a real mission. Partnered with trigger-happy Charlie Wax (Travolta), his action fantasy becomes a nightmare. Lionsgate Entertainment are kindly offering five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us which actor stars alongside John Travolta. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: August 31



Here-and-now: *Medal of Honor*'s latest tour of duty takes place in 2001-Afghanistan rather than the Second World War

Modern-day marvel

New *Medal of Honor* fast forwards from Second World War for Afghan adventure

Preview: Stephen Tyler

ALTHOUGH it is the basis for most forms of entertainment, the trend for art to imitate life has never been quite as readily apparent in video games.

While films have historically recreated real-world situations and music has its feet firmly grounded in reality, console titles have relied on the implausible adventures of the likes of *Mario* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*.

The same is true for war games. Early outings saw players single-handedly taking on entire enemy battalions in Vietnam, the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Fun? Undoubtedly. Realistic? Perhaps not.

But with technology now able to provide eye-popping graphics and amazing sound, developers are starting to bring a more life-like approach to combat titles.

The change in focus began 11 years ago when Electronic Arts released the first *Medal of Honor* title. Set in the Second World War, the series has gone on to place players on the front lines of the conflict's European, Asian and African theatres.

It was a winning formula, but EA has taken note of *Call of Duty*'s successful shift into modern operations and decided that the latest *Medal of Honor*, due out in October, will unfold in the here-and-now.

"*Medal of Honor* is an authentic look into today's war," explained Greg Goodrich, the game's executive producer. "Inspired by real people and real events, the game puts players in the boots of today's warrior."

The highly-anticipated shooter will shun the beaches of Normandy for the surroundings of Afghanistan in 2001.

As with previous titles – and as successfully done by *Call of Duty* – gamers will take charge of a series of characters tasked with undertaking missions in the war-torn country.

As well as placing players in the boots of regular United States Army infantry soldiers, *Medal of Honor*'s latest incarnation delves into the secretive world of the Tier One Operator – a shadowy elite warrior who conducts his business well under the radar.

"When we first set out to reinvent *Medal of Honor*, we wanted to stay true to its roots of authenticity and respect for the soldier but bring it into today's war," added Goodrich.

"The Tier One Operator is the most disciplined, deliberate and prepared warrior on the battlefield.

"He is a living, breathing precision instrument of war. We are honoured to have the rare opportunity to work closely with these men to create a game that shares their experience."

Teaser trailers from EA suggest that the game will certainly look the part. Afghanistan's mud-walled compounds, mountain ranges and urban areas have been faithfully reproduced to provide a varied theatre of combat.

The obligatory multiplayer option looks highly promising and it will be a true test of *Medal of Honor*'s credentials whether it can provide the same addictive experience – and finely-tuned learning curve – found in the most recent *Call of Duty* titles.

Vehicles including gunships, helicopters and quad bikes add an extra layer of gameplay to the mix as EA looks to steal a march on its rivals in the ultra-realistic battle game stakes.

"EA has always been an advocate for telling the soldiers' story. The new *Medal of Honor* follows that tradition," said Sean Decker, general manager of Electronic Arts Los Angeles.

"It promises to be an unforgettable entry in the modern shooter genre." ■

From fiery basketball stars to fast-paced American football, we check out the latest offerings...

Split Second Velocity for Xbox 360

HIGH-octane racing combines with ludicrously over-the-top crashes in this enjoyable release. Built around a flimsy plot which places gamers in the shoes of a contestant on a reality TV show, the story is of secondary importance once the green lights are lit and the races start. Players receive Powerplay points for driving close to other cars and drifting well round corners and can cash them in at certain positions to create obstacles for opponents or open up shortcuts by blowing up entire sections of track or felling buildings into other motorists' paths. It could have been a confusing mess, but it actually works brilliantly well.



Stephen Tyler, *Soldier*

Madden NFL 11 for all formats

SUPERBOWL aside, the impenetrable world of American football remains a mystery that most in Britain make no attempt to solve. The exception has been with the annual *Madden NFL* computer game and the never-ending conveyor belt of titles continues into 2010. Thankfully for those of us who do not know a quarterback from a wide receiver, EA Sports has simplified the action by allowing the computer to automatically pick the best tactical plays – delivered by a shout from the coach on the touchline – depending on your team and their situation. A stripped-down three-on-three online mode will add further playability.



Out on August 10

Two Worlds II for Xbox 360

OPEN-ended role playing games – once the preserve of spotty teenagers with too much time on their hands – have made a break into the mainstream thanks to the likes of *World of Warcraft* and *The Elder Scrolls IV: Morrowind*. *Two Worlds* followed the trend in 2007 and its sequel will again plunge players into the magical world of Antaloor. Despite suffering from several bugs, the first title gained plaudits for its large world and this should follow suit. Graphical touches including dynamic lighting and HD motion capture will ensure it looks the part, but its success depends on whether it has the story to match.



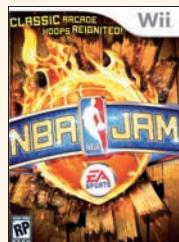
Out in September



First place: The United States Army's elite-but-shadowy Tier One Operators feature heavily in *Medal of Honor*, which is out on all formats this October

NBA Jam for Nintendo Wii

GAMERS of a certain age will remember the colourful take on basketball provided by mid-1990's classic *NBA Jam*. The two-on-two version of the popular sport allowed players to perform flying slam dunks, leap 20 feet in the air and even set the ball on fire during a particularly-hot scoring spell. The arcade-style action made it the perfect party game and now EA Sports is reigniting the series on Nintendo's Wii console. The backboard-smashing antics from the original will make a welcome reappearance, but EA has promised to deliver true-to-life body types, updated physics and player emotions. One to look forward to.



Out later this year

Dead Rising 2 for Xbox 360

ALTHOUGH it was undeniably fun, the original *Dead Rising* shunned zombie convention by having its heroes actively running into swarms of flesh-eating ghouls rather than creeping around trying to avoid them. The result was a fun, if bloody, action game which balanced its horrific subject matter with a cheeky sense of humour. The sequel promises all that and a whole lot more, with as many as 6,000 zombies intent on eating main character Chuck Greene on screen at any time. A new weapon-creation system, allowing users to combine items to create outlandish tools capable of fending off the undead, is also included.



Out later this year

Wireless controller for Xbox 360

THE *Guitar Hero* series of games returns for its sixth outing later this year – and this time players will have a colourful new axe to grind. Activision has high hopes for the upcoming *Warriors of Rock* release, which features a brand-new quest mode, and the company's in-house research and development team have used the title's distinctive art to inspire a customisable guitar controller. The wireless instrument's essential parts have been combined with the neck to allow gamers to replace the wings with colourful alternatives.



Out in September



A new direction: The Chemical Brothers go "synthesiser heavy" in new album *Further*, which is available now

Chemical reaction

Dance duo leave star collaborators behind to create new electronic masterpiece

Review: Richard Long

FROM the very start of their distinguished dance career, The Chemical Brothers have been famed for the impressive cast of guest vocalists who have contributed to their sound.

More than two dozen artists have helped create five UK number one albums in a run that has spawned multiple Grammy awards and a headline slot at the world-famous Glastonbury festival.

But for the release of *Further* the DJ duo resisted the urge to call on the likes of Noel Gallagher, Beth Orton and Richard Ashcroft in favour of electronic melodies and snatches of vocal samples.

"From early on there was a guiding idea to not have any collaborators on the record," explained Tom Rowlands, one half of the famed twosome.

"That pushed the sound of the record in a certain way."

Band-mate Ed Simons added: "After working with a lot of people over the last two albums I remember Tom saying 'let's not think in those terms for this record'.

"That felt really liberating. There are vocals

on there. The lyrics that Tom wrote, the way the vocals are woven into the tracks... for us, that was enough to satisfy any needs we might have to hear songs on the record."

The result is more akin to a Chemical Brothers live show, with the eight tracks weaving together to form an almost continual mix that ebbs and flows to varying crescendos.

"We put the record together in the same way we would a live set," Rowlands said.

"We were very aware when we were programming the record of how it would lock together. We wanted an enveloping sound like one of our live shows."

And Simons was quick to stress how an element of the unexpected played a key part in the recording process.

"The thing we realised when we're playing live is that sometimes it's the random things that cause the biggest reactions," he added.

"A delay or a drop, something that no one is expecting. The randomness factor definitely adds to things."

There is also a change in direction courtesy of a new focus that saw them breaking free of any musical shackles.

"This is definitely a very synthesiser-heavy

record," Rowlands explained. "Sometimes in the past we'd rein the synths in on tracks. On this record, we decided to just let it all splurge out."

"We wanted to make something where it didn't matter if it wasn't making total sense."

"I like records where things just come in unannounced. Those are good things."

And the method clearly works as *Further*, in time, could be considered among the highlights of The Chemical Brothers' career.

Opening track *Snow* – the only song to feature a guest vocalist in the form of Stephanie Dosen – offers a gentle start to proceedings with a slow-burning psychedelic feel before the pulsating *Escape Velocity* fully kicks in.

Another World is the only song that fails to deliver but the fast-paced *Horse Power* more than makes up for the shortcoming with an electrifying throwback to the superb *Dig Your Own Hole* release of 1997.

Swoon, *K+D+B* and *Wonders of the Deep* all contribute impressively to the mix and are songs that build towards an inevitable climax.

All in all the change of approach is a tremendous success and goes to prove that The Chemical Brothers can get by without a little help from their friends. ■

From lovesick androids to a triumphant return from the queen of pop, we try the best and the rest...

Renegades by Feeder

FEEDER make an impressive return with their seventh studio album *Renegades*, which delivers a throwback to the heavier sound of their origins. The 11 brand-new tracks featured here add to an impressive back catalogue of 25 hit singles from the three-piece, who show no sign of slowing down as their career progresses. *Call Out*, released as a single last month, is a proper romp-along anthem from the very first riff by the ever-energetic frontman Grant Nicholas. Ably backed up by Taka Hirose (bass) and Karl Brazil (drums), Feeder are here to stay for a little bit longer and this album will not disappoint their loyal army of fans in anyway at all.



WO2 Mo Morris, RLC

Aphrodite by Kylie Minogue

KYLIE MINOGUE'S latest offering is set to maintain her place at the top of the over-decorated, under-nourished, but still, somehow, elegantly turned out pop tree. The gangs of writers and producers who have worked on this release have ensured that, whoever was singing, the album would have a distinctly mirrored sheen and polished finish. Candy floss lyrics and the over-engineered sound aside, this is dance for grown-ups; casual and diehard fans will love it, teenage girls will buy it and Kylie will go on. I wouldn't have necessarily bought it myself but it's nice to know that she's still going strong in a career that started way back in 1987 with *The Loco-Motion*.



Capt Dan Knowles, 35 Engr Regt

Beneath this Burning Shoreline

THIS is the second album from British quintet *Cherry Ghost*. Following the release of their critically-acclaimed top ten debut, *Thirst For Romance*, this new offering sees the Ivor Novello Award winners perfecting their symphonic indie pop. *Beneath this Burning Shoreline* is full of impressive, dark lyrics and is heavily influenced by the songwriting talents of **Johnny Cash**. The album, complete with its elements of **Doves** and **Elbow**, fully deserves the heavy accolades that it is receiving from music critics. Country and indie combine superbly to produce track after track of melodic and catchy tunes that certainly get better with each listen. This comes highly recommended.



Ray Kalaker, civvy



Brotherly love: Ed Simons (left) and Tom Rowlands change direction in their seventh album, which flows like one of the band's legendary live sets

The Archandroid by Janelle Monae

THIS is a lot more than I expected from a songwriter I'd never even heard of. With a mixture of R&B, funk, hip-hop and rock all intertwined, every track is different in its own way; very creative, futuristic and unique songwriting. **Janelle Monae** adopts a highly-intelligent approach to *The Archandroid*, with the music and storytelling focusing on an android named Cindi Mayweather, who is marked for disassembly by the Star Commission for falling in love with a human. This innovative concept caught the attention of **Sean "P Diddy" Combs**, who signed her to his Bad Boy label. Despite being a little sceptical to begin with, I've really warmed to this album and it is definitely worth a listen.



LCpl Kerri Gilding, AGC

How I Got Over by The Roots

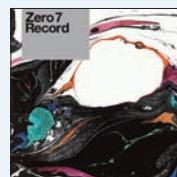
IN a market filled with artists obsessed with money, guns and women, **The Roots** have always been rap's leading lights in producing hip-hop with a more important social message. *How I Got Over*, the group's ninth studio album, follows the trend with style. The musical arrangements are simply stunning, taking in jazz, funk and soul, but it's the quality – and content – of the rapping that elevates this into classic territory. Stand out tracks include *Dear God 2.0*, *Radio Daze* and *The Fire*, each featuring star turns from guest artists including **Monsters of Folk** and **John Legend**, but every song is worthy of its place on one of the must-have albums of the year.



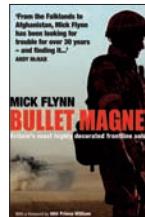
Stephen Tyler, Soldier

Record by Zero 7

ZERO 7 are the vehicle for creative duo Henry Binns and Sam Hardaker. Their work in a recording studio gave them the desire to experiment and the experience honed has certainly borne fruit. This album is a collection of the good and the great from the conception of the collective nearly a decade ago, when we were introduced to debut release *Simple Things*. Those early tracks showcased dreamy vocals destined to drift your mind and there was a strong thread of simplicity in songs that were not burdened by over production. The 16 tunes culled for this compilation still have that effervescence. As Binns and Hardaker consider their next move this is the perfect foundation.



Steve King, Soldier



Memoirs of Army's most-medalled: *Bullet Magnet*, which is out now, is published in hardback by Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Medal magnetism

From petty criminal to Gallantry Cross winner, the life story of Britain's bravest

Interview: Stephen Tyler

HAVING served in almost every one of the British Army's major operations in recent history, 50-year-old Sqn Cpl Maj Mick Flynn would have every right to want a quiet run-in to retirement.

The Household Cavalryman has seen comrades killed in Northern Ireland, fought through the hills of the Falkland Islands and completed tours of Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq during a career that has developed him into Britain's most highly-decorated serving front-line soldier.

But the thought of living off former glories has never occurred to WO2 Flynn. The man affectionately known as "Bullet Magnet" is as keen as ever to prove himself on ops.

"This will be my third tour of Afghanistan and, as a soldier, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else," explained the warrant officer who is due to return to Op Herrick later this year. "I will be there on the front line, but that's what I train to do."

Bullet Magnet tells the extraordinary tale of WO2 Flynn's journey from a childhood of petty crime on a South Wales council estate to his

life-saving actions on Ops Telic and Herrick. After falling in with the wrong crowd, WO2 Flynn admits he would probably have ended up in prison but for a spontaneous decision to accompany a friend to the local Army recruiting office.

"It was while I was playing truant one day that we went there," he said. "One of the soldiers said I should take the Army test so I did. Shortly after that I saw the Household Cavalry recruiting team and they gave me a warrant to visit Windsor and Knightsbridge and I was sold on them."

The Welshman signed up to serve with the Blues and Royals but found Army discipline "a massive culture shock". That, combined with an ambition to explore the United States, led to him going AWOL following an exercise in Canada. After working in various construction jobs, he made the decision to return to the UK and it was in the wake of a drunken night out and subsequent arrest that WO2 Flynn chose to hand himself in.

He was sentenced to 28 days' detention but the raw initiative he had shown in surviving on his own in America convinced his chain of command to give him a second chance.

"The commanding officer at the time decided that anybody who could go out there and cope was well-placed to be in his regiment," he said.

After being exposed to the deadly realities of service in Northern Ireland and the Falklands and deploying to Bosnia and Kuwait, WO2 Flynn left the Army in 1993. He ended up running a shop on civvy street but found the slower pace too mundane and the veteran's reintroduction to the military in 2001 at the age of 41 signalled the start of a glittering period of soldiering.

He won the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in 2003 for repelling a column of enemy tanks to allow wounded colleagues to be rescued from two vehicles in Iraq and was awarded a Military Cross for his part in the rescue of a comrade who suffered horrific burns following a Taliban ambush in Musa Qala in 2006. Both acts are covered in intricate detail in *Bullet Magnet*, which paints a colourful picture of a career which has still got at least one more chapter to be written.

His chest may be brimming with decorations, but WO2 Flynn insists that he would never place personal glory ahead of his duties. "I wear the title [of Britain's most-decorated soldier] because that's what the MoD says I am, but I would never go out thinking I was going to win a medal," he concluded. "I wear the medals I have with pride, but I wear them for the friends I have lost and for the ones who still stand alongside me." ■

From short fuses to Soviet spin, *Soldier's* army of uniformed critics scan this month's literary releases...

Extreme Risk by Chris Hunter

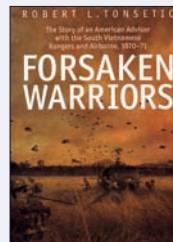
PENNED by the author of best-seller *Eight Lives Down*, this is an explosive account (excuse the pun) of a life in bomb disposal. Charting Chris Hunter's military career from a 16-year-old soldier through to tours of Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Iraq, *Extreme Risk*'s relentless pace puts the title in the "can't-put-down" class. An emotional and at times challenging read, the author recounts some frankly horrific acts of terrorism. Lighter moments come in the form of stories of late-night polishing sessions at Sandhurst. As much a study of human response as a military career, this literary offering should be included on any action-lover's bookshelf.



Tpr Alistair Campbell-Grieve, RY

Forsaken Warriors by Robert Tonsetic

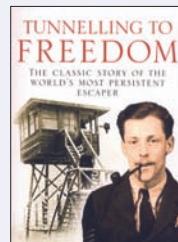
TONSETIC describes his personal experiences as an adviser, much akin to modern operational mentoring and liaison teams, to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam during the latter stages of the Vietnam War. In the mountains and forests of the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam, he worked alongside the Ranger and Airborne Divisions conducting offensive operations against the "Viet Cong". Of special interest is the way in which he recounts the dynamics of personalities and their effect on the indigenous commanders and units. A must-read for any soldiers likely to conduct partnering activities in the future.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC

Tunnelling to Freedom by John Fancy

THE author made 16 separate escape attempts over the five years he was interned as a Prisoner of War (PoW). In total he dug eight tunnels, of which three resulted in escapes – the most famous of which was immortalised by the movie *The Great Escape*. All were constructed with the aid of a table knife, kindly issued to him by his German captors. *Tunnelling to Freedom* provides an interesting insight into the mind of a PoW and reflects a sense of community, built on shared circumstances, which you'd be hard-pressed to encounter today. Well-written, **Fancy** colourfully details each of his attempted bids for freedom.



Lt Will Godwin, Rifles



Afghanistan 2006

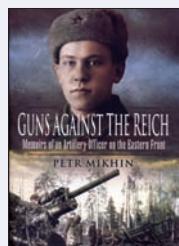


Northern Ireland

Tour guide: Having served in Iraq (main picture), Afghanistan and Northern Ireland (inset), WO2 Flynn has a wealth of operational experience

Guns Against the Reich by Petr Mikhin

MIKHIN was a school teacher at the beginning of the Second World War. Conscripted in 1941 and rushed through training, he became an artillery officer in the Red Army and fought on the Eastern Front at the battles of Stalingrad, Kharkov and Kursk. As an artillery observer he experienced the scale and intensity of war and the destructive power of weapons on the battlefield. Conflict is brought to life as Mikhin recounts his involvement with candour and spontaneity and details his personal conflicts with senior Russian officers. Absorbing and easy to read, *Guns Against the Reich* is written with humour.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Go! Go! Go! by R Firmin & N McCrery

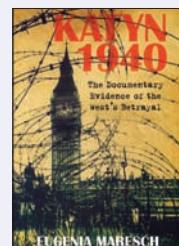
THE Iranian Embassy siege of 1980 put the modern SAS and its anti-terrorist capability on the map, with the storming of the building carried out under the full glare of the international media spotlight. In spite of this exposure and an insatiable public appetite for information, little is known about the real detail of the mission. Written by **Rusty Firmin** and **Nigel McCrery**, two members of the 55-man team responsible for rescuing the hostages, this book provides a unique insight into Operation Nimrod. Supported with photographs, floor plans and witness statements, this is a definitive account.



Maj Mike Peters, AAC

Katyn 1940 by Eugenia Maresch

THIS comprehensive account of the murder of thousands of Polish officers at Katyn in 1940 unpicks the crime in forensic detail. **Maresch** takes the line that more could have been done to condemn the Soviet perpetrators earlier. What clouded the issue was the contemporary evidence presented by the Germans and Soviets, both masters in propaganda. How then Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Foreign Office tried to interpret the data and draw conclusions, while supporting the Polish Government and not upsetting a key wartime Soviet ally, makes the most interesting of reading.



Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Badge of honour: The Ducati name's prestige in motorbiking circles is taken on an off-road adventure by the exciting Multistrada 1200

Off-road revolution

Sportsbike superstars Ducati blaze trail in adventure market with the Multistrada

Review: John Hogan

If you are fortunate enough to be into bikes, you will immediately understand the relevance of this particular two-wheeled wonder. If not, then read on and find out why this weird-looking contraption is, as we speak, tearing the pages of the motorcycling rulebook into pieces and sprinkling them from the rooftop of its Bologna birthplace.

Until now, bikes came in distinct flavours – fast ones, off-road types, boring ride-to-work bikes and long, shiny ones that go slow.

Each kind has its own typical owner and its own individual character traits. The UK biking majority used to demand sportsbikes – exciting, razor-edged gatekeepers of thrills.

Recently, however, biking has morphed into a lifestyle choice for adults that wake up one day and decide they are bikers, rather than wasting a lifetime learning to ride like the rest of us.

The problem is that a bike that does 94mph in first gear in four-and-a-half-seconds isn't so much a lifestyle choice as it is a death wish.

So the modern biker looks elsewhere,

eventually stumbling across the adventure bike.

With go-anywhere attitude, comfort and the riding manners of a stallion, adventure bikes tick the majority of boxes for the majority of buyers.

They are also big business – big enough for all of the major manufacturers to jump on the bandwagon, including Ducati which has released the Multistrada 1200 you see before you.

Ducati has not strayed too far from its roots with the Multi. Under the watchful eye of director Claudio Dominicali, the company has delivered a beautiful, purposeful, jaw-droppingly capable machine jam-packed full of the most relevant and useable technology ever seen on a road bike.

Thumb the starter (keyless ignition) and the bike allows you to choose from one of four riding modes – sport, touring, urban or enduro. The sport setting has 150bhp, low-level traction control, firm suspension and snappy fuel mapping. At the touch of a button you can switch between modes until you find yourself in enduro where you are restricted to just 100bhp, super-soft suspension and a traction control setting that makes going off-road a doddle.

The riding dynamic is typically Ducati. The bike flatters your inputs by connecting all of your chunky efforts together and churning out fluid,

cohesive and very impressive road manners.

The traction control has very little to do with your everyday ride, but knowing it's there is very reassuring. I found the suspension a little too soft in sport mode, so made some adjustments (using a button rather than a spanner), telling it there was a rider, a pillion and luggage on board. This prevented the bike from pitching too far forward on the brakes and wagging the handlebars when accelerating hard out of slow corners.

When it is set up properly, the Multistrada 1200 is ridiculously quick. There wasn't a single environment in Portugal (where I tested the bike) where I felt it needed a bit more power or a bit less bulk. Rather than developing a new engine for the Multistrada, they instead decided to use the 1198 Superbike engine. Perfect. Some retuning work has sapped 20 or so bhp, but it has also increased the service interval to 15,000 miles.

Ducati has designed this bike for the market that is the most buoyant in today's suppressed sales arena. The Multistrada is comfortable enough to ride all day and has the kerb appeal that only a Ducati can offer. If you're not a biker yet, at least now you know what you're missing out on.

● Multistrada £10,995. www.ducatiuk.com ■

From German luxury to a Japanese all-rounder, we check out the best supermotos on the market...

BMW R1200 GS

CELEBRATING its 30th year of production in 2010, the GS is an absolute marvel of a bike. Designed at a time when BMW (as a bike manufacturer) was on its knees, this is the bike that changed the fortunes for the German brand. Yes, it feels slightly wobbly if you try too hard and no, it will probably never win a beauty contest, but the versatility and capability of the GS is where the appeal lies. Especially now that the DOHC top end from the HP2 Sport has found its way onto the GS. Buy with confidence as major faults are rare and minor ones, well, they're only minor. Try to buy a used example with as many gadgets (ESA, ABS, grips etc) as possible.



From £8,999

Honda Transalp

THE Transalp seems to have been around since time began. More a behind-the-scenes kind of bike than one looking for the limelight, the Transalp is the perfect beginners' bike if you're looking for a do-it-all kind of ride. Ignore the newer versions for now – leave them be until they've lost enough value to suit your wallet. They certainly won't have lost any of the ability to do pretty much anything you ask of them in terms of day-to-day riding – so long as that doesn't involve racing the Dakar or beating up club racers on a track day. Like the Transalp's bigger brother the Africa Twin, the Honda quality shines through regardless of how hard you've tried to break it.



From £850

KTM 990 SMT

KTM has a strong reputation for building amazingly uncompromising, yet extremely capable, motorcycles. So this, the soft-seated, large-tanked SMT with its tiny screen and 130-mile tank range is about as soft as you'll likely find from the orange-loving Austrians. If you're riding one positively (as fast as you can), you won't notice the lurching nature of the bike on a partial throttle, nor will you pick up on the slightly-too-large aggressive brakes. But the SMT is a proper tool in the right hands. It's certainly no 950SMR (the greatest large-capacity supermoto ever built), but if being quicker than sportsbikes and pulling perfect wheelies is your bag, it has to be an SMT.



From £7,000



Kerb appeal: As well as looking the part on public highways, Ducati's Multistrada 1200 has the flexibility to tackle the toughest off-road conditions

Suzuki DRZ400e

OLD as the hills power plant meets old as the hills chassis. Should be a recipe for the perfect night's sleep, but sling a pair of supermoto wheels in and uncork the diddy engine with a fruity pipe and you'll be the talk of the riding town on a DRZ. A severe lack of power means you'll need to make the most of what you have, but that doesn't rule out fun either on- or off-road as the Suzuki is a peach to ride. The DRZ is surely one of the best ways to keep your riding sharp in any weather. When the winter comes you could wrap up the sportsbike and dust off one of these safe in the knowledge that you can fix most of the low-speed damage inflicted with a well-aimed kick.



From £1,000

Triumph Tiger

A QUIRKY triple-cylinder, soft-roader wannabe, the Tiger has about as much in common with off-roading as a pair of ice skates. But the 1,050cc motor is packed full of character, the brakes are perfect and it's comfortable enough to rack up full day after full day in the saddle. Low points are the gearbox, a real weakness for Triumph across most of its model range. In gear they're fine and the ratios are well placed but the shift is terrible. The Tiger is also a little too saggily for completely committed riding (unlike the SMT for instance). You do have to be trying fairly hard to get things wrong on one though, and if you're not that kind of rider then take a look at the Tiger.



From £5,500

CCM 604e

BEFORE bikes had electronic this and that, real men rode CCMs. The Rotax-engined 604e is the perfect example of a bike that can do things off road equally as good as it can on road. Fantastic quality component parts are laced into a frame that is just as happy getting bogged in on an Enduro as it is getting stuck into your commute to work. If you've ever climbed from an Army Harley Davidson itching for more power and proper suspension (and let's be honest, if you haven't you should probably hang up your helmet) you should try a 604e. Newer CCMs have gained the fuel-injected Suzuki DRZ engine but lost the thump that the older version provides.



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HELP for HEROES

SOLDIER SPORT

HOTSHOTS: ARMY MEN DOMINATE INTER-SERVICES TRACK AND FIELD

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WOMEN TAKE TO
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High seas adventure

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

ARMY sailors have returned to dry land following a year at sea in one of the most challenging adventurous training expeditions within the Service.

Exercise Transglobe saw personnel travel 34,000 miles across some of the most inhospitable waters on the planet as they went head-to-head with their Forces rivals in a race to circumnavigate the world.

With the expedition divided into 13 legs, soldiers from various corps and regiments manned the Army's *Challenger 67* craft on each stage, many of them experiencing ocean sailing for the very first time.

The last leg of the epic journey saw the boats return to Gosport and *SoldierSport* spoke to the personnel who have been onboard for the highs and lows of the past year.

"It was a fantastic leg," said skipper Andy Fernie, who guided *Challenger* home from Boston.

"I had a great crew. We had a real mix of experience, from two virtual novices to two yacht masters.

"It has been said that offshore sailing is the closest thing to combat. There is cold weather, you feel sick and you do not know when you are going to get a decent meal.

"You have to muck in to get things done, just like on operations. This is as good as it gets.

"I think sailing is the best form of adventurous training for soldiers and the guys all showed the attributes needed to succeed."

OFFSHORE SAILING IS THE CLOSEST THING TO COMBAT

— SKIPPER ANDY FERNIE

Former military man Fernie, who served with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and is now part of the Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre staff in Gosport, also explained how the final leg was far from plain sailing.

With the boat just four days from UK shores it struck a pilot whale and had to cruise home at a slower speed due to the damage caused.

But their problems were insignificant compared to the perils faced by the leg eight crew.

The course from Auckland to Punta Del Este in Uruguay saw *Challenger* knocked down four times in the Southern Ocean west of Cape Horn.

A full search for the stricken craft was launched after an emergency beacon onboard was triggered, but with communications down the soldiers were unable to tell the rescue party they were alive and well.

"The storm had winds of more than 16 knots with 40-foot waves," said Fus Stephen O'Grady (2 RRF).

"Cape Horn is notorious for its weather and we expected to get tossed around a bit. At first we went through a number of gales, we thought that was bad but it seemed as though we were not going to get a big storm.

"When it hit we just focused on what immediately needed to be done and

there was a feeling that we had enjoyed an authentic Cape Horn experience."

Like his colleague, LCpl Ryan Lambert (2 RRF) heard about the exercise while on operations in Afghanistan and was keen to sign up for what proved to be the most difficult leg of the voyage.

"I had done a Channel crossing before but anyone can do that," he said.

"As novices we were perhaps a bit unprepared and we did not fully understand what we would be in for.

"Being away and getting smashed by waves it could have been life or death, just like on the front lines. When the comms went down it was quite scary, you don't know if they [the rescue party] are coming for you.

"But when the Chilean Air Force came it was like a Chinook coming for us in Afghanistan."

After sustaining heavy damage the boat was diverted to the Falkland Islands for repairs before rejoining the Transglobe course.

Another notable stage was leg 11, from Antigua to Charleston, which was dedicated to the Defence Medical Services and saw personnel who were injured on operations put to work on each of the yachts.

Although Transglobe is primarily a training exercise there was no lack of competitive spirit between crews from the three Services.

The Navy were crowned overall winners with the Army second and Royal Air Force in third place.

The Army also won the finest example of seamanship accolade following their multiple knock downs on the seas west of Cape Horn. ■



Service crews return to Gosport after spending a year at sea in the challenging Ex Transglobe



An Army sailor helps to secure the *Challenger* yacht at the end of its 34,000-mile ocean voyage



Friends, family and the media greet serving personnel as they arrive home with stories to tell

BOWING OUT

THE Inter-Services athletics championships saw a stalwart of Army track and field representing his team for the last time.

SSgt Mark Wiseman (AGC, pictured below) has won a host of titles during his career and signed off from Forces' sport in fine style.

The Army strongman powered to victory in the discus with a throw of 50.23 metres, a performance that dominated the field and left his rivals trailing in the distance.

Wiseman claimed second place in the shot putt thanks to an effort of 15.44 metres and finished second in the hammer behind teammate Cpl John Osazuwa (3 LSR).

As well as being a key asset to the Service squad for almost two decades, the 41-year-old has shone at international level by winning a gold medal in the discus at the world masters championships.



MULTI-EVENTER

SGT Lee Okoroafo (RLC) had a busy day on both track and field. The all-rounder finished third in the pole vault and discus, was fourth in the 110 metres hurdles and was runner-up in the javelin with a throw of 48.37 metres.



Male athletes in a field of their own

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

POWERFUL displays from the Army's track and field stars saw the men's team cruise to a dominant victory in this year's Inter-Services athletics championships.

The squad smashed their Forces rivals on their way to an imposing total of 159 points, an effort that saw them finish 33 points ahead of the Royal Air Force and 84 clear of the Royal Navy in third.

While the men celebrated a fine win, a depleted women's team saw its stranglehold on the competition broken in what proved to be a challenging day at RAF Cosford.

The home side, inspired by the outstanding Cpl Laura McGawn, made up for the disappointment of

losing by a single point last year to claim their first victory since 1996.

Cpl John Osazuwa (3 LSR) ensured the day started in fine style for the men as his throw of 59.02 metres easily secured the hammer title, with SSgt Mark Wiseman (AGC) completing an Army one-two.

Sgt Musa Audu (3 LSR) and Pte David Olusile (3 LSR) recorded another double for the Reds in the 400 metres while Capt Richard Smith (RADC) posted a time of 55.91 seconds as he secured gold in the 400 metres hurdles.

The sand pit proved to be another happy hunting ground as LCpl Victor Mahachi (REME) captured the long jump and triple jump titles, while the Army dominated the javelin courtesy of

'WE HAD SOME ABSENTEES DUE TO OPERATIONS BUT IT WAS THE SAME FOR THE OTHER SERVICE TEAMS'

Pte Osman Muskwe (3 LSR) and Sgt Lee Okoroafo (RLC).

"It was a very pleasing result this year and we had so much depth to call on," men's field manager Maj Martin Annis (APTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"Our expectations were to win and we were very confident."

"We keep in close contact with the other team managers and we knew what we were up against."

"There is now great depth across all the events, which is great."

"We had some absentees due to operations but it was the same for the other Service teams."

"We got 90 per cent of the squad together, which included a few new faces on the track. We rely on the old and the bold who come back year-on-year but we will be trying to push some youngsters through at our warm weather training camps."

Annis also found time to praise the efforts of veteran Wiseman, who won the discus and finished second in the shot putt and hammer in what was his last appearance at the Inter-Services.

"He was a bit disappointed not to take the shot putt title but he retained his discus crown and did very well in the hammer," the officer said.

"He has been a great servant to Army athletics for 17 years and he will be sorely missed."

With one star stepping away from the spotlight, Annis was pleased to see some younger athletes starting to fulfil their immense potential.

"Pte Muskwe did very well with personal bests in the javelin and triple jump," he said.

"He has improved gradually

RETURNING HERO

LCPL Victor Mahachi (REME) celebrated a spectacular return to action after an absence of four years. The field athlete won the triple jump and long jump titles as the Army men triumphed over their Forces rivals



PERSONAL BEST

JAVELIN ace Pte Osman Muskwe (3 LSR) recorded a personal best throw of 54.18 metres to comfortably win his event at RAF Cosford. The soldier also excelled in the triple jump, finishing second to Mahachi





Driving forward: Sgt Lee Okoroafo (RLC) adds to his personal points tally in the 110 metres hurdles

throughout the year and he is still very young, but he has so much natural talent and ability.

"LCpl Mahachi was outstanding in winning the triple and long jump titles. He has been out of action for four years but came back to win in fine style, which was really encouraging."

As the men made light work of their Forces opposition, the women struggled to match the dynamic displays of the RAF team.

Ladies' captain McGawn took the 100 metres, 200 metres, 100 metres hurdles, long jump and triple jump titles and scored useful points in the shot putt, high jump and javelin during a superb personal performance.

Her efforts helped the RAF post a commanding total of 140 points.

The Army rarely threatened the hosts and finished on 118, with the Navy trailing once again on 63.

However, the Reds offered some brave resistance on the track.

Pte Cathy Chunda (3 LSR, pictured right) won the 1,500 metres and 5,000 metres and secured a bronze medal in the 800 metres.

Distance runner Cpl Danielle Hodkinson (AFC Harrogate) had double success by winning the 800 metres and finishing second to Chunda in the 1,500 metres.

In the field events there were also some notable performances.

Lt Lucy Rann (AGC) powered to victory in the shot putt with a throw of 11.60 metres.

She also finished second in the javelin and third in the discus to cap a fine day's work.

The versatile Pte Nichola Flaherty (RLC) was another athlete to prove her worth in the field.

She won a close high jump competition thanks to a fine leap of 1.63 metres and went on to take second place in the triple jump and third in the long jump. ■



TRACK STAR

DISTANCE runner Cpl Danielle Hodkinson (AFC Harrogate) piled on the points for the women's team. The endurance athlete took gold in the 800 metres after clocking a time of 2min 19sec and celebrated silver in the 1,500 metres



TAKE OFF

PTE Nichola Flaherty (RLC) clears the bar on her way to a winning leap of 1.63 metres in the high jump. The Army star shone in the field events, finishing second in the triple jump and third in the long jump. ■



Adams eyes mane event

Interview: Richard Long

WITH the 2012 Olympics looming brightly on the horizon, athletes across the country are now stepping up their performances in the hope of securing a place at London's showpiece sporting event.

Three-day eventing star Capt Paul Adams (AGC (ETS)) is moving ever closer to the qualification standard following a fantastic year on his horse Algorithm, form which has seen him steadily climb the world rankings.

With victories in International Horse Trials events in Hungary and Slovakia already behind him this summer, the officer is eagerly awaiting the turn of the year when the entry requirements for the Games are announced.

But Adams remains realistic about his chances and believes the vast array of talent within the country could ultimately count against him.

"Qualifying for the Olympics is one thing but getting selected for Great Britain is something totally different," he told *SoldierSport*.

"The issue of selection is always somewhat

"HE IS A SUPER HORSE WHO MAKES MY JOB AS RIDER SO MUCH EASIER"

– CAPT PAUL ADAMS, AGC (ETS)

political. We are so strong as a nation and the riders likely to be selected are those who have already competed in events such as the world championships.

"Realistically it is unlikely and if it looks like we will not make it my focus will turn to the World Cup circuit."

As well as winning in Hungary and Slovakia, Adams secured an impressive second place at the trials in Austria and enjoyed top 20 finishes at two international events in Germany.

Such consistency means he is on the brink of stepping up from two-star to three-star contests, a level that is set at the Olympic qualification standard and should see him secure a place on the

World Cup series.

"This is a career highlight for me,"

Adams said.

"I have ridden at three-star level but it was a long time ago.

I have never had a horse with this much ability before.

"It is a slight step into the unknown but it is a challenge

I am very much looking forward to."

Last year Adams was ranked 185th in the world, a position that was due to rise to 120 as this issue went to press. His next target is to break into the top 100.

And with such positive progress being made the officer has been quick

to praise the efforts of Algorithm, who continues to go from strength-to-strength on the circuit.

"I started working with him when he was a six-year-old who had done nothing at all," he explained.

"He just gets better and better. He is a super horse who makes my job as rider so much easier."

"But he is definitely still on the way up. He is nine years old now and eventing horses peak between the ages of 11 and 15, so he is a good age."

"In this sport you always have to think in the long term. If he stays injury free there is no reason why he cannot compete at Olympic and world level until he is 15 years old."

"He has gone a long way in such a short space of time."

Another key element in his success has been the facilities offered at the Army Equestrian Centre in Paderborn.

Adams said: "The military's support has been absolutely fantastic, I cannot credit them enough."

"My chain of command are very supportive and they try to make my work as flexible as possible so it fits around competitions and training."

"Paderborn is a super facility, it really caters for riders of all levels and abilities and I think it is the best equestrian centre the Army has." ■

ADAMS' YEAR IN THE SADDLE

1st Nagykanizsa CCI International Horse Trials, Hungary, June 2010**

1st Motocice CCI International Horse Trials, Slovakia, June 2010**

2nd Laintal CCI International Horse Trials, Austria, May 2010**

12th Salgen CCI International Horse Trials, Germany, May 2010**

17th Velen CIC International Horse Trials, Germany, April 2010**

20th Langenhagen CCI International Horse Trials, Germany, September 2009**

2nd Sopot CIC International Horse Trials, Poland, July 2009**

LEAP FORWARD

A SERIES of stunning performances over the past year has seen Capt Paul Adams (AGC (ETS)) move to the brink of the world top 100

STAR MAN

THE three-day eventer is hoping his horse Algorithm (pictured) will step up to three-star competitions at Olympic standard

SERVICE SUPPORT

ADAMS has praised the excellent facilities offered at the Army Equestrian Centre in Paderborn which have helped him to progress in the sport





Picture: Sgt Adrian Harlen, RLC

SPORT SHORTS

ARMY Rugby League players helped raise nearly £9,000 for a selection of charities by competing in a challenge match against the Great Britain All Stars.

The fixture was played at Deepcut as part of the Armed Forces Day celebrations and saw the former professionals record a 24-8 victory.

Proceeds from the event were divided between CLIC Sargent, Life For a Kid, the Renal Transplant Charity and Veterans Aid.

The event was organised by WO1 Mark Bragg (RLC), whose daughter Lauren has suffered with Leukaemia.

GREENIDGE Farm Coarse Fisheries is hosting a charity angling match to support the work of Help for Heroes.

The venue in Romsey, Hampshire, is staging the event on Monday, September 20 and Service personnel are being encouraged to sign up and join the action.

For more information call Lee Noble on 01962 888252.

ENTRIES are now being sought for the 2010 Army Match Fishing Festival, which runs from September 5 to 11.

The event will be hosted by the Cudmore and Heronbrook Fisheries in Staffordshire and information about the various competitions being held during the week is available from Maj (Retd) Colin England on 01743 262474 or email colin.England879@mod.uk

JUDO player Tpr Emanuel Nartey (1 RTR) has moved a step closer to competing in his first Olympic Games after he won a bronze medal at the World Cup in Venezuela.

The 27-year-old Ghanaian was successful in the 73kg category and the medal win follows his victory in the Apia World Cup, which was held in Samoa late last year.

In Venezuela, Nartey defeated home player Wlunkis Herrera with a bout-winning ippon score before going down to Andrew Porras of the USA.

The result saw him competing in the repechage, where he beat Argentine Alejandro Clara and Lucas Pascal, of Uruguay, to take the bronze.

In 2005 Nartey became the first judo player from Ghana to compete at the World Championships and his goal now is to win a place at the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

PERSONNEL from the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) have been settling into their new home after cycling 750 kilometres from Germany to Gloucester.

The challenge coincided with the corps moving headquarters from Rheindahlen to the UK and saw cyclists from Denmark, Holland and Norway joining their counterparts from the British Army.

ARRC commander Lt Gen Sir Richard Shirreff said: "It was a long and tiring journey, but well worth the effort."

ARMY polo players suffered a comprehensive defeat at the hands of the Royal Navy in this year's Rundle Cup match. The Senior Service were inspired by the sensational form of Sub Lt Hiro Suzuki, who helped his side build on a half-point handicap advantage and seal an impressive 4½ – 2 victory at Tidworth. Capt Matthew Eyre-Brook (9/12 L) and Maj Guy Simpson (9/12 L) were on target for the Army but the team struggled against determined defensive play from the visitors.

Race ace joins green revolution

MOTORCYCLE star SSgt Pete Ward (QRH) has had the honour of competing in the first-ever zero emissions TTXGP championship race at Snetterton.

The new series challenges teams to take to the track on machines that produce no toxic or noxious fumes, with races planned across the country up until October.

Ward is riding a Mavizen TTX02 in the championship and is excited by the prospect of competing in this new form of racing.

"I am extremely looking forward to the challenges that it will bring and hope that as well as finishing

the races as high up as possible, I will be helping to bring this sport to the forefront within the Armed Forces," he said.

"It requires a massive amount of control and fast thinking that all soldiers do naturally. It is going to be a long challenge with a lot of hard work."

Ward has raced motorcycles for the past 11 years and has competed on several different bikes across a number of championship events including short circuit, supermoto and enduro.

To learn more about the series visit www.egrandprix.com

Cadet aims for Olympic success

ARMY cadet LCpl Jamie Fletcher is targeting Olympic success in 2012 after being named in the shotgun team for the London Games.

The 17-year-old, of Warsop Army Cadet Detachment, shot an unbelievable 694 clays out of 700 in an open trials day, an effort that saw him selected for the British team.

"I couldn't believe it, I was totally over the moon," Fletcher said.

"I knew I'd shot well that day but I wasn't sure if it would be enough.

"I'd love to win a medal but to be honest I'm just happy to represent my country."

Fletcher first started shooting

as a ten-year-old, when he went to the Ollerton Gun Club with his uncle.

"I started to go regularly with my family and last year I was in the county shotgun team at the Cadet Inter-Services Clay Target Competition down at Portsmouth.

"I really enjoy the sport and when I saw a poster at my gun club advertising trials for the Olympic team I asked if I could go."

Recently-promoted Fletcher, who is also part of the Nottinghamshire Army Cadet Force squad, is due to start training with the rest of the 2012 team this month in London.



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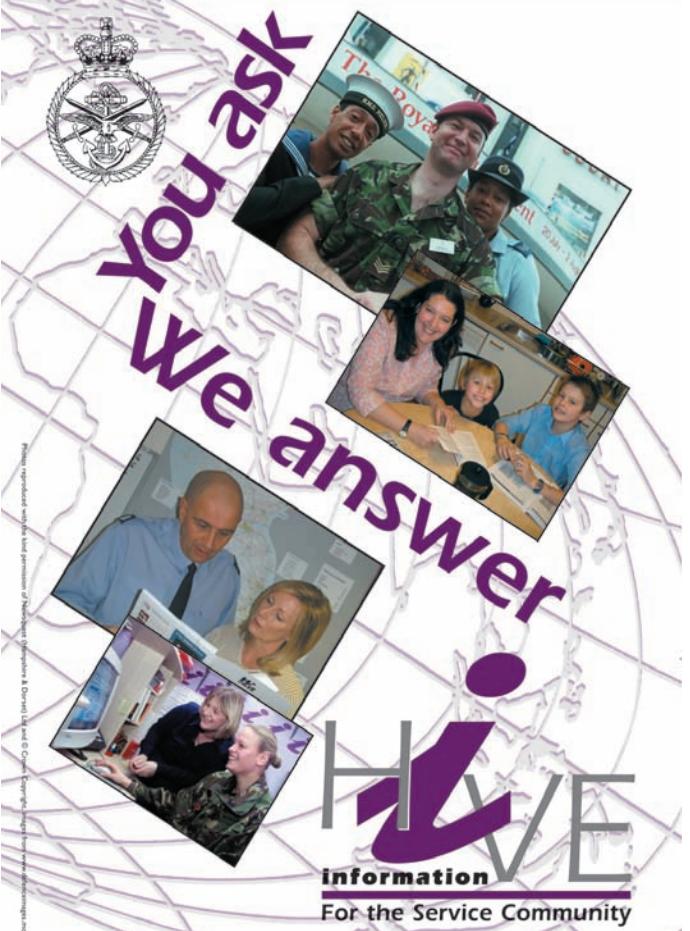
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Soldiers of fortune: The Army's 640kg A-team power their way to a comprehensive victory during the Inter-Services tug-of-war competition at RAF Cosford

Pullers take the strain

Interviews: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

THE Army tug-of-war squad will be hoping to build on its progress of recent years when they take part in the world championships in South Africa next month.

Personnel will lock horns with some of the toughest competitors on the planet in a sport that is far removed from the stereotyped view of overweight men having some light-hearted fun at a village fete.

Gruelling training regimes ensure team members are in peak condition and

Maj (Retd) Rob Holland, the Army coach and manager, believes it is one of the toughest activities a soldier can take part in.



"I always relate it to boxing training," the former Royal Artillery man told *SoldierSport*. "It is the hardest sport anyone will do in terms of physicality."

"You have to be a very good team player and as an individual you have to be a winner."

"My saying is 'train hard, win easy'. If you do hard work with the rope in training the competition becomes so much easier."

Holland said a typical training day will include a six-to-eight-mile run as well as weights work, sprints and a two-hour rope session.

Army puller SSgt Vito Giaccone (RA) said: "It is hard. It is all about stamina and finding something extra when you have got nothing left."

"You just have to be stronger than your equivalent number on the opposite team. Training is not fun; it is harder than the competition itself."

"But once you start getting results it is a huge pick up. I was volunteered to take part and it grew from there. Once you master the technique it becomes a very addictive sport."

Like most disciplines within the Army, the tug-of-war team has suffered due to the pull of operations and

Holland hopes the South African trip will form a stepping stone to future success.

"We started getting the squad together two years ago and

our aim was the world championships," he explained.

"But over the last couple of years we have lost 60 per cent of that initial squad to operational commitments in Afghanistan, so we had to get replacements in."

"This will be about experience more than anything else. If we had the same squad we started with we would be knocking at the door of the national championships."

"The first year squad was unbelievable but Afghanistan took that all away from us."

"We are now building towards the European championships next year and some great youngsters are coming through."

The tug-of-war fixtures come thick and fast over the summer months with personnel pulling in inter-corps, Army and Inter-Services competitions as well as the Royal Highland Gathering.

They also flexed their muscles at the national championships and, although they did not win, the event gave a useful insight into what is needed to improve.

"If you imagine the Army football team playing Manchester United or Chelsea, this was the same for us," Holland explained.

"The biggest difference is continuity. Some of those teams have been working together for 15 years. Our strength and fitness are second-to-none but continuity is the key."

• If you are interested in learning more about tug-of-war email aspt-resources-snco2@aspt.mod.uk ■

Kabaddi stars join elite stage

Interviews: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

FOR newcomers to any sport the opening weeks of training are usually spent mastering the basic skills and technique needed to perform at a novice standard.

But for the Servicewomen who helped form the first-ever England ladies kabaddi team there have been no such luxuries.

Just weeks after signing-up for the all-action discipline, the proud personnel faced a baptism of fire against one of the sport's heavyweight countries at the international championships in Italy.

Although the team tasted defeat in its series with Japan, the performances on court suggested kabaddi has a bright future within the Army's female ranks.

"The team has only been together for six weeks and the commitment from all the ladies has been outstanding," coach Sgt Scott Burrell (APTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"They [Japan] could not believe we had been together for such a short space of time.

"This was our first event and it was a good test for the women. They are raring to go again and they do not want to lose that momentum."

Japan, who narrowly lost to world

"THIS WAS OUR FIRST EVENT AND IT WAS A GOOD TEST FOR THE WOMEN"

– SGT SCOTT BURRELL, APTC

champions India at the last World Cup, ultimately proved too strong for the England team due to their vast experience and explosive pace around the court.

The first match resulted in a 39-24 defeat, with the second clash ending 28-15 in the opposition's favour, but Burrell was pleased with the overall performance of his side.

"The team was eager to make contact in either an attack or a tackle but the Japanese raiders proved to be so quick and unpredictable," the coach explained.

"We had the ability and the strength but the Japanese had the experience and speed."

As well as providing a first taste of serious action, the event offered important networking opportunities.

Plans are now in place to form an Army women's team and matches in Japan, Canada, India and the USA are in the pipeline as the sport continues to grow.

Team captain Cpl Lucy Steele (REME) is hoping the Service team becomes a reality and only has positive things to say about kabaddi.

"I was based at Larkhill and saw the men's team training, I was really intrigued by the sport," she said.

"I got speaking to the manager who thought it would be great if we could get a women's team together.

"I love it. I have never been involved in contact sports before and I really enjoy it.

"We have managed to recruit a few girls who have a rugby background; they love the game and its culture.

"It was a bit surreal being in Italy playing against Japan. They were awesome – the sport has been in the country for ten years and their drills were really slick.

"Our girls had only been together for six weeks but we did alright and the future looks promising.

"It was like a Sunday league football side playing a Premiership team and it really pushed us.

"But we held our own and with more training we can progress and become a good squad.

"The sport is definitely going places. It is very interesting and the cultural side is amazing."

If you are interested in joining the women's team, contact Sgt Burrell on 94222 8329. ■





Picture: Cpl Steve Blake, RLC

Aaron's leap of Faith

SERVICE star Sgt Aaron Faith (1 Para) will take to the skies over Russia this month to compete in the World Parachuting Championships.

He is part of the four-person formation skydiving team that is representing the United Kingdom at the event, which sees competitors jumping from 10,500 feet with just 35 seconds to score as many points as possible.

"This is the culmination of years and years of effort," Faith said. "We formed in 2007 with the aim of winning the nationals and going on to qualify for the World Championships."

Faith's team Satori is the only side in the world top ten to have full-time jobs outside of competitive skydiving, making them definite underdogs for the competition in Russia.

The soldier believes the top three teams will dominate proceedings but said every effort will be made to finish as high as possible.

He added: "We are in a real battle with at least four teams to come fourth.

"I've always dreamt about going to the World Championships and representing my country, so this is my chance." ■

SPORT SHORTS

INJURED personnel are being invited to take part in a new gliding programme on offer at the Joint Service Adventurous Training Centre at RAF Halton.

The facility has had two of its ASK21 gliders adapted so soldiers without lower limbs can undertake training in the same way as any other member of the Armed Forces.

Centre manager Roger Davies said: "This is a great release from the emotional highs that some members of the Forces face on returning to the slow-paced world that we live in."

Tpr Corie Mapp (HCR), who lost both of his legs in an IED blast in Musa Qala earlier this year, undertook his first flight this summer.

"By creating these opportunities it shows that the military really does care," he said. "I am going to grab it with both hands."

Funding from 22 Training Group at RAF High Wycombe helped finance the alterations to the gliders and Boeing has offered sponsorship which will cover the scheme's insurance and maintenance costs.

THE Army retained its team title at the Joint Services Paragliding Championships in Wales.

With this year's competition proving tougher than ever, the squad had to rely on its strength in depth to triumph in narrow victories over the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Fine weather allowed tasks of 75km to be set and powerful thermals saw pilots rise to more than 4,500 feet in what proved to be a series of long and challenging flights.

ENGLAND Rugby Union players will be holding their annual summer open training day at Twickenham Stadium on August 11.

Admission to the event is free for all fans, who will see the squad in action before meeting the players at an autograph session.

Entrance to the ground will be available at stadium Gate A from 1330.

SOLDIERS from the Black Watch were guests of honour at a Help For Heroes golf day in Perthshire.

A total of 180 players took part in the event at Auchterarder Golf Course, which raised £4,261 for the charity.

THE Army Football Association will be hosting a coaches' day in Aldershot on Thursday, October 21.

All Service coaches are welcome to attend and application forms are now available from www.armyfa.com

THE Association for Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus is looking for athletes to join its team at the Great South Run in Portsmouth on October 21.

Entrants will receive a place on the start line as well as a breathable vest and sponsorship forms to help raise money for the charity.

Call Ian Morley on 01733 421328 for more information.

Pilots chase world title

THE Army canopy piloting team continued its fine recent form with a strong showing at the sport's British Championships.

Maj Alastair Macartney (RLC) won the overall title thanks to dominant performances in the accuracy and speed categories.

His efforts saw him secure a place in the British team for this month's World Championships in Russia.

"I am delighted to have won," the officer said. "It is pretty exhilarating and a lot of fun to jump out of a plane and twist your parachute so you come down as fast as possible.

"It sounds crazy and dangerous but there is a lot of risk management involved. We have to prepare well."

The contest was staged at the Joint Services Parachute Centre in Bad Lippspringe, Germany, and saw LCpl Sean Sutcliffe (RE) finish second overall with Sgt Alan Westley (AAC) winning the speed and distance events.

They will join Macartney in

the British team along with WO1 Spencer Hogg (RLC) and Cpl Stuart Storey (R Signals).

The event was held in Germany as the centre boasts one of the best landing ponds in Europe.

Parachuting is ranked among the most popular adventurous training sports for personnel and is viewed by many as an important character-building exercise.

"It can be a dangerous sport which is why every competitor has to do at least 1,000 jumps before being allowed to take part in the competition," explained Maj Sebastian Muntz, officer commanding the Joint Services Parachute Centre.

"You have to be confident in yourself as a parachutist and be able to put on a good show.

"But it's not all about competing. We would urge anyone who wants to really challenge themselves and likes adventurous training to do a parachuting course."

For more information on the centre call 94879 2918. ■

final word



We asked competitors at the annual Army Operational Shooting Competition what they thought about the revamped contest

INTERVIEWS: STEPHEN TYLER
PICTURES: GRAEME MAIN



LCpl Tarik Fouda (Rifles)

We have just done The Parachute Regiment Cup which has elements like having to drag a dummy for 300 metres and an ammo tin lift. I personally think they need to add more section attacks and move away from static shooting. The Para Cup also used to have a two-mile run at the start which was a good test but that has been scrapped.



Rfn Alex Ward (Rifles)

I have enjoyed it. It is useful for us to do the shooting under pressure and have to run because that's how it is on operations, but I think there should be even more operational stuff. It would be good if there was some shooting from a platform because that's what it's like from a sangar. I would also like to see more moving targets, but on the whole it has become more relevant.



SSgt Colin Sutcliffe (REME)

You can definitely see that the operational side of things is being built on more and more. This is something we should do more of at units, especially now you have things like The Para Cup where you are doing the kind of task that fire teams are doing in Afghanistan. It's enormously valuable and the guys here can go back to their units and pass on their knowledge.



Gnr Sam Gowin (RA)

I think that this is totally relevant to everything we do on ops – lots of running around and firing from different positions. A lot of people think this is all about prone shooting from different ranges but it's actually a lot of hard work. Things like the casevac drills and wearing heavy kit are what you expect in Afghanistan so it's right that we should do it here as well.



2nd Lt George Holdsworth (RA)

This follows the run fast, shoot straight philosophy and it is a long way from the old image that people might have of Bisley. It's true to say that there is no prone shooting in most of the events and that shows how things have changed. This is considerably harder than shooting anywhere else – obviously I have been through Sandhurst, but this is where I have really learned to shoot.



LCpl Ian Jack (Int Corps)

This kind of shooting reinforces what we do when we go on operations. What is quite good to see is that it is not all Infantry units here – most of the scoreboards have chefs or clerks on them. It's a real mixed bag and it shows that anyone can do it. Our team has been lucky because we have been trained by the Queen's Medal winner from last year.



LCpl Andy Culley (RE)

This whole process is valuable not just because it is relevant to operations, but because it shows that it is not only the Infantry who can shoot. Anyone can do it to a very high level if they are trained correctly. I also think that there should be more emphasis on this type of shooting at unit level and I am always trying to get people along to give it a go.



Sgt Danny Marriott (RLC)

It's valuable because learning the skills the guys need to do this gives them confidence to take the shots when they are in theatre. The focus has become more operationally-orientated because of changes like wearing body armour and also the speed and position of the shooting. The competition is excellent and there are no downsides to coming here – it's all positive.


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