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Cover picture (left): Dog handler and Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course student Sgt Nik Hawke (RAVC)

Background image: *Soldier's* Joe Clapson is given an extreme fishing lesson in Brunei (Pages 26-41)
Pictures: Graeme Main

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“When you’ve finished being sick we’ll continue with Delia Smith’s recipe for barbecued tree snake.”

● Brunei-style bush-tucker trials – Pages 34-35

Resolve to remain resolute

IN this month of new beginnings, tradition dictates that the coming weeks will be characterised by New Year’s resolutions and the premature abandonment of them.

For the majority of those not in uniform these annual and in the main short-lived pledges of self-improvement tend to take the form of fitness and see gym memberships soar every January.

Those who actually persevere beyond setting up a direct debit to pay for the privilege of working up a sweat, do so with a desire and aspiration to achieve a level of health which would be considered the bare minimum by serving soldiers.

With all personnel expected to pass biannual Personal Fitness Assessments and the rigours of operations in mind, physical training is about far more than just ironing flat beer bellies and obliterating bingo wings for British troops. Throwing in the towel after only two weeks is simply not an option.

Deployments to southern Afghanistan require increasingly high levels of stamina and power, but not content with just being fit for the fight, a growing number of Army personnel are striving to be among the Service’s peak performers by seeking to become members of the 300 Club (Pages 44-45).

Set up to recognise physical excellence, gaining entry to this elite group singles soldiers out as being among the Force’s fittest and, as our little experiment in this issue proves, demands standards far beyond the reach of your average Sunday League footballer – no surprise there – or semi-professional cyclist (Pages 47-49).

‘Physical training is about far more than just ironing flat beer bellies’

For those on civvy street who have already embraced Op Massive or long ago given up on worrying about their waistlines, excelling in the workplace is a recurring resolution.

However, this is yet another area in which members of the public are eclipsed by those who serve to protect them.

While poor performance or lack of effort for some might mean profit not being maximised or, in my own case, a spelling error appearing in this column, members of the Armed Forces have no such luxury.

Whether on the front line in Helmand province, supporting operations remotely by ensuring war-winning assets such as Apache are in first-class condition (Pages 26-27) or honing skills in the jungle of Brunei (Pages 30-33), lives depend on soldiers giving 100 per cent all of the time.

The reality of the matter is that Service personnel set themselves altogether more challenging targets than superficial goals such as shedding pounds or earning a few more of them.

As New Year’s resolutions go, the British Army’s unwavering determination to deliver stability and security to the people of Helmand, and in turn protect those in the UK, is both admirable and ambitious.

The news pages of this issue (Pages 7-22) are littered with reasons for tempered optimism and suggest that the prize is within reach.

Resolve to keep doing what you’re doing and I don’t doubt you will succeed. I wish you all a safe and prosperous New Year. – **Andrew Simms, Managing Editor** ■



ARMY



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Legion of leaders: The Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir David Richards, and commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, Lt Col Andrew Harrison, flank David Cameron during the British Prime Minister's most recent tour of Helmand province, Afghanistan Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

'Grounds for cautious optimism'

PRIME Minister David Cameron has announced plans to boost the military campaign in Helmand province, with both UK troops and their Afghan National Security Force partners set to benefit.

Speaking during his latest visit to theatre, the British premier revealed that £135 million will be spent on doubling the amount of Reaper remotely-piloted aircraft systems currently patrolling the skies.

The armed asset provides live, detailed images of the area in which troops operate, allowing commanders on the ground to make more informed and effective decisions on how to defeat the enemy.

Reaper has proved to be particularly successful and the boost in numbers will help the ongoing mission to detect and destroy insurgent targets and improvised explosive device networks.

As part of the package, a further £33.1 million will be made available for the development of the Afghan National

Police, including the construction of seven police stations in addition to the two UK-funded facilities that were opened late last year.

During a hectic visit, Mr Cameron travelled to Lashkar Gah for a briefing by the commander of Task Force Helmand, Brig James Chiswell, on the progress being made by the provincial reconstruction team.

He also presented graduation certificates to newly-qualified officers at the Helmand Police Training Centre and met personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment at a patrol base in Nahr-e Saraj, where he inspected the recently rolled-out Warthog armoured vehicle.

The Prime Minister said: "I would like personally to thank everyone serving in Afghanistan for the sacrifice they are making.

"It is great work you are doing and we must continue to do all we can to help you endure.

"This is my sixth visit to Afghanistan,

to Helmand province, and what I see is some grounds for cautious optimism.

"The amount of ground that's covered by the forces is up, the amount of markets that are open, the number of provincial and district governors that are in place, the number of schools that are open, the level of security – there are lots of signs of positive improvement."

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Sir David Richards accompanied the Prime Minister on the trip and was delighted by the level of progress being made.

Speaking to the *Daily Telegraph* he said that British troops could even begin drawing down later this year.

He added: "The resources are in, things are coming together well.

"There will be a period over the next year or two when we have our ups and downs but we think we can get there.

"It is conditions based for this year but looking at the progress we have made – I was only here three months ago – it is quite astronomical how quickly things are coming together."



**“IT’S GETTING BUSIER AND BUSIER IN
HERE BECAUSE EVERYONE WANTS APACHE”**

– A LOOK INSIDE THE GUNSHIP GARAGE, PAGES 26-27

Picture: Stuart Bingham



IN A NUTSHELL

What is the Future Reserves 2020 study?

In brief

In announcing the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), Prime Minister David Cameron commissioned a six-month study of the Reserve Forces to ensure the MoD makes the most efficient use of skills, experience and capabilities. The FR20 study – as it has been dubbed – will be organised in three phases, with the findings announced in the summer.

Why is it needed?

In order to make the greatest contribution to the Armed Forces, the Reserves need to be properly structured for future conflicts and arranged to support the new organisation of the Regular Force. This will make the best use of their experience and capabilities, while at the same time moving towards a more efficient structure.

How will it differ from the review of 2009?

The Strategic Review of Reserves looked at the current commitments of UK Reserves, in line with existing Defence policy. It made recommendations that aimed to improve existing structures to better support and deliver operational capability. The SDSR requires the UK Regular Force structures to be more adaptable and flexible. FR20 will look at a fundamental revision of roles and structure, in line with the Regular Force's reorganisation, rather than making the extant roles and structures more efficient.

What impact will this have on the Volunteer Reserve Estate?

Estate issues will be a key area of FR20 as work develops over the coming months. No decisions have been made yet about precise changes but it is likely that the total number of locations will reduce. However, the sites that remain will be fit-for-purpose and every effort will be made to maximise value for money.

What elements are not being looked at?

Cadets and university units are not included, except to the extent at which they are a key source of officers for the Reserves. Cadets have not specifically been reviewed as part of the SDSR, although the MoD is undertaking a separate study of all youth matters.



Picture: Sgt Rupert Ffene, RLC

Force for good: The Helmand Police Training Centre is now capable of turning out 180 newly-qualified policemen every three weeks, following an intensive eight-week course run by soldiers from 5 Scots

Police academy graduates show promise

A NEW generation of Afghan policemen will be providing added security in the urban centres of Helmand province after successfully completing their British-led training.

The officers were drilled in patrolling and emergency response techniques, as well as the skills needed to identify potential improvised explosive device threats, under the watchful eye of personnel from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

A total of 89 patrolmen and 28 junior commanders graduated from the intensive eight-week course, which is run by the Canterbury-based troops at the Helmand Police Training Centre near Lashkar Gah.

The graduation featured a ceremonial parade and inspection of the newly-qualified officers by Gen Angar, the Chief of Helmand Police.

Lt Col Adam Griffiths, CO of 5 Scots and officer in charge of developing the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Helmand, said: “It is always incredibly positive to see events like this.

“To be able to show the guests the standard of policemen who will soon be providing security in the towns and villages of Helmand is a great thing to be able to do.

“It is the kind of thing which then improves our ability to recruit and enhances general confidence in the ANP among the local population.”

Maiden honour for morale-boosting medic

AN Army nurse who showed “great empathy and understanding” has been rewarded for her work caring for soldiers wounded in Afghanistan.

Sgt Kes Bradley (RAMC, pictured) won the unsung hero category of the inaugural Morale Awards, an event organised by The British Forces Foundation (BFF). Katherine Jenkins, a trustee of the charity, presented the prize to the medic at a ceremony in London hosted by Gethin Jones.

Judges praised the nurse’s “unique personality” and the care she provided for injured troops, particularly those undergoing serious operations at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

Top Gear host Jeremy Clarkson won the outstanding contribution to military morale by a public figure class. Accepting the award he said: “I’m



very flattered, but what I do is nothing compared to what you lot do out in Afghanistan. Thank you very much.”

Other winners included charity uk4u Thanks!, which sends festive boxes to troops serving on operations over Christmas, and Shirts for Soldiers who provide a bespoke tailoring service to injured personnel.

■ A 48-HOUR mission conducted by Scottish troops and Afghan security personnel has cleared a Taliban stronghold in the rural area of Loy Adera in Helmand province.

Partnered by members of the Afghan National Police (ANP), soldiers from C Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland came under significant fire during the two-day action but were successful in forcing insurgents from the region.

With the enemy cleared, the allied forces have begun work on establishing a number of new patrol bases in the area, which is close to the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

Capt George Vlachonikolis (2 Scots) said: "Loy Adera is a region which has historically been a staging post for the Taliban in Helmand."

"The people here, however, are really receptive to Isaf [International Security Assistance Force] and they want to get rid of the insurgents as much as we do."

He added: "These new patrol bases and the peace of mind that they offer will provide the locals with the freedom to get on with their lives and the Afghan Government with the ability to begin investing in the area."

Picture: Cpl George, RAF



Picture: AP/Press Association Images

Lisbon line-up: British Prime Minister David Cameron and American President Barack Obama in Portugal

Nato endorse Helmand handover

WORLD leaders have reaffirmed plans for National Security Forces to lead and conduct operations in all provinces of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

The counter-insurgency strategy for the country was one of the key topics at the Nato summit in Lisbon, where representatives from the International Security Assistance Force and the wider global community renewed their support for a transfer of responsibility to home-based personnel.

The move is consistent with the deadline set by Prime Minister David Cameron for British combat operations to end by 2015.

Nato has also committed itself to a long-term relationship with the Afghan Government which will be based on aid, development, diplomacy, trade and, if necessary, military training.

As part of the wider Nato reform it was agreed that more resources should

be focused on the unconventional threats of the future, such as global terrorism, cyber security, failing states and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

A new ballistic missile defence system for Europe was also proposed while measures to drive efficiencies, similar to the Strategic Defence and Security Review, were revealed.

These will see the amount of headquarters posts reduced from 13,000 to less than 9,000 and the number of Nato agencies trimmed from 14 to three, as well as an agreement that all summit decisions will be funded from within existing resource plans.

The Nato-Russia council agreed practical cooperation on Afghanistan, which will open routes through Russia to support coalition troops on the ground and lead to a joint effort to sustain improved helicopter capabilities for Afghan forces.

'A classic example of how to win without fighting'

THE Helmand town of Naqilabad Kalay celebrated the Islamic festival of Eid in peace after insurgent forces were driven from the area without a bullet being fired.

A well-executed raid involving troops from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and members of the Afghan Security Forces saw Taliban fighters pushed on to the back foot in a surprise operation ahead of the holiday.

The mission, which was code-named Op Zamrod Zhemay (Emerald Winter in English), saw 200 personnel move into the settlement and take up positions before first light.

As they inserted under the cover of darkness, other troops continued to stifle insurgent activity in the surrounding areas by occupying key locations. After witnessing the show of strength in the Afghan-led mission, the



Home front: An Afghan soldier patrols the outskirts of a settlement during Operation Zamrod Zhemay

Taliban decided to abandon the town rather than put up any resistance.

Habbibullah Shamalami, the Nad-e Ali district governor, was kept informed throughout the operation and was able to chair a shura with local residents later in the day to learn more about their concerns and priorities.

Lt Col James Coates, CO of 3 Para, said: "It was very clear to us that all the

local people wanted was security for their families. They were very happy to see us and the Afghan Security Forces and supported us throughout.

"This op was a classic example of how to win without fighting. We invested time and effort in detailed planning and consultation with the Afghans as well as mounting precision operations against insurgents during the build-up. The fact that Afghan forces took a leading role in the operation made a real impact on the local people, allowing us to win their confidence very quickly.

"We were pleasantly surprised when the locals invited us to celebrate the Muslim festival of Eid with them.

"It was a real privilege for the regiment to share this time of peace with them as they embark upon a new chapter in their lives without the fear and intimidation they have suffered for so long."

A close-up photograph of a young man and woman smiling and embracing each other. The woman is on the left, looking towards the camera, and the man is on the right, leaning in towards her. They are both wearing white shirts. The background is a solid light blue.A small icon of a speech bubble containing a pink heart and a white cursor arrow pointing at it.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

SCHOOL REOPENS ITS GATES

■ CHILDREN in the Afghan town of Kushal Kalay are being educated for the first time in more than three years following a successful refurbishment programme at their school.

The building was closed after insurgent fighters wreaked havoc in the area in a series of attacks that saw locals fleeing from their homes.

But improved security brought about by British troops, most recently from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, and their Afghan National Army partners allowed them to return.

As the population grew officials from the country's Department for Education and the local Waiki (people's representative) were brought together to work on the refurbishment, with help from the military forces.

WELFARE WORK TO CONTINUE

■ GOVERNMENT ministers have pledged to make further improvements to mental health services for Armed Forces personnel.

The MoD and Department for Health, along with military charity Combat Stress, announced they will continue to work together to ensure recommendations made in the Fighting Fit report move forward. The work was carried out by former Royal Navy doctor Andrew Murrison, who was asked to conduct an independent study into the mental health of serving and ex-Service personnel to see what more can be done to assess and meet their needs.

Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Andrew Robathan said: "I am determined to ensure that our Armed Forces receive the best mental health care available, both while serving and after leaving the military. I will do whatever I can to improve the services they receive.

"Already, following the recommendations made in Dr Andrew Murrison's study, we have announced plans to improve mental health services for veterans through the introduction of 30 mental health nurses and a 24-hour counselling and support helpline."



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

Partners in peace: Maj Matt Collins (1 IG) shadows his Afghan National Army counterpart in the village of Saidan near Gereshk on day one of Op Omid Char – a four-week surge into Taliban-occupied territory

Hope builds for improved security

SOLDIERS from the Afghan National Army (ANA) have struck at the heart of the Taliban campaign in Gereshk in what has proved to be their most significant mission to date.

Operation Omid Char, or Hope Four in English, has seen improved security and a greater Afghan Government presence established in the region as part of a successful four-week push led by troops from 3rd Brigade, 215th Corps.

Supported by British mentors from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, they moved through the village of Saidan towards an area which had been designated for the construction of an ANA patrol base.

On the first day four Afghan soldiers were injured by an improvised explosive device but progress rapidly increased after the early setback.

Over the course of the operation, two groups of engineers built a 100-man patrol base and two 15-man outposts

as well as improving two kilometres of road leading to the site.

Capt Ashley Hough, a Royal Gurkha Rifles officer attached to the 1 IG mentoring team, said: "I see the next couple of months being spent getting to know the locals, getting to know the ground, understanding the dynamics of what is going on here, learning where the Taliban are and how we can isolate them from the population."

ANA company commander Capt Mohammad Tahir added: "This is a very important security position for the Gereshk district.

"If we build a strong presence in the area, we will be able to provide better security and stop the Taliban traffic through the region.

"I think the future is very bright for us because of the continued support of the people in the area and because of the determination our soldiers are showing in building security."

Tankies set tracked Warthog to work on Herrick

SOLDIERS from the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment have traded in their old Viking armoured vehicles for a new beast that will roam the unforgiving terrain of Helmand province.

The Warthog offers greater protection and packs a mightier punch than its predecessor and its outstanding manoeuvrability means it can offer support and firepower wherever it is needed.

Troops from 2 RTR have already been dubbed the Warthog Group in theatre and the unit is now looking forward to the challenges ahead.

Driver Tpr Nick Dinsdale said: "This really is a big boy's toy and it is great cross-country. I like the versatility of tracked vehicles as what you can do is so much greater than with wheels.

"It does take some getting used to though but we've tested Warthog to the limit and I'm really impressed with it."

The tracked vehicle consists of two cabs. The front houses the driver and commander and is armed with a heavy-weapons turret, while the rear is used for transporting personnel.

Vehicle commander Cpl Tristan Cordery said: "We can move around the battlefield and provide protection to the infantry and engineers while

they work. We can choose between the heavy, grenade or general purpose machine guns. This gives me, as a Warthog commander, the flexibility to tailor my armament to the mission and that is a vital capability in order to succeed in the complicated environment of Afghanistan."

One of the first tasks for the group was to protect the development projects deemed as priorities by the Afghan Government, most notably the roadworks to connect Sangin and Lashkar Gah.





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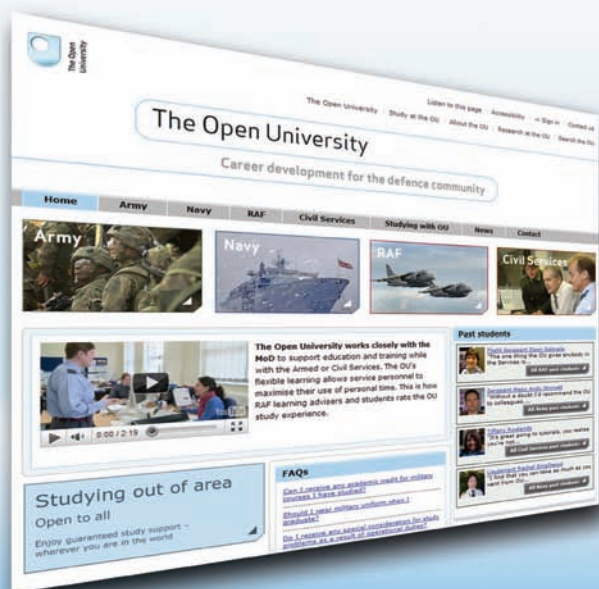
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Capability not in doubt: Announcing the MoD's decision to maintain its policy of preventing women from joining the Infantry, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Andrew Robathan, praised female members of the Armed Forces – such as Pte Laura Docherty (16 Medical Regiment), pictured on patrol with A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment – for the part they play “across the board” on operations Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Restrictions on roles remain following review

FEMALE soldiers will continue to be excluded from close-combat functions within the Army after a MoD study decided the policy on such roles should remain unchanged.

The legislation was last reviewed in 2002 and the European Commission Equal Treatment Directive requires the UK to carry out a reassessment every eight years.

Operational commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided considerable evidence of women serving on the front line, all of which came under the scrutiny of the review.

The process saw recent literature on the effectiveness of mixed-gender teams in close-combat trades closely examined, while the roles women undertake in theatre were also taken into account.

MoD bosses have acknowledged that females play an active part on the front line, undertaking crucial posts in areas

such as logistics, medicine, artillery and engineering, but have stated that they cannot join the Infantry or serve in small tactical teams that are required to close with and kill the enemy face-to-face.

The Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Andrew Robathan, said: “The Service chiefs and I all agree that women are fundamental to the operational effectiveness of Britain’s Armed Forces, bringing talent and skills across the board.

“Their capability is not in doubt; they win the highest decorations for valour and demonstrate independence and initiative.

“We looked closely at the findings of this review but the conclusions were inconclusive. There was no evidence to show that a change in current policy would be beneficial or risk free and so a decision was made to take a precautionary approach and maintain the current position.”

The department said there was no question that some women in the Services would be able to meet the standard required of personnel performing in close-combat roles, both physically and psychologically.

However, the key issue was the potential impact of having both men and women in small teams.

Under the conditions of high-intensity close-quarter battle it was felt that unit cohesion is of much greater importance and failure to create this can have far-reaching and potentially grave consequences.

None of the research answered the key question of the effect that gender mixing would have on such teams so the MoD has decided the case for lifting the current restrictions has not been made.

■ DEFENCE bosses have put pen to paper on a £180 million contract to build 200 new light protected patrol vehicles for the campaign in Afghanistan.

The Foxhound (pictured), which is being delivered by Force Protection Europe, has been designed to provide unprecedented levels of blast protection for its size and weight. As reported by *Soldier* in November, the light and agile vehicle will allow troops to carry out a wide range of tasks in environments that may restrict larger and heavier platforms.

The Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, Peter Luff, said: “I’m delighted that this important contract has been signed. It shows the real progress that’s being made to ensure our front-line troops are able to use these versatile and highly-protected vehicles as soon as possible.”



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“ALL OF THEIR HARD WORK IS DONE FOR A TENNIS BALL AND TO PLEASE THEIR HANDLER”

– HOUNDS HAPPY TO BE PAID IN PERKS, PAGES 37-39

PARA POSITIVITY

A PEACEFUL future under the control of Afghan Security Forces is on the horizon for Nahr-e Saraj in Helmand province, according to the commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

Speaking of the task facing his men after relieving 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles in the region, Lt Col Andrew Harrison was positive about both the progress made and what can be achieved.

“The role of the 2 Para Battlegroup is to create some space in the area of Nahr-e Saraj South to allow development to grow in this sector,” he said. “I was here just over a year-and-a-half ago and the changes in that time have been extraordinary.

“I see these villages becoming secure and I see genuine change in the atmosphere – people no longer intimidated by the Taliban, people protected by Afghan Security Forces.”

The CO explained that working in tandem with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police was key to gaining lasting success in the war-torn area.

“Everything we do is partnered – partnership is what this is all about; we are in Afghanistan, these are Afghan people and they understand one another and they are our inroads into the communities.

“We are here to train them to enable them to take on this insurgency. I am sure in due course they will be ready to take on this problem on their own.”

Commenting on the capabilities of the Afghan Security Forces, Lt Col Harrison insisted that they were better equipped and better organised than ever before.

“A year ago they looked like a rag-tag mob; there was very little discipline and while they fought very bravely they did not have the structure that was necessary to be as effective as they might be,” he said.

“Now I see them out every morning doing PT [physical training] as a squad and then going out as a disciplined body on patrol.”

Lt Col Harrison, pictured below, also revealed that his battalion of paratroopers was making a notable impact on the enemy.

“The morale of the insurgents is declining,” he concluded. “They are struggling in the area and I think slowly, very slowly, they are starting to realise the futility of their arms struggle. I am very optimistic for the future of Nahr-e Saraj.”



Pictures: Capt Herbert, 1 R Irish

Making an impact: Sgt Es Mattullah (ANA) examines the after-effects of a controlled explosion used by a British-trained Afghan counter-IED team to defeat one of two Taliban devices discovered by 1 R Irish

Brit training helps beat bombs

AN Afghan National Army (ANA) bomb disposal team was called into action for the first time when it safely neutralised two deadly improvised explosive devices in Helmand province.

The British-trained unit carried out controlled detonations on the Taliban traps under the watchful eye of their colleagues from the Counter-IED Task Force, who have taught them the drills needed to conduct such important work.

ANA soldiers and personnel from C Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment discovered the devices during a joint patrol and called the expert team for assistance.

After setting up a cordon, the newly-trained soldiers demonstrated perfect safety procedures and used a loudspeaker to inform residents of a nearby village what was happening.

Lt Jaqoob Kahn, the ANA commander at the scene, said: “The speaker provided much-needed reassurance for the local people.

“Parents are always concerned for the welfare of their children when explosions are heard. Unfortunately, children playing in the fields and tracks are often the victims of these cruel devices.

“Our men did a good job and proved

their skills. They eliminated this threat and our British friends from the Counter-IED Task Force complimented their attention to safety.

“This is an important step in the ANA’s ongoing development.”

To celebrate the success of the mission, the British troops invited their Afghan counterparts to their patrol base for dinner in a move which further cemented the growing bond between the two forces.

Maj Alastair Harbison, officer commanding C Company, 1 R Irish, said: “We see this as a real milestone. The Taliban insurgents do not want the ANA to have the skills to tackle the IEDs they lay indiscriminately, threatening the safety of the Afghan people, but there is nothing they can do about it. The Afghan capability we saw demonstrated on this operation is here to stay.

“During patrols, the ANA take the lead wherever possible – entering compounds, speaking with locals, demonstrating their ability to provide security – and now they boast the skills to make IEDs safe as well.

“This sends a strong message to the local population that the ANA is a capable force providing security for much-needed development projects.”



■ Sgt Robert Walker (1 R Irish) leads a joint patrol close to where the IEDs were discovered



■ The device is destroyed by a British-trained Afghan National Army bomb disposal team

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Picture: Cpl Brian Gabriel, Jr, US Marines

Healthy progress: Afghan National Army medic Sgt Abdul Ghafar puts his education to the test

CARE COLLABORATION

■ AFGHAN National Army soldiers are receiving valuable medical training as part of the ongoing partnership with their British colleagues.

Troops from the 1st Kandak, 215th Corps have been advised on an array of skills, ranging from dealing with common ailments to performing combat trauma treatment, during their time at Forward Operating Base Shawqat in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province.

When attending to patients, personnel from the Royal Army Medical Corps have been on hand to offer expert guidance to their Afghan counterparts, who have been progressing at an impressive rate.

Sgt Mick Potts (16 Med Regt) said: “Most mornings, unless we have some operations going on, we see what patients are presented at the Afghan medical facility.

“When the Afghans are able to run the sick bay by themselves, we let them; but if not, I’ll intervene or assist them in any way they need.

“When they know they’ve got a medical facility that they can rely on, it is much easier for them to prepare to take the fight to the enemy.

“They have the reassurance they’ll be well looked after by their guys and evacuated to a safe place if something does happen.”

MANAGEMENT MAKEOVER

■ PLANS are under way to establish a Defence Infrastructure Organisation in a bid to deliver streamlined services and efficiencies.

If approved, it is likely that the majority of staff involved in the management and delivery of infrastructure across command would transfer to the new body.

The decision remains subject to Defence Board approval and trade union consultation and staff will be kept informed of the work as it develops.

By streamlining how infrastructure is managed and delivered it is hoped the MoD will make significant savings on the £3-4 billion a year which is spent in this area.

National forces growing in popularity and proficiency

AFGHANISTAN is getting closer to having security forces capable of taking on the Taliban without international intervention, according to high-ranking British officers.

Addressing members of the press at MoD Main Building, Maj Gen John Lorimer, Chief of the Defence Staff’s communications officer, pointed to the increasing number of operations planned and led by the Afghan National Army (ANA) as a clear sign of progress.

“The NTMA [Nato Training Mission Afghanistan] is producing warriors for the ANA and officers for the ANP [Afghan National Police] and they are doing incredibly well,” he added.

“They are well on track to reach 171,600 personnel by October. But it’s not just about numbers, it’s also about quality – we’ve seen an overall increase in the quality of the individual and also of the collective performance.”

Maj Gen Lorimer highlighted that the education provided to ANA troops was improving and stressed their partnership with the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) was reaping operational rewards.

“On the literacy side we’ve got 34,000 ANA soldiers going

through training and [in 2011] they are expected to put 100,000 through,” explained the senior officer. “The current construct of better partnership and working together has brought real benefits to the coalition forces.

“You get their interaction with the local population and they help with cultural awareness and with language.”

Maj Gen Lorimer added that the Afghan population is beginning to place its trust in the ANA by referring to the organisation as “our Army”.

Officers at the press conference emphasised that due to the success of Op Moshtarak last year there has been a greater chance to focus on the development of the ANA and ANP in Helmand province.

“It’s a blank canvas with which to work on this summer,” said Lt Col Charlie Herbert, former CO of the Task Force Helmand Brigade Advisory Group (TFHBAG).

“They [Afghan soldiers] have a desire to sort out their own problems and I was really struck by that.”

In recent months the NTMA has been working closely with the ANA to make them more self-sufficient and more effective.

As a result of this international partnering the Afghan warriors can now boast a brigade headquarters, embryonic counter-IED and reconnaissance capabilities and basic medical skills.

Lt Col Chris Ghika, the current CO of TFHBAG, said the

continued progress of the ANA has allowed Afghan soldiers to replace British Service personnel in dangerous

roles. Commenting on the Afghans’ new counter-IED force, he said: “It is a valuable, effective capability which is frequently used now instead of Isaf teams.

“They are brave in the fight, working to tackle insurgents head-on and they are astute and shrewd in their judgement.”



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

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Planning party: Maj Alastair Harbinson (1 R Irish) and Lt Col Said Mahmand prepare for Tor Kanjak

■ AFGHAN troops took the lead in an overnight air assault to clear Taliban fighters from the rugged area of Shin Kalay in Helmand province.

The British-trained personnel, who were supported by soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, were inserted under the cover of darkness to take full advantage of the element of surprise.

Designed as a clearance and search mission, Operation Tor Kanjak 5 – Black Thorn in English – was aimed at providing better security for people living in the region.

The coalition forces cleared compounds and insurgent firing points while colleagues offered protection from the flanks.

At the same time another group from the Afghan National Army, together with elements from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, swept through the village.

With security in place, officers from the Afghan National Civil Order Police moved out into the surrounding fields and compounds to

gain information and track down the enemy.

The police also held an impromptu public meeting so residents could inform them of any insurgent activity in the area.

This effort yielded immediate results as a number of suspects were detained.

With a more positive atmosphere in the village, Habibullah Shamalani, the Governor of Nad-e Ali district, was able to hold his first shura in the area for two years.

Maj Greg Murphy, officer commanding D Company, 1 R Irish, said: "Afghan security forces were very much the lead on this operation. The highlight was the fact that the governor's shura was able to take place without any Isaf [International Security Assistance Force] presence at all.

"I think the most important thing to take away from this operation is that when you go out on the ground, meeting the people of Afghanistan, you now see the physical evidence that we are having a positive effect on the whole situation."

IN MEMORIAM



**PTE JOHN HOWARD (23)
3RD BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA DECEMBER 5 – AFGHANISTAN**

A BRAVE and utterly-dependable paratrooper whose motivation and drive made him stand out from those around him was killed as he took the fight to insurgents in Lashkar Gah.

Pte John Howard, of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, was serving with 16 Air Assault Brigade's Reconnaissance Force (BRF) when he was fatally injured while on patrol.

Initial reports suggest his death was the result of a friendly fire incident and the Ministry of Defence has announced that a full investigation has now been launched.

Born in Wellington, New Zealand, the 23-year-old was posted to 3 Para after passing out of the Infantry Training Centre Catterick in November 2007.

He deployed to Afghanistan early the following year and in April 2010 volunteered for service in the BRF.

"He had always aspired to serve in this role, very much in the vanguard of operations in Afghanistan, and he fulfilled his aspirations in spades," said Lt Col James Coates, commanding officer of 3 Para.

"He was an exceptional operator and made a real impact on all those who had the pleasure to work with him.

"Where others might have chosen the easy option in life, he lived his dreams in full knowledge of the risks involved. He was a brave and utterly-dependable man and a good friend to all."

Maj Matthew Cansdale, officer commanding of the BRF, added: "It was no surprise to his friends that Pte Howard chose to serve with the BRF as it was in his character always to tackle the next test.

"As expected he was performing extremely well and was a source of encouragement for others in his platoon."

Pte Howard, who was also known as Jack, leaves behind parents Roger and Anne, sisters Charlotte and Isabella, and his girlfriend Sophie.

A statement issued by the family read: "Jack was immensely proud to be both a Para and a New Zealander.

"He was absolutely passionate about what he was doing. He was never prepared to accept less than the best and was always striving for the next challenge."

Covenant to be cemented

AN INDEPENDENT report into innovative ways to strengthen the bond between the nation and her Armed Forces has been published and handed to the Prime Minister.

Having vowed to rebuild the Military Covenant last year, the Government set up a task force, led by military historian Prof Hew Strachan, to develop fresh ideas to help achieve its aim.

The group's findings identify support that can be provided across state departments and throughout society.

The Government will begin work immediately on two of the report's key suggestions; an Armed Forces Community Covenant to encourage communities across the UK to volunteer support for their local regiments, and a Chief of the Defence Staff Commendation Scheme, which will allow the head of the British military to thank individuals or bodies who provide exceptional backing.

Andrew Robathan, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, will publish a full response to the recommendations in the spring.

In response to Prof Strachan's report,

David Cameron said: "Our Service personnel make an extraordinary contribution to British life. Those serving on the front line risk their lives for us on a daily basis.

"So all of us – the Government, the private sector and the voluntary organisations – need to go the extra mile for them.

"I want to get to the root of their issues and make sure that the inevitable disturbance associated with military life does not lead to greater problems."

Other recommendations featured in the report include a call for the military to work with banks to offer favourable mortgages for Service personnel and a need to provide recognition for Armed Forces families.

Prof Strachan also outlines ideas such as a veterans' privilege card, Service families' card and an ID card for Reservists.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox added: "We are committed to strengthening the bonds between this country and the Armed Forces that do so much to defend it. This report gives us a great deal to study and take forward as part of that process."



Picture: Graeme Main

From Bastion to Brunei: WO2 Greg Buckley (RE) casts an expert eye over the multi-million pound plans

Garrison’s grand designs

A STATE-OF-THE-ART building project in Brunei is set to provide accommodation, education and entertainment facilities for British Army personnel and their families.

The ongoing £125 million Estate Development Programme on the periphery of the Borneo jungle is being funded by the sovereign state’s sultan and overseen by experts from the Royal Engineers.

Explaining the scale of the plans, the build’s electrical clerk of works, WO2 Greg Buckley, said: “There has been a massive increase in Army numbers in Brunei, particularly from the Gurkhas, and this will provide accommodation for 700 families so it’s a very big project.

“It’s far bigger than anything that’s going on in the UK and we’re in a good situation because there’s money to fund the work.”

To date, more than 240 three-/four-bedroom apartments and 34 officers’ quarters have been completed with a school for 350 pupils, 20 blocks of flats and a new sergeants’ mess in the pipeline. A 25-metre swimming pool with diving board and Naafi-run pool-side shop are also under construction.

Due to stipulations from the Sultan of Brunei, all building work on the

expansive site must be carried out by Bruneian companies, with the Army team on hand to monitor quality control.

“Royal Engineers do this kind of thing all over the world but what’s different here is that we don’t have control of the money, we are more like consultants ensuring things adhere to UK standards,” said WO2 Buckley.

“My last job was building Camp Bastion but this is actually more difficult because of the need for diplomacy with the Bruneians.

“There’s a lot more to the country than the jungle – this is a big challenge, working with people that speak a different language, making sure the job gets done.”

The ambitious programme is currently on track and scheduled to be handed over to Defence Estates to manage by 2020.

WO2 Buckley (RE) concluded: “Everything is being built from scratch; from power to drainage to a new water tower and when it is all done we’ll have a great little community here.

“It is part of the agreement with Brunei that our Service families have to be educated and provided for and we will keep the pressure on to make sure that happens.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

GRATIS GUESTS

■ FREE tickets to watch England at Wembley and *Top Gear* live shows were among the plethora of passes on offer to British soldiers and their families during a massive giveaway to mark the first anniversary of Forces charity Tickets for Troops.

The organisation encourages big-name groups, such as Premier League football clubs, to donate seats to major events and since its launch has secured more than 250,000 tickets for Service personnel.

Patron Samantha Cameron said the charity recognised the work and courage of troops, describing it as “a massive success”.

The Prime Minister’s wife added: “It has also rewarded those families whose support and love is crucial on the front line.”

To date, around 70,000 troops have signed up for the scheme, which is supported by music venues, acts and theatres, as well as leading sporting organisations.

The charity’s chairman Lord Jonathan Marland said: “Tickets For Troops is really making a difference to those who sacrifice so much on behalf of the rest of us.”

Members of the Armed Forces can register their interest for fixtures, shows and events at www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk



SPINE OF STEEL

■ THE opening of the Imperial War Museum’s *Extraordinary Heroes* exhibition – which boasts the world’s largest collection of gallantry medals – inspired last month’s spine line competition.

Each of the names printed on the side of December’s cover – Norton, Hughes, Finney, Johnson, Archer – are all British soldiers who have been decorated with the George Cross.

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 the words adorning the side of this issue. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by January 31.



Cpl Gary Kendall (RLC)

■ SERVICE photographers have been praised for their talent and tenacity by the Chief of the General Staff.

Speaking at the Army Photographic Competition, Gen Sir Peter Wall said: “[The pictures] recognise the work of our professional and amateur photographers and illustrate the many faces of Army life. There are some outstanding images that have taken skill and in some cases courage to capture.”

The award for professional photographer of the year was handed to Cpl Gary Kendall (RLC), while the accolade for best overall

image went to Sgt Mike Fletcher (RLC).

Of his winning portfolio, Cpl Kendall said: “My eight images cover a bit of everything from working with the Afghan locals and the exhaustion of soldiers at work, to the reflective moments.”

Commenting on his success (Pages 50-51), Sgt Fletcher said: “I was asked to take eulogy pictures for guys at my unit and I wanted to do something that wasn’t just a mugshot to be released if the worst was to happen. I didn’t want ropy images to portray the people I worked with and although it was a difficult situation it was a privilege.”



Sgt Mike Fletcher (RLC)

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Forces help defeat deep freeze

ARMYPersonnel braved the severe cold snap to offer vital assistance to those affected by the heavy snowstorms that swept across the country in early December.

With temperatures plummeting as low as -20 degrees in parts of Scotland, soldiers were out in force to deliver potentially life-saving services for members of the public.

Troops from 1st and 6th Battalions, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and 32 Signal Regiment (Volunteers) used Land Rovers to help the Ambulance Service transport paramedics to call-outs in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

"The soldiers have been busy rescuing those who require immediate medical care or who are at risk from the severe cold," said Lt Col Philip Donegan, CO of 32 Sig Regt.

"Typically this has been the elderly, infirm and infants. The challenge has been varied and we have been called to assist with fractures, women in labour and cold-weather injuries."

The military men and women were deployed for 48 hours with the Ambulance Service and in that time they received more than 100 calls.

The goodwill also extended to the streets of Edinburgh, where 1 Scots helped City Council workers to clear treacherous snow and ice from roads and walkways.

Supported by colleagues from RAF Leuchars and HMS *Illustrious*, they opened access routes to hospitals and



Picture: Mark Owens

Snow business: Military personnel clear access to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh

residential homes, allowing members of the public to get to emergency medical appointments across the city.

Brig George Lowder, commander of 51 (Scottish) Brigade, who was in overall charge of the mission, said: "The troops have been deployed to save and preserve life, and alleviate significant distress."

"They were clearing routes to hospitals, surgeries, care homes and

the like to make sure that vital supplies of fuel, medicines and food got to the people who most needed it."

Maj David Goodacre, officer commanding B Company, 1 Scots, added: "We have just returned from six months in Afghanistan and we got such support from the public while we were away that we wanted to use this as an opportunity to give something back."

Personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles were also part of the relief effort north of the border, working alongside paramedics to reach areas badly affected by snow and those in need of urgent medical attention.

In South Yorkshire, two Land Rovers and drivers from 212 Field Hospital (Volunteers) joined the emergency services to respond to 999 calls, while a battlefield ambulance from the unit transported new mothers and their babies from the Royal Hallamshire Hospital to their homes.

Vehicles and drivers from 38 Signal Regiment (Volunteers) supported the work in the region and personnel from 146 Field Company (Volunteers) and 104 Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (Volunteers) assisted the police in reaching isolated communities in the Worksop area.

At the other end of the country in Kent, 36 Engineer Regiment helped to deliver meals on wheels and soldiers from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland took patients to hospital in Brighton.

Army's Antarctic ambitions

TWO teams of Army personnel are planning an energy-sapping race to the South Pole to mark the 100th anniversary of the famous Scott-Amundsen expeditions.

The Servicemen start their challenge on November 11 and will battle temperatures of -52 degrees as they trek across 900 miles of snow and ice in a contest that is expected to last for 70 days.

One team will be departing from the Bay of Whales, the base camp used by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, with the opposition setting off from Cape Evans in the Antarctic, which was the starting point for British rival Capt Robert Scott.

Team leader Lt Col Henry Worsley (Rifles) said: "The tragic loss of Scott's party on the return journey is seared in the nation's memory as an enduring narrative of duty and sacrifice."

"We are not only attempting this slow and brutal challenge in the honour of Scott and Amundsen, but as a tribute to the men

and women of the Armed Forces who have served and continue to serve Britain in duty and often sacrifice."

The race is being organised in support of The Royal British Legion (RBL) and Prince William has given his backing to the project by becoming a patron of the expedition.

He said: "This fitting tribute exemplifies the courage, determination and pioneering spirit shown by early 20th century explorers, and which lives on today in the British Armed Forces."

"The Scott-Amundsen Centenary Race is a remarkable adventure, which will be a test of character, strength and resilience. I urge you to join me in supporting both teams to achieve their goals."

Proceeds from the challenge will help the RBL's ongoing work to support seriously injured personnel.

● For more information about the expedition visit www.scottamundsenrace.org

NEWS IN BRIEF



■ THE Assistant Chief of the General Staff has expanded on some of the key issues raised by the Strategic Defence and Security Review in his latest sitrep.

Maj Gen Richard Barrons' report discusses what the policy means for the future of the Army and how it will transform over the next ten years.

Soldiers can read the document in full by logging on to the Defence Intranet, <http://defenceintranet.diiweb.rmil.uk/DefenceIntranet/Library/Army/BrowseDocumentCategories/ManComm/StrategicDefenceAndSecurityReviewsdsr.htm>

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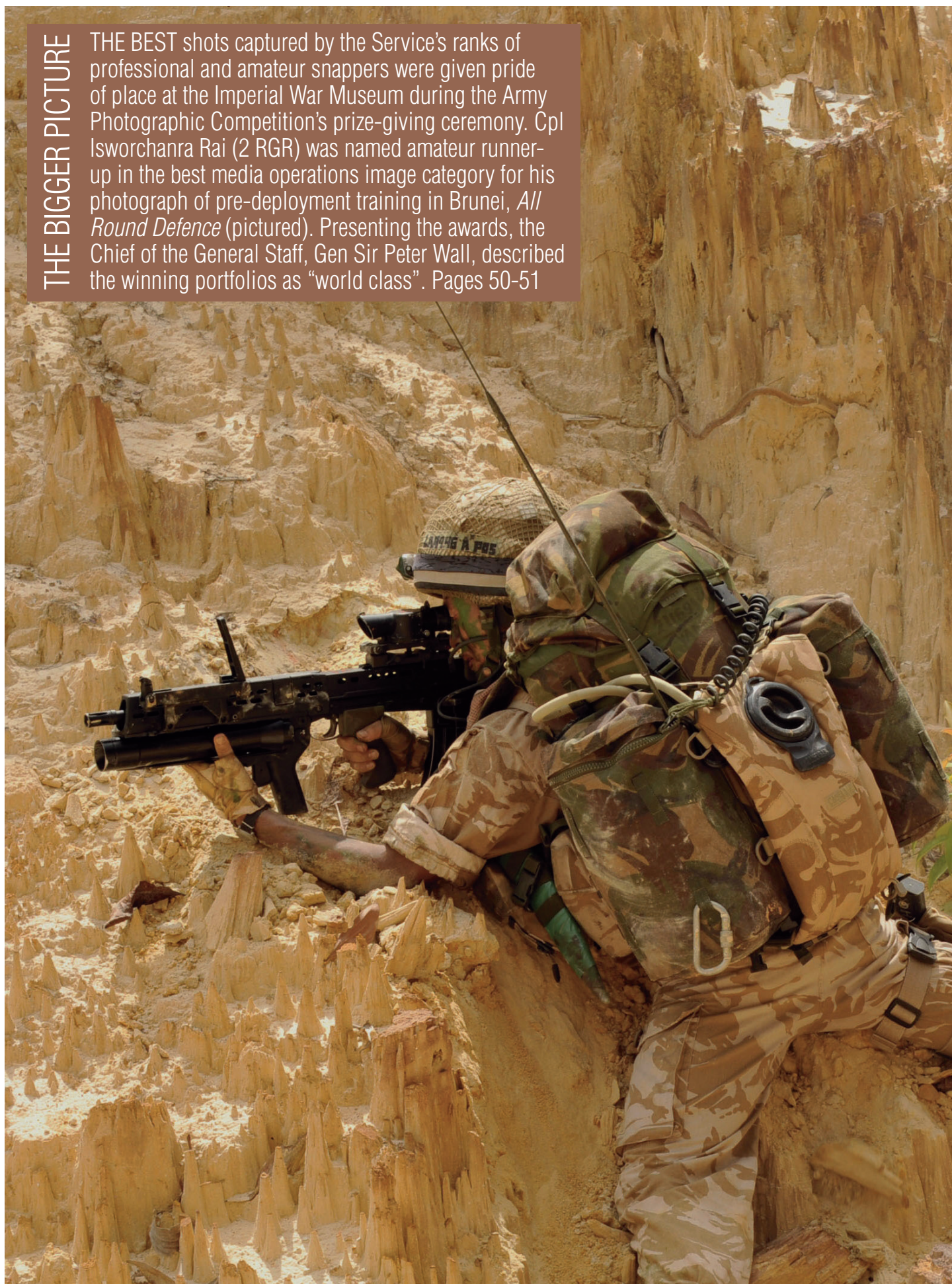


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THE BIGGER PICTURE

THE BEST shots captured by the Service's ranks of professional and amateur snappers were given pride of place at the Imperial War Museum during the Army Photographic Competition's prize-giving ceremony. Cpl Isworchanra Rai (2 RGR) was named amateur runner-up in the best media operations image category for his photograph of pre-deployment training in Brunei, *All Round Defence* (pictured). Presenting the awards, the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, described the winning portfolios as "world class". Pages 50-51





GUNSHIP GARAGE

Soldier meets the army of engineers keeping Apache fit for flight

**Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock**

BEHIND every battle-winning Apache in Afghanistan is a team of unsung heroes working tirelessly to ensure the British Army's gunship is fully serviced, fuelled and fitted with the firepower to take on the Taliban.

While specialist support crews in theatre conduct the day-to-day maintenance on the hi-tech helicopter, the aircraft also has a legion of engineering experts poised for action in the UK.

Based at Attack Helicopter HQ in Wattisham,

a highly-skilled group of REME craftsmen work alongside civilian contractors to run a Depth Support Unit (DSU) – an organisation charged with keeping the Apache fleet fit for flight.

Whenever an aircraft clocks up 600 flying hours it is booked into the state-of-the-art service centre to be stripped down to its bare frame and meticulously cleaned and inspected for wear and tear or damage. Parts are then repaired or replaced before the helicopter is rebuilt and sent back into service.

WO1 Christian Rouse (REME), the man responsible for overseeing the movements of every Apache on behalf of the Joint

Helicopter Force, said: "Afghanistan is the priority and they're flying a lot of hours out there. It's always busy, there's always another op on.

"They go out for seven to eight weeks then come back here and go into depth service. Then about 60 to 65 days later they'll go back to the regiment."

Up to ten Apaches at a time can be housed in DSU's enormous hangar, where they will move sequentially along a pulse line of nine stands, spending roughly nine days at each.

Common rectifications made by the unit include removing corrosion, replacing worn nuts, bolts and valves and soldering

cracks to joints on the airframe.

A joint Service effort, the Army delegation is partnered at Wattisham with the Royal Navy's Mobile Aircraft Support Unit (MASU), specialists in helicopter repairs and fixing breakages caused by enemy bullets.

"They also have a section based in theatre to mend any damage sustained out there," explained WO1 Rouse.



Main picture, Stripped bare: An Apache undergoes a thorough service at Wattisham
Above right, Close support: Technical experts repair and replace worn or damaged parts in the Depth Support Unit's huge hangar

"MASU patch up the aircraft to keep it flying but when they do a repair it's usually permanent. They are awesome."

Contributing to the civvy contingent are engineers from Agusta Westland, the company responsible for adapting the Apache for UK military use, and subject matter experts from organisations such as Rolls Royce, Longbow International and Lockheed Martin, who provide advice on the aircraft's engines, radar and sighting systems.

Dougie Lloyd, a former REME lance corporal, is one of many ex-Service personnel based on the workshop floor.

"A lot of our work is tin-bashing – repairing dents to the airframe and dealing with normal wear and tear," the crew chief told *Soldier*.

"Faults are found and we fix them or replace parts. Then there are a



few scheduled inspections and follow-ups.

"It's getting busier and busier in here because everyone wants Apache. The aircraft like the desert but coming back from Afghanistan they are dirty because they pick up a lot of sand, especially any exposed engine parts that are a bit wet as particles will stick to any leak."

Unless a severe fault is discovered, rebuilding begins soon after the repair phase, with the gearbox and main rotor head among the first major parts put back on to the advanced airframe.

Next are the drive shafts, tail rotor gearbox and tail blades, before finally the main blades and the weapon systems are replaced.

Functional testing is carried out throughout the rebuilding phase ensuring the aircraft leaves the DSU ready to fly.

"They can be in here for anything between

59 and 79 days," said WO1 Rouse. "It fluctuates for various reasons. It could be the need for spares, amount of airframe repairs or just an unwillingness of the aircraft to become serviceable in the air-test phase."

The final stage of the service process sees mission-specific modifications made to the helicopters.

"You can't send any old aircraft out to Afghanistan, it must have desert engines and the right radar and weapon systems – known as the helicopter integrated defensive aid suite – to bring it up to what we call theatre entry standard," WO1 Rouse concluded.

That the team at DSU continually meets this high benchmark ensures that one of the Army's most powerful air assets is ready to fly to the aid of troops on the ground in Helmand province whenever needed. ■



'MASU patch up the aircraft to keep it flying but when they do a repair it's usually permanent. They are awesome'

HIGH DEMAND

COMBAT WEAPON OF CHOICE
PROVIDES A CHALLENGE FOR
ARMY AIR CORPS PERSONNEL

Report: Sharon Kean
Picture: SSgt Mike Harvey

WITH the renowned firepower and fearsome reputation of one of the Army's most lethal combat weapons at his fingertips, it is fair to say Col Neale Moss is a man in demand.

So when the commander of the UK-based Attack Helicopter HQ has to make the crucial decision of how to utilise the awesome capabilities of the Service's Apache assets, attention inevitably turns to operations in Helmand province.

The heavily-armoured gunships have been a continuous and welcome feature in the skies above Afghanistan since 2006 and in that time they have more than proved their worth.

"The Taliban are frightened rigid of the Apache and usually disappear when we come onto the scene," Col Moss told *Soldier* at his base in Wattisham, where the relentless tasking in Helmand is managed.

"The weapon of choice written into the counter-insurgency doctrine is the Apache, so troops in contact with Always try to hold of one.

"And as well as the firepower we bring to the show, we have the surveillance and target acquisition piece."

This means that demand for these helicopters far exceeds supply and prioritisation of the available airframes is essential.

With the aim of defending troops and other aircraft from insurgents' fire, the Apache's role in theatre has evolved as Taliban tactics have changed and updated.

"We have also got to know the machine better, the ground forces have got to know us better and the rules of engagement change," said Col Moss.

"We, probably more than anybody else, have to get our heads round those rules of engagement

and how we use the helicopter because where the Apache really earns its spurs is in support of the ground troops when there's an incident."

The fleet also has a hectic schedule of escort tasks, such as accompanying troop-carrying Chinooks, and has been involved in operations that often take days to plan, like the enormous air assault that kicked-off Moshtarak.

Col Moss said: "Op Moshtarak's a really good example as the air mission commanders were in the Apaches, leading the aircraft package.

"Because of the communications systems onboard they can coordinate from the air.

"They also get involved right from the word go, in terms of the planning. We've got some brilliant captains and majors who are able to take command of those particular operations."

Such challenging work in theatre, combined with rigorous training exercises in America, means Army Air Corps personnel are routinely away from their families for 15 months at a time.

"I have crews that have done five op tours and I've got one person on this base who has done

six," explained the commanding officer.

"There are people who have literally completed back-to-back deployments and gone out [to Afghanistan] to fill in because of illness.

"It's not planned but occasionally we have to send someone straight back out to theatre on a voluntary basis."

It is commitment such as this that proves every step is being taken to ensure the increasing demand for this awesome aerial asset is being met and soldiers can be assured the Apaches will be there when needed. ■



'The Taliban are frightened rigid of the Apache and usually disappear when we come onto the scene'

— COL NEALE MOSS

TEAM PLAYERS



Picture: Steve Dock

THE Army Air Corps team running the Apache is divided between ground and aircrew. The roles of aircraft commander, pilot and co-pilot/gunner are handled by the aircrew, while the ground staff are responsible for fuel and armour as well as acting as communicators between land and air, passing on information via the intelligence network. Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer technicians with specialist avionics and electronics qualifications support the fleet while a squadron of soldiers from the Royal Logistic Corps ensures supplies are shipped to wherever they are needed in the world. The final link is a small unit of Royal Air Force survival equipment specialists who look after the hugely-complicated helmets worn by Apache pilots, as well as their jumpsuits, boots, knives and any other unique kit.



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An aerial photograph of a vast, dense tropical jungle. The forest is a thick canopy of green trees, with some taller trees visible. In the background, a mountain peak rises above the forest line under a cloudy sky. The word "Jungle" is overlaid in a large, semi-transparent font across the middle of the image.

Jungle

geography

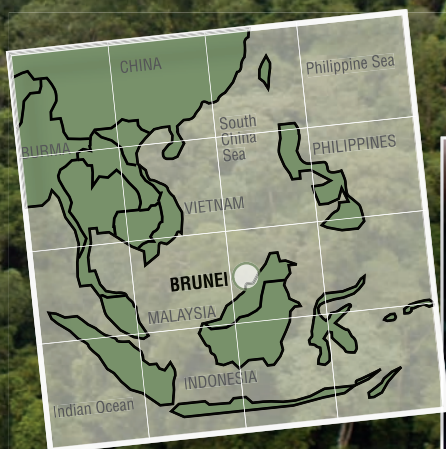
Life beneath the leaves prepares UK soldiers for global operations

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

DELIVERED in the depths of Brunei's triple-canopy rainforest, a military master-class teaches British troops skills that will save lives in all environments.

In an era characterised by cutting-edge communications equipment, students are denied the digital guidance of global positioning systems and radios by the impenetrable green blanket above their heads and must learn and hone the basics of soldiering to survive.

Those who graduate from the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course (JWIC) will have been provided with an education that will allow them to deploy and operate effectively in the most difficult of conditions. >>



>> Granted a glimpse of the tuition on offer in this lecture theatre of trees, *Soldier* spoke to Maj Dean Williams, OC Training Team Brunei, to find out more about the challenges of the seven-week curriculum.

"If commanders can command and control in the jungle they will be able to do it better in other situations and that's why the JWIC is so good," said the Royal Marine.

"Those on the course have enhanced close-quarter battle skills and improved mental and physical robustness from their feet to their weapon – they become more potent soldiers."

Working in close terrain with limited lines of sight along ridges and through murky waters, pupils are required to follow tracks and act on ground signs without compromising their own position.

Maj Williams emphasised that although current conflicts are largely played out over dusty terrain, the lessons learned in the rainforest are vital to all arenas.

"When you have the basic skills you don't have to wait for analysis to come back from a base; you can get the information while on a patrol," he said.

"Ground sign awareness and tracking is saving lives without a doubt.

"If you can master living off your belt in the jungle then you can survive anywhere."

A tri-Service programme open to junior NCOs and above,

the JWIC is run once a year for up to 55 personnel to learn from a seasoned team of jungle warfare specialists.

Living and working in an environment that can boast 90 per cent humidity and temperatures topping 35 degrees, students face a stern test of both their minds and bodies.

While checking his boots for scorpions and spiders, training officer Capt Gaz Veacock (RM) described some of the facets of the arduous course.

"It's really about having excellent low-level skills such as looking after your kit and your body on a day-to-day basis – if your admin is bad in these conditions you will be in trouble," he explained. "Core competences like observation, communication and navigation with basic kit are essential and directly transferable to operations anywhere in the world."

The Brunei school is the only recognised place for British Service personnel to qualify as jungle warfare instructors and soldiers on the latest intake saw the benefits of the tough process. Following a day of close-target reconnaissance drills, Cpl Kieran Hunt (1 R Anglian) said: "Training here is like going back to scratch because everything is new. There's no resupply so you are self-sufficient and it's very much back to basics."

"I returned from operations in April and there are definite skills like ground awareness and working in close terrain that can be taken from the jungle and used in Afghanistan."

Prior to moving out on the forest floor – which is shared with a variety of species including wild boar, snakes, gibbons and leeches –

students are given in-depth tutorials on the nature of the jungle and the essentials for survival.

Personnel are taught to live off their "belt buckle" in case of separation or extended time on the ground and reminded to keep a look out for "winch holes" to allow for helicopter rescue.

Cpl Matt Betty (33 Engr Regt (EOD)) highlighted the importance of the jungle warfare training to all-round soldiering.

"Since I joined the Army personnel have been fighting from forward operating bases and aren't really asked to survive alone for long periods, so out here it's been surprising how much we've forgotten or didn't know," he said.

"On the EOD side, what we're learning in Brunei

will improve things in a big way on patrol in southern Afghanistan.

"The ability to track and be aware of ground signs is very important to negate the IED threat – it sounds cheesy but the motto 'train hard and fight easy' really applies to this course."

LSgt Paul Hope (Gren Gds) added: "The JWIC is brilliant for honing infantry techniques which could be in danger of being lost due to the operational tempo.

"Learning things like wet and dry skills and how to live out of your Bergen are so important."

From putting up a hammock in total darkness to conducting silent river crossings and learning to notice the tiniest of ground signs, the JWIC teaches low-level drills to the very highest standard.

WO2 Taff Jones (RM) spelt out the importance of such an education.

"It's a very steep learning curve for the students but those who master it will go back better soldiers and disseminate information to their battalions," he concluded.

"What we are teaching here is how to work in a complex environment and I'm convinced this training is allowing people to come back from operations with their legs and lives intact." ■

‘There’s no resupply so you are self-sufficient and it’s very much back to basics’





Above, Close encounter:
Students patrol through heavy
woodland on the Jungle Warfare
Instructors' Course

Left to right, Silent service:
Hand signals are used to
communicate during a jungle
patrol; Ground signs: Footprints
give a clue of enemy activity;
River crossing: Personnel patrol
on every terrain; Map marvels:
Soldiering success depends
on low-tech abilities; Extreme
education: Theory and tactics
are briefed before an exercise



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

FAR from being the sole preserve of television personalities such as Ray Mears and Bear Grylls, survival techniques are an essential weapon in a soldier's arsenal.

And while most of those deployed in Afghanistan's Helmand province find themselves patrolling from a fixed supply base to which they return daily to replenish their rations, the fine art of being able to live off just your wits and the kit you carry remains relevant to all operating environments.

Soldier caught up with troops on the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course (JWIC) beneath Brunei's impenetrable canopy to find out exactly how British Servicemen and women survive when detached from civilisation.

Cpl Michael Scott (3 Para) explained that "living off your belt buckle" is a crucial skill for all Armed Forces personnel and how being made to learn the lesson in the jungle is tough but ideal preparation for operations – wherever they may be.

"If you didn't have all the kit and you got lost or separated you wouldn't be able to sustain yourself for very long," he said. "Your belt is pretty much your last line of defence and the JWIC improves your ability to live off it and therefore become a better soldier. People that can get by in the jungle are definitely better prepared to survive anywhere in the world than anyone else."

Those on the course leave camp with a 70lb Bergen and 30lb belt which carry all the tools required to stay alive – items such as cord to create snares or a fishing line to catch food; hexi blocks and nails to build a stove for cooking prey and water purification tablets.

Capt Gaz Veacock (RM), a member of the training team in Brunei, said: "Once you come into the jungle you need to learn to survive off the land in order to get along. Then you can go on to work effectively. Being able to catch food and set traps are essential parts of operating in the jungle and if you can do it here, you can do it anywhere." ■

Survival of the fittest: An exercising soldier takes cover during the patrol phase of the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course, which is run by the Training Team Brunei



Lifebelt

Troops buckle up in bid to beat Brunei jungle

SURVIVAL STRAP

Pouches 1 and 2: Four magazines each with 30 rounds of ammunition



Pouch 3: Water bottle and mug



Pouch 7: Camouflage cream; mosquito repellent; 30m length of cord



Pouch 4: Emergency rations and spare hexi blocks for cooking; weapon-cleaning kit; sharpening stone; oil bottle for lubricating knife and weapon; malaria tablets; torch; knife; batteries; ear defenders; condom for carrying water; fishing line and hooks; windproof matches; snares and spoon



Pouch 5: Water bottle; emergency rations; purification tablets; nails and hexi blocks for cooking stove



Pouch 6: Folding saw; loop line and carabiner for river crossing



No messing: How to catch yourself a freshwater feast



1. You will need cord, a mess tin, ration biscuit, plastic bag, small piece of wood and knife.

2. Place wood in plastic bag to act as a weight; insert mess tin into plastic bag and put biscuit in the tin; tie cord around top of plastic bag and cut off excess to use as a fishing line; use knife to cut a cross-like slit in the bag, forming a passage into the mess tin.



3. Lower the bag into the running stream, ensuring the wood's weight holds the mess tin under the water. Freshwater shrimp will enter the bag to feed on the biscuit and become trapped.



4. Carefully remove shrimp and cook as part of a nutritious meal.





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AFGHAN HOUNDS

Man's best friend in training for
a walk on the wild side



**Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main**

AN INCREASED ability to detect enemy insurgents while unsighted in inhibiting close terrain is something soldiers patrolling the Green Zone of Helmand province would welcome.

A dog named Sally is currently providing such a capability in the most testing of training environments, with a deployment to Afghanistan on the horizon for the hound.

At present the four-year-old German Shepherd is the only specially-trained Infantry Patrol (IP) dog in the British Army and her skills are being utilised and assessed in the Brunei jungle.

Working with dog handler Sgt Nik Hawke (RAVC), this latest asset for ground-based operations uses its heightened-sensory awareness to uncover enemy fighters and insurgent activity.

Soldier caught up with Sally as she sniffed out personnel from the training support platoon (2 RGR) while assisting troops on a close-target reconnaissance mission during their Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course.

"These dogs provide early warning from ambushes and tactically they make a difference in setting up an ambush by giving early indication of where the enemy is," said Sgt Hawke, a former regimental dog handler in the Royal Signals. "She often picks up an indication from some distance away which enables us to get a clear bearing on targets."

Unlike other canines working in the military, IP dogs are coached to remain silent to prevent them from compromising their position with a bark or growl. Whether moving through heavy undergrowth at speed or wading through a flowing river, Sally operates stealthily at all times and responds immediately to the clicks of Sgt Hawke's fingers.

Describing his colleague's discipline, the



handler said: "She does not bark or make any noise on patrol and only reacts to my commands."

"You can tell whether she has detected scent or sound because if it's scent her head will come up, but if it's sound her ears will prick up."

'Dogs are so valuable on patrol that they are given an equal status to soldiers'

The benefit of having the four-legged addition on patrol was highlighted when unranked Sally stopped in her tracks and fixed her stare in one direction.

"By placing a compass on her head when she stops on her head when she stops on her head when she stops human activity," said Sgt Hawke.

"It gives us early warning of possible enemy in the vicinity and we can also get an idea of how far out from other people we are, judging on the dog's reactions."

“By placing a compass on her head when she stops I’m able to get a bearing of where she is indicating human activity”

HANDS-ON ANIMAL AID

DOG handlers ensure they carry the correct kit to treat any injuries their canine partners may suffer while on operations.

The animals face the same risks as soldiers on patrol and it is essential that wounds are dealt with quickly and with as little disruption to the mission as possible.

"They might cut their feet on the ground but we always have the medical equipment to sort them out," said Sgt Nik Hawke (RAVC).

"The treatment might be painful but the dogs won't make a noise because they've been trained to be quiet."

The use of canines on the battlefield is not a new tactic; they proved an invaluable aid to ground troops in the Malayan jungle campaign and in Borneo against the Indonesian invasion.

"Man's best friend" has also proved its worth in open country and in urban areas, discovering intruders and detecting munition dumps during British operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland and Iraq.

Now the IP dog could make a dramatic difference to the lives of Service personnel walking the insurgent-riddled ground of Afghanistan.

"If you speak to guys on patrol they say IP dogs would be an invaluable asset on Op Herrick," said Sgt Hawke.

"In Helmand province's Green Zone nobody would be able to sneak up on you because they would be detected very quickly.

"The dog will pick up an indication from anyone,



so soldiers on patrol just need to do a recce of the area when the dog senses something," explained the canine expert.

"But it also means the dog can be used for search and rescue missions using scent to recover casualties or missing personnel."

Recognising the importance of animals in a war zone, the British Army now hold the same priority for them as humans in casualty evacuation situations.

"Without being cheesy it's called a canine-liner – as opposed to a nine-liner – which is recognised by all nations if medical assistance is needed," said Sgt Hawke.

"They are lifesavers, force multipliers and so valuable on patrol that they are given an equal status to soldiers."

An IP dog's superior ability to indicate the presence of insurgents and adhere to precise

commands to help protect lives make them a sought-after and highly-effective asset.

But Sgt Hawke explained that the dogs want

little in return for their vital efforts.

"All of their hard work is done for a tennis ball and to please their handler," he said. ■

POOCH ON A MISSION



Infantry patrol dog: Sally signals to her handler on a close-target reconnaissance patrol

I'M A CIVVY GET ME OUT OF HERE!



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

LYING towards the helicopter landing point I looked down on the stunning green vista that forms the roof of the Borneo rainforest, home to jungle warfare training for British soldiers.

As the Bell 212 hovered over the giant-sized broccoli florets it became apparent that the close foliage serves as an efficient block to sunlight and any attempt to spy on what unfolds below.

My task was to gain an insight into what goes on beneath the leaves at the remote training location where soldiers have been testing themselves in extreme conditions since 1962.

The safety brief informed me that I should protect myself against mosquitoes, keep an eye out for wild boar and always check my bed space for reptiles, so I was not really expecting a relaxing holiday jaunt.

Prior to landing in the stifling 35-degree heat I mentioned to air crewman Sgt Adam Roots (7 Flt AAC) that however difficult conditions were, I was sure a few days in the jungle would be simple enough.

"Even one day in there is like a lifetime," was

the winch operator's blunt response.

"Once you're ten minutes away from the concrete of Medicina Lines Garrison that's pretty much the end of civilised life."

On arrival I was greeted by WO2 Taff Jones (RM) and Capt Gaz Veacock (RM), members of Training Team Brunei (TTB), who showed me where to put up my hammock and gave me a tour of base camp.

"Just watch out when you pick up the firewood – there's a massive scorpion under it," was WO2 Jones' nonchalant advice.

Out on the ground I joined students on a course as they prepared for a 36-hour close-target reconnaissance mission, which would require excellent low-level communication skills and the ability to read ground signs.

The purpose of the serial was to work out the routine of a mock-enemy – played by soldiers in the training support platoon – without being seen or leaving signs in order to plan the best time to attack and safely extract.

"It's always better to attain less information and not be compromised than to get 95 per cent of the information but become compromised," emphasised Capt Veacock.

"If you can't see the enemy then sound is important and you must also realise that you will be found if you are heard."

Moving through thick bushes and cutting

Above and main picture, It ain't half hot, mum: **Soldier's Joe Clapson** on patrol during the 36-hour exercise



across the knee-deep brown water system, I shadowed soldiers as they worked at speed checking for any sign of tracks or disturbance.

As I charged forward knocking into anything that lay before me I was politely informed that personnel were being careful not to hit trees because it telegraphs their position.

I made a note: "Must be less clumsy."

For those whose future as an instructor of jungle warfare relied on getting the drills right, becoming skilled at tracking and not leaving a trace was a high priority.

Prior to deployment to the jungle, Maj Dean Williams (RM), OC TTB, had spelt out the importance of reading markings without relying on technology.

"You simply can't beat the mark one eyeball – whether it's spotting the placement of a knee or position of a foot – it can determine where the enemy has been," he said.

"We all had the ability to track, we've just got to reawaken it – it is a low-level ISTAR

[Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance] skill which will save lives."

While I plodded along in the patrol line I was enjoying the serene atmosphere which was spoilt only by the continuous chainsaw-esque noise of a beetle.

Then came the shout of "contact right" and I realised we were under fire.

The soldiers I was trailing automatically reverted to their life-saving drills and immediately extracted down a ravine to adopt safe positions and gain the best line of sight. I followed.

As I carefully watched my step to ensure I didn't fall over or drop my pen, the Servicemen exchanged loud communications while

maintaining a strong rate of simulated gunfire at the 2 RGR riflemen acting as the opposition.

Once out of danger the talk was of "remaining focused and aware of the 360-degree threat" and the requirement to "identify suitable areas for winch holes".

Only then did I consider that in such close terrain the ability to extract a casualty was very

much reduced and relied on helicopters having access to the area.

Another hurdle that has to be overcome in the jungle is the fact that telecommunication systems cannot penetrate the canopy.

My bright ideas of using GPS for navigation and advanced radio communications if I got lost were in pieces, just like most of the students' blistered feet.

"Communication is a really big thing out here and you have to revert back to basics because the high-tech stuff simply doesn't work," explained Capt Veacock.

"It's good to practice hand signals and close-contact situations as they're what is needed in Afghanistan's Green Zone."

Learning to be aware of ground signs, to cover your own tracks and to communicate with only very basic equipment is just part of the jungle training course.

Add those lessons to having to live in an extreme environment, being detached from civilisation and fighting an enemy while surviving on what you can scavenge and you have an intense and extensive education.

I was safely back in the sergeants' mess eating doughnuts after 36 hours of civilian-style graft but Service personnel who complete the course in Brunei return after seven weeks with improved and outstanding abilities. ■

'IT'S GOOD TO PRACTICE HAND SIGNALS AND CLOSE-CONTACT SITUATIONS AS THEY'RE WHAT IS NEEDED IN AFGHANISTAN'S GREEN ZONE'

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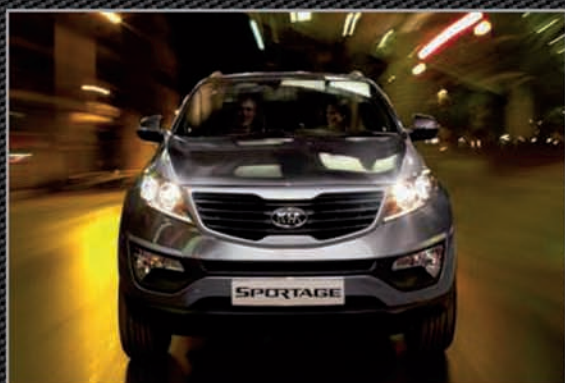
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JOIN THE 300 CLUB

MEMBERSHIP RESTRICTED TO PEAK PERFORMERS

Report: Stephen Tyler

In an Army engaged in a mission as relentless as Op Herrick, the need for soldiers to display superhuman levels of fitness has grown massively.

Today's troops hit the ground in Helmand province for patrols lasting several hours, often doing so carrying a hefty weight of personal kit and equipment.

Underpinning the development of the stamina and power required to cope with the demands of operations is the bi-annual Personal Fitness Assessment (PFA), a Service-wide challenge comprising press-ups, sit-ups and a one-and-a-half-mile run.

But while the vast majority of military men and women meet the required standard, a growing number are pushing the boundaries of physical excellence by gaining entry to the prestigious 300 Club.

The elite group takes its name from the maximum achievable PFA score – 100 points are up for grabs in each of the three disciplines – and membership singles soldiers out as being the fittest of the fit.

SSgt Ewen Gillies (RAPTC) explained: "Fitness is the bedrock of soldiering and the 300 Club adds another layer to that. It gives the soldiers something to strive for and reaching the standard is a huge achievement.

It encourages them to really push themselves and it can become very competitive."

As with all groups worth joining, gaining entry into the 300 Club is no mean feat.

To make the grade, soldiers have to complete daunting amounts of press-ups and sit-ups in two-minute bursts before completing the run in a very fast time.

The standards required vary depending on the person's age and gender, but each target has been set to ensure that a 50-year-old female has to work proportionally just as hard as a 19-year-old male.

The disciplines that make up the PFA were selected to develop key military traits such as core strength and stamina, and 300 Club advocate Maj Dave Wilson (5 Rifles) said that they were now more relevant than ever.

He added: "The tests within it represent a different skill set that applies to different aspects of soldiering.

"The ability to move at speed is especially relevant in whatever environment we face, but it's about more than that. The press-ups develop upper-body strength and the guys need a lot of that on ops. Sit-ups develop core stability and that's another good reflection of what's needed.

"It's good to know they are applicable across the ages and genders so that the guys and girls can all compete equally, whether

they are male or female or have been in six months or 22 years."

The size of the challenge facing would-be 300 Club members is apparent in the fact that since its launch in October 2009, fewer than 300 Service personnel have met the stringent standards.

Germany-based 5 Rifles have contributed 17 people to the total thanks to a battalion-wide exercise regime taking in everything from loaded marches to circuit training.

Maj Wilson told *Soldier* that gaining membership has become a "badge of honour" for Servicemen and women.

He said: "It's well-advertised and well-known and there's now quite a bit of competition between the guys to get in.

"We do have additional incentives – they get long weekends or a day off if they achieve the standard – but the real attraction is to get to wear the T-shirt and be able to say you are a member."

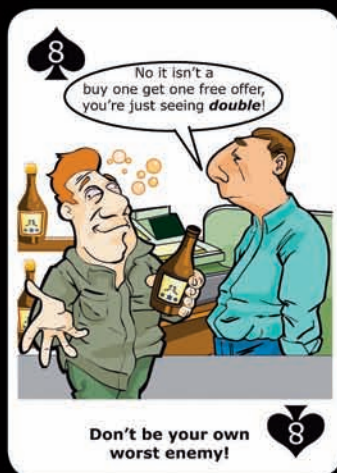
With operations placing incredible demands on the current crop of British military men and women, the need for physical robustness has arguably never been greater. But as the challenges have increased, so too have the effort levels of those serving and it would take a brave man to bet against the 300 Club welcoming a lot more members through its doors. ■

STANDARDS TO ACHIEVE

PRESS-UPS	SEX/AGE	UNDER 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54
	MALE	72	70	68	62	55	51
	FEMALE	46	41	37	33	31	28
SIT-UPS	SEX/AGE	UNDER 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54
	MALE	77	72	71	67	62	61
	FEMALE	77	72	71	67	62	61
RUN	SEX/AGE	UNDER 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54
	MALE	8min 15sec	8min 30sec	9min	9min 15sec	9min 30sec	10min
	FEMALE	10min	10min 30sec	11min	11min 30sec	12min	12min 45sec



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FACE OFF

**SOLDIER PITS AMATEUR ATHLETES
AGAINST TRAINED TROOPS TO TEST
TOUGHNESS OF FORCE'S FITTEST**



A close-up photograph of a man with light brown hair, wearing a white tank top. He has a pained expression, with his eyes squeezed shut and his mouth open in a grimace, showing his teeth. His skin is red and sweaty. Two hands are visible, one on the left and one on the right, holding his shoulders. The hand on the right is wearing a silver ring. In the upper right corner, there is a quote in white text. On the right side, there is a large, stylized red graphic that looks like a torn piece of paper or a stamp, with the word '300' in large letters and 'CLUB' below it.

“If the tests of strength and core stability were tough, the one-and-a-half-mile run ratcheted up the difficulty even further”

300
CLUB

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

AS devoted fans of unscientific experiments, *Soldier* went to find out just how tough gaining entry to the 300 Club really is.

With a mountain of stories to write – and nothing to do with a general lack of fitness at the magazine's HQ – we passed up the challenge and instead enlisted two keen sportsmen from civvy street to pit against a Defence duo.

Our guinea pigs included David Main, a 20-year-old Sunday League footballer, and Toby Meadows, a 19-year-old semi-professional cyclist.

Accompanying them on our mock Personal Fitness Assessment (PFA) at the Aldershot home of the Royal Army Physical Training Corps were physical training instructor Sgt Kevin Richardson (26) and 30-year-old Gdsm Phillip McPherson, of 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

The group began the session with an in-depth warm-up including the usual array of stretching and jogging. They were then guided through the press-up and sit-up process by

instructor SSgt Ewen Gillies (RAPTC).

The scale of the tasks ahead soon became clear. Not only would the civilian competitors have to manage 72 press-ups and 77 sit-ups in separate two-minute periods, but they would have to complete them to very exacting military standards.

With an eagle-eyed spotter checking every single repetition for correct form, David and Toby respectively battled through to 41 and 42 press-ups, some way short of the 72 required to gain 100 points.

Sgt Richardson showed absolute focus in performing the exact amount required, while Gdsm McPherson – whose target was 70 as he falls in the next age bracket – finished with a respectable 64.

With almost no rest in between, the four athletes got to work on the sit-ups. Aiming for a target of 77, cyclist Toby achieved 61 and David reached 54.

Once again, Sgt Richardson looked in complete control as he powered through to 90 while Gdsm McPherson began to succumb to the cold he was bravely battling as he reached 45.

If the tests of strength and core stability were tough, the one-and-a-half-mile run

ratcheted up the difficulty even further.

Our civvy street volunteers would have to complete the course in under eight minutes and 15 seconds to take home 100 points.

After a half-mile warm-up, the four runners set off. It was no surprise when, a little more than seven minutes later, Sgt Richardson came into view on the home straight.

The NCO crossed the finish line in eight minutes and two seconds, gaining him another 100 points and reaffirming his membership of the 300 Club.

Toby followed a little over a minute later, with David and Gdsm McPherson – who did well to even complete the course given his illness – following them home.

Sgt Richardson said: "Reaching the [300 Club] standards requires a lot of determination because it is quite demanding. Certain people find aspects of it harder than others but it is hard to do well in them all."

Second-placed Toby admitted that the Army's PFA had been much more difficult than he expected.

The cyclist said: "I knew the press-ups would be hard, but after 20 my arms started to cramp up and from then on it was hell."

"I found the sit-ups OK, but the run really pushed my lungs and used different muscle groups than I am used to." ■

TESTS FOR THE BEST

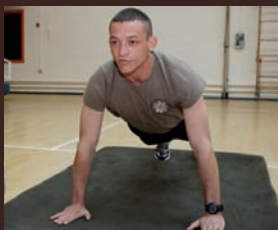
Name: Sgt Kevin Richardson
Age: 26
Role: Physical training instructor

Name: Gdsm Phillip McPherson
Age: 30
Role: Infantry soldier

Name: David Main
Age: 20
Role: Lifeguard/amateur footballer

Name: Toby Meadows
Age: 19
Role: Semi-professional cyclist

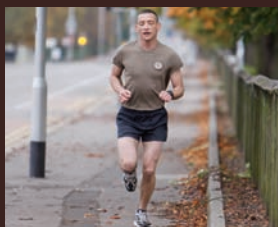
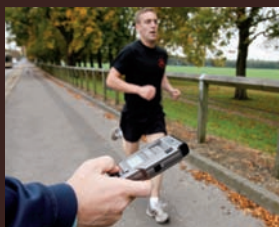
PRESS-UPS



SIT-UPS



RUN



RESULTS

	AMOUNT	SCORE
PRESS-UPS	72	100
SIT-UPS	90	100
RUN	8min 2sec	100
PASS		300

	AMOUNT	SCORE
PRESS-UPS	64	91
SIT-UPS	45	65
RUN	11min 37sec	55
FAIL		211

	AMOUNT	SCORE
PRESS-UPS	41	67
SIT-UPS	54	75
RUN	10min 58sec	63
FAIL		205

	AMOUNT	SCORE
PRESS-UPS	42	68
SIT-UPS	61	82
RUN	9min 7sec	88
FAIL		238

PICTURE PERFECT

ARMY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION'S
AWARD-WINNING GALLERY



Background picture: Best non-operational image and best overall image – *Craigy* by Sgt Mike Fletcher (RLC); **Above:** Best sporting image – *Wakeboarding* by Jim Hennessey (Media & Comm, HQLF); **Below:** Best media operations image – *Amputee Winchester* by Sgt Steve Wood (RLC)



HOTSHOTS HONOURED



Best operational video/multimedia

Professional winner:

Cpl Tom Robinson, Media & Comm, HQLF

Professional runner-up:

Kevin Capon, Media & Comm, HQLF

Amateur winner:

Cpl Milan Chamling Rai, 2 RGR

Amateur runner-up:

Maj Tim Symonds, 12 LSR

Best non-operational video/multimedia

Professional winner:

Kevin Capon, Media & Comm, HQLF

Professional runner-up:

Jim Hennessey, Media & Comm, HQLF

Highly commended:

Sgt Ian Forsyth, Media & Comm, HQLF

Best media operations image

Professional winner:

Sgt Steve Wood, Media & Comm, HQLF

Professional runner-up:

Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Amateur winner:

A/Maj Paul Smyth, J9 Media PJHQ

Amateur runner-up:

Cpl Isworchanra Rai, 2 RGR

Best sporting image

Professional winner:

Jim Hennessey, Media & Comm, HQLF

Professional runner-up:

Cpl Gabriel Moreno, 19 Bde, NI

Amateur winner:

Cpl Isworchanra Rai, 2 RGR

Amateur runner-up:

WO2 Mark Jones, 2 Lincs

Best operational image

Professional winner:

Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Professional runner-up:

Cpl Gary Kendall, 4 Mech Bde

Amateur winner:

CSgt Gary Ranu, Leeds UOTC

Amateur runner-up:

Lt Col Simon Jordan, HQLF

Best non-operational image

Professional winner:

Sgt Mike Fletcher, SRW, Lydd

Professional runner-up:

Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Amateur winner:

Maj Richard Crawford, HQLF

Amateur runner-up:

Bdr Peter Linley, 103 Regt (V) RA

Professional photographer of the year

Winner: Cpl Gary Kendall, 4 Mech Bde

Runner-up: Cpl Steve Blake,

Media & Comm, HQLF

Amateur photographer of the year

Winner: SSgt John Hughes, 1 MI Bn, JHQ

Runner-up: A/Maj Paul Smyth, PJHQ

Best overall image

Sgt Mike Fletcher, SRW, Lydd



Pictures, top to bottom:
Best operational image – *Contact* by Sgt Rupert Frere (RLC); Professional photographer of the year – *Mortar mayhem* and *Exhausted* by Cpl Gary Kendall (RLC); Best non-operational image (amateur runner-up) – *Horses on parade* by Cpl Steve Blake (RLC); Best non-operational image (amateur winner) – *Pageant of power* by Bdr Peter Linley (RA(V)); Best media operations image (amateur winner) – *Contact*, *wait out* by A/Maj Paul Smyth (PJHQ)



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SCHOOL OF ROCK

OFFICER SETS SOLDIERS ON RHYTHMIC ROAD TO RECOVERY

Interview: Sharon Kean
Picture: Mark Owens

WHEN Capt Fraser Dowling was appointed second in command at one of the first of the Army's new Personnel Recovery Centres (PRCs) for wounded, injured and sick soldiers, he saw it as a chance to introduce his own brand of alternative therapy.

The AGC officer set up and now runs a weekly guitar club for troops visiting or residing at the Edinburgh PRC, providing lessons in how to master the basics of the instrument he loves.

"I'm a rock man, so I've had them playing *Sweet Child O' Mine*," Capt Dowling told *Soldier*.

"I've called it the Help for Guitar Heroes Club – I hope Help for Heroes don't mind."

A regular contributor to our *Reviews* section (Pages 77-85), the axe fanatic teaches his string-plucking proteges everything from basic chords to 12-bar blues and Bon Jovi classics.

"It's a chance for the guys to chill out a bit and it covers off some of their welfare," he said. "It's

very satisfying helping them, knowing I'm giving something back – I think they appreciate it."

Soldiers assigned to the Edinburgh centre, whether injured in the UK or wounded in Afghanistan, follow tailor-made programmes that are designed to speed up their recovery.

Individual schedules comprise sessions based around the four key themes of clinical, welfare, education and employment, and aim to get personnel back to their unit or help them make the transition to civvy street.

"It's definitely one of the fun parts of my programme," explained Cpl Vinnie Polus (3 Scots), a resident at the recovery centre and a beneficiary of Capt Dowling's guitar classes.

"Learning something new in an informal setting with the guys – it's something to look forward to.

"Some lads might have had a bad day beforehand, but I've never seen anyone leaving without a smile on their face."

It was Capt Dowling's passion for the guitar that gave him the idea of writing to musical instrument shops and suppliers to ask whether they would

donate some equipment to the Edinburgh PRC, which opened just over a year ago.

"I wrote begging letters and Yamaha sent four electric guitars and a local music store sent four amplifiers," he explained.

"The idea was to give recovering soldiers the chance to experience the joy, satisfaction and boost in confidence that learning to play an instrument can bring."

Hectic rehabilitation schedules can make it hard for personnel to commit to regular time slots but despite this a consistent turnout of three or four students a week means the instruments are very rarely idle.

The first of four purpose-built facilities to be opened as part of the Army Recovery Capability, the Edinburgh centre is supported by Help for Heroes, Scottish veterans' charity Erskine and the MoD and has capacity for 12 residents and up to 15 day attendees. ■

From left to right (above), Guitar heroes: Cpl Chris Cunningham (SG), Capt Fraser Dowling (AGC (ETS)) and Gnr Robert Newman (RA)



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'Give troops a fair crack at Civil Service careers'

I AM coming to the end of my military career but still believe that I have more to give my country and would like to do so serving alongside the Servicemen and women who I have worked with for the last 34 years.

As I can no longer do it in uniform, I decided to look at employment within the MoD as a civil servant to help me achieve a number of personal goals, namely further employment (I too have a family to support) and to use the skills and training I have learnt during my career to support the Services.

I have since been informed that the MoD has taken the decision not to allow any external applications for current vacant, or soon to become vacant, Military Support Function (MSF) Civil Service posts.

These roles are usually filled by those who have an affiliation to the unit they are supporting (such as regimental secretary) or have particular experience and skill sets that make them ideally suited to the responsibilities of the posts.

I personally know that a number of these positions have been advertised again and again internally within the Civil Service but have not been filled because those who apply lack sufficient knowledge or are not seen as suitable.

When told this, the powers that be inform the unit to look again internally, offering training, until such time as they do find a worthy candidate.

The organisation and the people it serves is therefore penalised twice – once while the post is vacant and again by filling it with someone who lacks the level of skill and knowledge required.

I can understand why certain members of the Civil Service would believe this practice is acceptable and fully support it, but it does smack of protectionism.

If any civil servant wished to join the military they just have to visit the nearest Armed Forces Careers Office and apply. The same, however, is no longer true for a serving member, or ex-member, who wishes to join the Civil Service and work for the MoD.

Where is the "best person for the job" ethos or is it always to be "the best person for the job (as long as it's a civil servant)"?

This decision has effectively removed the opportunity for a serving or ex-member of the Armed Forces, or indeed the general public, to compete in an open contest for any appointment.

I am not sure if this practice is legal and compliant with employment law but I personally believe that this is a further degradation of the Military Covenant



Serving the Forces: Main Building is home to many of the civil servants working in support of the MoD

between the MoD and the Armed Forces.

How can the department and its ministers look us in the face and tell us that they greatly value our service and experience (as they often do) if they will not allow us to openly compete for positions within the Civil Service where they know that the same service and experience can be used to best effect?

The posts are still there, are still needed and are still being advertised.

Come on MoD, if you honestly believe what you tell us at least give us a fighting chance and allow us to apply. – Name and address supplied.

Julie Norman, LF HRBP S01 Policy, Land Forces, responds: The MoD does not prevent MSF vacancies from being advertised externally.

However, following the Permanent Under Secretary's announcement on May 25, 2010, the department has been forced to make difficult decisions and in the current financial climate with the restrictions on recruitment and the proposed reductions in Civil Service posts, there are certainly fewer vacancies up for grabs.

In June 2010 PUS directed that only those posts critical to the business could be filled externally.

Land Forces identifies these jobs as vital to supporting current operations, business resilience (including health and safety, security and business continuity) or otherwise business critical.

The Government driven Next Generation

HR project has led to the introduction of a new recruitment process.

Where surplus civil servants including MSF staff in the redeployment pool are suitably qualified and skilled, they remain the first choice to fill posts if authority has been given to recruit.

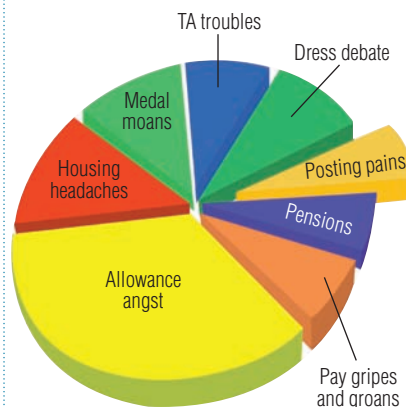
Vacancies are then advertised internally across Government, firstly for surplus staff but then for all staff.

It is at this stage civil servants, including MSFs, could apply for level transfer, advancement or promotion.

It is only when all of these routes have been exhausted and there are no suitable internal candidates that authority may be granted to recruit externally.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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Picture: Gaerne Main



Remote posting: British troops based in the Asian state of Brunei are more than 7,000 miles from UK

Bugbear over being Brunei-bound

I AM writing regarding the criteria for School Children's Visits (SCV) having been given an appointment in Brunei, where I will be accompanied by my wife and two of my three kids.

My oldest daughter, from my first marriage, lives with her mother and I have been informed that under Joint Service Publication 752 I have no entitlement to claim for financial assistance to fly her to visit me during the school holidays.

When at home she stays with me most weekends and for half of the school holidays. I pay a significant proportion of my earnings to maintain her and yet the regulations seem to take no account of this.

I understand the necessity to be the established prime mover in the child's life if claiming Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA), for reasons of committing to moving your family where the Army wants you to go.

However, I play a full part in my daughter's life, effectively sharing parental responsibility and custody, and yet the way the system is designed indicates children of married couples are more important.

The needs of the Service are sending me to Brunei and this policy effectively means I either cease contact with my daughter or

am considerably financially disadvantaged.

Clearly I have no choice but to accept the latter. The only other alternative would be to seek sole custody of my daughter and place her in boarding school, claiming CEA, to ensure I can fly her to Brunei in the school holidays. However, I fail to see how this would be in anybody's interests. – Maj S Dyson, Op Herrick.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
The SCV exists to assist in the cost of reuniting children with their parents, however, as with all allowance packages there are clearly-defined qualifying criteria which must be met. By your own admission you do not meet this criteria.

You do not have care and control of your eldest daughter and you are not the prime mover in her life and as such I am sorry to say that you cannot make use of this facility where she is concerned.

I'd also add that your option of placing your daughter in boarding school after gaining sole custody seems a little extreme and, while within current regulations, is bordering on the edge of breaking the spirit of the rules about continuity, should you remove her post tour.

Soldiering sets up second career

I AM one of four former REME soldiers who have left the Army in the last year to study on a degree access course.

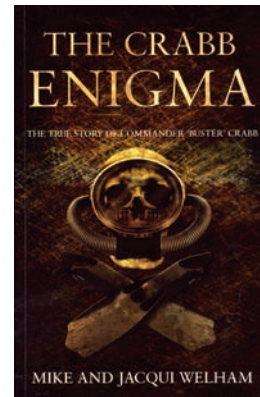
Our military training gave us the ability and confidence to tackle this challenging and varied course and we are doing well enough to progress onto Bachelor of Engineering programmes.

I often find a misconception among civilians without a Service background that people join the Army because they have in some way failed in life.

And while the military does give some the second chance they might not have had, many of us joined as professionals.

Our story is an excellent way of showing the wider Forces community what options they might have on leaving and help remove this stupid myth.

The university we attend is very much pro ex-Service personnel and are looking for more quality candidates. – Chris Ibbotson (ex-REME lance corporal), Sheffield University.



"*The Crabb Enigma* is an intense disappointment. Not content with one conspiracy, Mike and Jacqui Welham have created another to encompass their own investigation and they are seemingly able to construct a hypothesis from thin air. The writing style is ponderous, the spelling mistakes plentiful and the phraseology repetitive. The most exciting thing about this title is its cover."

– Lt Col (Retd) Nick Sim, ex-PWRR, *Soldier*, December 2010

Author crabby over criticism

■ AS one of the authors of *The Crabb Enigma*, a book featured in December's issue of *Soldier*, I was not surprised at the extremely negative review.

It is after all a title that does focus on issues with the "establishment" and of course the reviewer is a member of that "establishment", as indeed is *Soldier*.

The issue I have is that what appeared was in fact a non-review, as it provided no information about the contents, good or bad.

In fact I fail to see why *Soldier* bothered to print it. Or did you do so because it is a case of this [the book's content] is what the "establishment" does not want you to know.

I would point out that it [the review] does clash with what appeared in *Eye Spy*, a magazine dealing with the covert world of espionage – the subject of the book – and sold in 36 countries.

In the title's November 2010 edition there was a page about the Commander Crabb saga drawn from other sources and a critical review of the *The Crabb Enigma* which is completely positive and includes comments such as: "The authors make a plethora of claims, too many to list in this review"; "there is no question the authors have a deep insight into the case, and clearly they have done a tremendous amount of research – made clear from earlier works such as *Frogman Spy*"; "is *The Crabb Enigma* worth reading? – Absolutely, and there is a brilliant photo section and snippets of information that we haven't seen before."

In addition, the title is in the Amazon best-seller list for espionage books.

I would ask that you publish this letter so as to provide a more balanced view and allow your readers to make informed decisions. However, as you are the "establishment" I doubt that you will. – Mike Welham.

PS...

■ I CAN understand why WO2 Neil Port (37 Signal Regiment (Volunteer)) expressed his disappointment that Dr Liam Fox's signature was scanned on to his Royal Warrant, *Talkback* (December).

I recently had the good fortune of being awarded an MBE and in addition to receiving the medal you are presented with a scroll personally signed by the Queen.

Her Majesty holds approximately 25 investitures a year with an average of 100 recipients at each.

A total of 2,500 signed scrolls is a few more than the number the Defence Secretary is being asked to sign. Perhaps if there was an expense to claim for when signing warrants it would tempt him to put pen to paper. — **SSgt K Barnett, RTMC.**

■ I WRITE to comment on the poor state of some of the berets shown in *Soldier*. Why aren't regimental sergeant majors or even commanding officers doing more to address this?

In August 1999 I wrote to Lt Gen Sir Mike Jackson concerning the slovenly look of the troops of today's Army. In his reply he assured me that the wearing of the beret by some units did indeed look sloppy and said that he was going to take action. Nothing happened and they look even worse these days. My previous letter to the magazine in 1999 on this topic brought forth quite a number of comments from former soldiers – all of whom were in total agreement. — **Brian Kirkwood, Canada.**

■ I AM writing with regards to the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA), which helps to ensure Service children are not disadvantaged by the upheaval of military life.

Following the Strategic Defence and Security Review it was announced that the scheme would remain for those who needed it, but that the rules would be tightened.

I believe that our senior officers, despite having to take difficult decisions, have stood by us during this review and I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

However, there has been some speculation that the contribution of Service parents may rise or even double. These payments can easily exceed £300 per month (not including all the other extras).

Tightening the rules to ensure those receiving the allowance are actually posted and mobile is fair. But an increase in contributions that effectively excludes soldiers on low to modest incomes would be unjust and would increase the incorrect perception that the allowance is a perk of officers.

One suggestion might be to introduce a contribution on a sliding scale with salaries using the same principle that is applied for Local Overseas Allowance.

I hope that current speculation is just that and, in line with the Government's recently renewed pledge to the Military Convent, that our children and families are supported. — **Name and address supplied.**



"Just look where your letter complaining about no allowance for gym membership has got us."

Gym fees create unlevel playing field

I WRITE having recently been posted to an Armed Forces Careers Office. After asking what fitness facilities were available and discovering there was nothing, I was disgusted to find that no subsistence is in place to aid with gym membership fees even though my Royal Navy and Royal Air Force colleagues in the same office are given funding for this.

Whatever happened to tri-Service?

How is it that we're all doing the same job, yet there are so many different terms and conditions?

I understand that the preservation of physical fitness standards is a personal issue, but surely all Forces personnel should be treated the same. — **Sgt P Snow, Regimental Resources SNCO, 26 Engr Regt.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:

Under current tri-Service regulations (Joint Service Publication 752) there is no entitlement to an allowance towards the payment of gym membership when Service facilities are not available.

Both the Navy and RAF have put in place their own policies to address their specific fitness needs though these are under regular review in the current financial climate.

Given that the Army's fitness assessments do not require access to a gymnasium to enable individuals to meet the standards required, it is not possible to produce a compelling argument for such payments to be met from within the Land Forces budget.

Gripe fuelled by hike in travel costs

I WAS wondering why the Home to Duty Travel (HDT) rates are so different in the UK compared to Germany.

I have just been posted back to Britain and cannot believe the amount I am to be paid. While in Germany I had an approximate 20km round trip to work and received almost £50 a month. With fuel coupons this was more than enough to cover petrol and usage costs.

My new payment is just over £70 for a 52km round trip. I have not chosen to live this far from work – housing could only offer me my required property in this location. I would be surprised if this sum covered half my travel costs each month.

When claiming Motor Mileage Allowance on Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) for part of my return to the UK from Dover to Ashford, the amount was more than £10 for about 20 miles, yet I'm told by my admin staff that I can only claim a little less than £5 for a 36-mile round trip, as HDT only covers one-way travel and not the return journey.

I didn't ask to be posted but had to be as my son has special educational needs and we have been told the best place for him to attend school is in the UK.

I am hoping my admin team has made a mistake, as £70 will not even fill my tank let alone cover the cost of wear and tear suffered as a consequence of the awful British roads. — **Pte Pilbeam, 1 PWRR.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

HDT provides a contribution towards your return travel costs and the important word here is contribution.

The rate table in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 752 shows the single journey distance but the amount payable is based on the complete return journey. These rates are paid on a daily basis based on an average requirement to undertake 18 journeys to work per month (this takes account of weekends and leave).

While the published figures in the JSP apply to the UK, there are different rates applied automatically by JPA when serving overseas to reflect the local fuel and running costs. For Germany these take account of your access to tax-free fuel via the fuel coupon system.

I have spoken to your current unit HR staff and have confirmed that you are being paid the appropriate rate of HDT for the distance you are travelling within the UK.

Swipe at 'ridiculous' dining scheme

I WOULD like to raise a few suggestions regards Pay As You Dine (PAYD). My previous camp used the old system and I, as did many other soldiers, thought it was absolutely brilliant.

However, I now find myself at a location with PAYD facilities and think the scheme is ridiculous and can't find a single soldier who believes it is a good idea.

To make matters worse we have no cooking facilities of our own and are prohibited from buying any on health and safety grounds.

This leaves little choice other than to dine in an over-priced cookhouse which offers minimal variety; eat fast food or get ripped-off yet further by the Naafi shops on camp.

The problem is worse still in the mornings when we only have a 20-minute window in which to go to breakfast before parade. A problem which again could be avoided if we were allowed our own cooking facilities.

The old system was awesome – soldiers always had food and they never went without dinner at the end of the month.

I know becoming a "hungry soldier" is an option, but the blokes have more pride than to go to the sergeant major and ask him for a free meal chit.

If I was in a position to which anyone listened, I would offer the following two suggestions. Firstly, get rid of the profit-crazy civvies the Army insists on employing and bring back the old way of feeding.

Or alternatively, operate a swipe as you eat system, which would see guys get charged at the rate the Army pays for the food and the money deducted from their salaries at the end of each month.

Could such a scheme be viable or would



Picture: Mike Weston

Dinner is served: A soldier tucks into his lunch in the Village, the Army Aviation Centre's PAYD facility

it just prove far too much work for the pen pushers to investigate and organise? – [Name and address supplied.](#)

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:

Soldier has carried many letters on PAYD over the years so I will not cover the old ground you present, but concentrate on your suggestion about swipe as you go.

During the trials prior to PAYD "go live" such a system was put to the test but the take up was minimal so it was not pursued further.

Since then we have asked contractors to look at bringing in swipe technology but the complexity of linking already in place systems to Joint Personnel Administration across multiple contracts means it cannot be retrospectively installed.

Some card schemes are in operation but this is a private arrangement between a single contractor and a location.

In the longer term there are plans to trial some cashless systems to inform the next generation of contracts. So you are being listened to.

Downbeat about disturbance to downloads

I AM a soldier based in the south of England on a camp which has just had new accommodation built.

We were told that anyone who was not in their relevant block (determined by what squadrons they are in), was to move out and change rooms.

However, our commanding officer has also informed us that nobody will be entitled to Disturbance Allowance (DA), which works out to be around £65 for a living-in soldier.

This penalises those of us, like myself, who have internet set up in our rooms. I recently paid £125 for the privilege and it would have been nice to have the allowance to partly-refund this cost.

I have total respect for what the lads are doing on tour and know they are going through a much tougher time than to be worrying about this.

I have been there and done it myself, but this is a problem and I personally think



"I don't believe it. I've just paid a fortune for broadband and our new location has the slowest speed in the UK... I've been robbed!"

something should be done about it. – [Name and address supplied.](#)

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

Your issue on DA for single, living-in Service personnel raises an issue that has been taken to the MoD policy-makers but the Army failed to secure continuation of this allowance.

In essence the "within unit" moves that came in when Joint Personnel Administration was launched simply cost the MoD too much money and the payment for this type of relocation has since been withdrawn.

Commanding officers who told their soldiers that they would receive it did so in good faith but this change of policy caught them and many others out.

I can only apologise for the annoyance and cost this has caused.

We have asked the chain of command to reduce inter-unit moves as much as possible where the individual could be out of pocket. I am afraid that in this case, as you state, the single, living-in soldier has been penalised.



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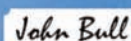
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Counting cost of commutation

I RECENTLY left British Army life after a two-pronged Forces career, the latter of which was spent in the Military Provost Guard Service.

I was paying back my resettlement commutation when the payments suddenly stopped without explanation. I reported this immediately and was told I no longer owed any money.

Almost a year later the payments started again unannounced and having reported the matter once more to the appropriate staff I was informed the deductions would be refunded.

Now, when I have left the Army and need the money the most, it has been revealed that my commutation was undercharged and I owe £4,000.

I received an apology for the error but was told "while you may have accepted the undercharge in good faith, this is not sufficient cause for this debt to be written off".

How else could I have accepted the situation when trained admin office staff and the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) were advising me? The mistake was only revealed when I asked for a forecast of my pension. — **Keith Thomas, Bridgend.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I am disappointed to hear that you appear to have been given conflicting advice and information.

Treasury guidelines state that money which has been over-issued from the public purse must be recovered and, even though it may not be the fault of the individual, they are still required to repay the amount owed.

The Government publication *Managing Public Money* also states that "in principle, public sector organisations should always pursue recovery of overpayment irrespective of how they came to be made". Recovery may only be waived where there is documentary evidence of hardship.

I strongly encourage you to write to SPVA explaining the pension problem and outlining your grounds for complaint.

If you are still unable to resolve the issue then you are entitled to invoke the internal dispute resolution procedure, details of which are available from SPVA.



'Why are single soldiers subject to scrutiny?'

CAN you please tell me why I, as a single soldier living in my own house, have to provide four different forms of identification to make a Get You Home (GYH) allowance claim?

My married colleague only has to produce proof of Council Tax payment and one utility bill, whereas I have to provide both of these along with a further utility document and mortgage statement.

I have a joint mortgage with my partner. Why should I give a copy of these details to my regimental administration officer to be kept on file?

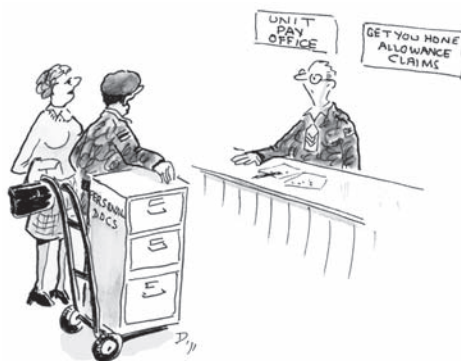
This is a sensitive document and my partner is not happy about the Army having a copy on its records.

Why are single soldiers producing twice as much evidence as married men?

Is there some sort of disclosure issue with holding sensitive information on people's partners?

I understand that false claims are made but both married and single men could cheat the system and we should all be treated equally.

As for the documentation required, why is a copy being held? If we produce these forms of identification once a year then surely that should suffice. — **CSgt T Miller, ACIO Burnley.**



"It may seem somewhat 'over the top' to you, mate, but it's better to be safe than sorry."

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: The anomaly of different burdens of proof between single and married personnel who wish to claim GYH allowance has already been recognised and since April 1, 2010 the requirements have been standardised for all (see para 05.0208 of Joint Service Publication 752).

To claim any allowance you must be able to substantiate an entitlement.

In your case this involves producing the documentation necessary to demonstrate that you are travelling to a residence for which you meet the

"privately maintained property" criteria.

It is therefore quite appropriate that your unit Human Resources personnel see such paperwork.

However, while there is no requirement for them to hold copies, it is perfectly proper for your unit to ask you to re-present such documentation, from time-to-time, to validate your continuing entitlement to the allowance.

PS...

■ AS a civvy with a keen interest in the Forces and huge amount of respect for Service personnel, I must say it was fantastic to see the return of the British Military Tournament.

The spectacular event at Earls Court may not have had the "Royal" in its title as in previous years, but it was every inch as impressive as any exhibition I have seen.

Not only was it a magnificent evening to showcase the talents of our troops but it was also raising money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. Every person in the place was beaming with pride at what our Armed Forces have done and continue to do across the world.

Whoever decided to bring the event back, well done and please make sure it remains an annual fixture. — **Rob Blake, London.**



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PS...

■ I would like to share a problem I recently came across when trying to apply for my Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) in the hope of stopping others from hitting the same wall.

The system was introduced in April 2003 to provide full-time members of the Armed Forces with funding to pursue their personal development, both during their service and for up to ten years afterwards, subject to the qualifying criteria being met as per Joint Service Publication 898, part 4, chapter 3.

When I tried to apply for the credits for a course I was to attend, I was told that they had no record of myself and I was not entitled to any funds.

I believed I had met the qualifying criteria with time served and had applied when the scheme was launched. But due to unit administration the application was not sent/received. I can't see why ELC is not just an automatic right to all.

The only window you have for late registration is after eight years of service and only then for six months, after this time you dip out. Why is this?

I would recommend all personnel who think they are entitled to ELCs to check with the education centre as leaving it to your last year maybe too late.

If due to an admin error you are not entitled, individual cases may be heard by the MoD's Director General Training and Education. — **Sgt M Brownlee, 4 Regt AAC.**

■ **I HOPE I wasn't the only one amused by the Defence Estates Operations Housing response to the letter "Pregnant pause over port move" (Talkback, December).**

"The family are housed to entitlement within a ten-mile radius of the soldier's duty station," it proclaimed, before admitting "unfortunately, as can sometimes be the case with some geographical locations, the actual road journey can be much longer".

Wow. In this case about 20 miles further according to the aggrieved soldier. A meaningless entitlement matched by a meaningless response. Or did I somehow miss the point? — John Elliott, Hants.

■ I WOULD just like to make it clear that the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) website "Rightjob" is full to the brim of jobs from other agencies paying advertising revenue.

I foolishly thought CTP diligently cold-called organisations touting for business on behalf of Service leavers, I have since learned this is not the case.

The reason I'm writing this is to make others leaving the Forces aware, if they are not already, that the best way to find companies in their area that are recruiting is to contact them by phone directly.

One day the powers that be will discover that CTP is not offering value for money and resolve the weakness. Until then, good luck guys. — **J Thomas, ex-1 KORBR.**



Picture: Sgt Steve Wood, RLC

Spark of annoyance: After 21 years of keeping the Army rolling – a task being carried out above by Cpl Brian Burden (103 Battalion REME) – a retired warrant officer criticises a protracted parchment process

Missing warrant throws spanner in the works of mechanic's retirement

AS a recently retired Regular soldier, I feel I must pen my last appeal to the Army system before I shuffle off into relative obscurity.

After 21 years' service I was fortunate enough to be promoted to warrant officer class two as an artisan vehicle mechanic.

On completion of my required courses, and with my Joint Personnel Administration records updated to reflect my promotion, I sat back and awaited the arrival of my Royal Warrant, framed and presented in the time-honoured mess tradition.

After 12 months with nothing to show I began approaching my unit staff to try to track down the missing parchment.

With still nothing appearing I contacted my manning division directly and was told "it has been ordered/delayed at the printers/will be here next week" etc.

I have now been discharged from the Army and as I fade away and become another old and bold member of the ex-Forces community I still have no warrant to hang on my wall.

I fully realise that as I no longer belong to a mess if the warrant arrives it will be rolled up like a poster in a cardboard tube and I can understand that nobody else

gives a stuff, but please can I have what is owed to me. — **Ex-WO2 M J Tyrell (REME), Lostwithiel, Cornwall.**

Lt Col Pete McMillan, SO1 REME Soldier Wing, APC responds: I fully understand your disappointment with the inordinate wait and lack of a formal presentation but I can assure you that the chain of command and Army Personnel Centre care very much about the soldiers they lead and support.

Time to order, print, confirm and distribute the warrant parchment would normally take six to eight weeks.

Regrettably, at the time of your promotion, the specialist printer was inoperative and staffing issues compounded the situation.

Many of the parchments received after the machine was repaired had to be returned, which again added to the backlog. It has taken around 18 months to catch up and your parchment has finally been despatched.

The delay in forwarding your warrant, and others, is regretted, however, I am sure in your particular case it now takes pride of place at home.

Strike medal and make some money

FOR some time now there has been discussion about the striking of a National Defence Medal to be awarded to all who have served either as volunteers or during National Service.

Just a thought, but why can we not have a decoration approved by the Queen, issued by The Royal British Legion and sold with profits shared between Forces charities? Think how much money this would raise for these causes if the medals were sold for around £25. As well as generating profit, it

would put British veterans on an even (albeit more expensive) footing with those of other countries.

Such a medal would also come at no cost to the Government in these austere times. Mind you, I expect some pompous fool in the medal office would set the criteria as "officers only".

Remember the words of Calvin Coolidge (30th President of the USA): "The nation that forgets it's defenders, shall itself be soon forgot." — **David Butler, ex-Royal Signals.**

BULLETIN BOARD

DEFENCE DIRECTORY

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

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

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

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: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

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

DEFENCE DIARY

January 1 onwards: The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes. The world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses and George Crosses. The new gallery will examine the concept of

bravery and the personal stories behind the medals. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. Call 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

Starting February 11: Classic War Stories for Children: *Once upon a wartime* delves into the pages of well-loved books, bringing five stories of war dramatically to life. Adults and children can wander through life-size sets, peer into intricate scale models and explore the stories' themes of loyalty, separation, excitement, survival and identity. Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk

Until March 19: Revised Winter Opening Arrangements: Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Moved to earlier closing time of 1600 daily. Land Warfare and Hanger 3 closed to the public until March, remainder are open as usual. For details visit www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

Starting May 2011: Exhibition of War Correspondents – Reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to us at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

Until September 2011: Exhibition – A National Hero of 95 years ago: Capt Charles Fryatt. In-the-spotlight display gives visitors unique access to intriguing items in the controversial story that caused national outcry when Capt Fryatt was arrested and executed during the First World War. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

SEARCHLINE

Airborne Forces have celebrated their 70th anniversary this year. These volunteers initially wore their own regimental cap badge and headdress until the maroon beret was introduced by Gen "Boy" Browning. It was these men who mounted the first operations in North Africa, Normandy, Arnhem and many more. In just 70 years of service, nine Victoria Crosses have been awarded to Airborne Forces, six in the Second World War, two in the Falklands and one in Afghanistan. To mark the 70th anniversary, a 64-page, A4 colour book packed with historical detail has been published. Now available at £8 including postage. To order your copy, send a cheque to DRA Books, 14 Mary Seacole Road, The Millfields, Plymouth PL1 3JY or call direct on 01752 312061 and pay by card.

Tony Davie is married to the widow of **Capt John Love RA**, a former Army Air Corps pilot who was killed in an accident on the Okehampton Ranges, Devon in 1960. If you served with John and can tell me anything about him, especially the circumstances of his death, his wife Margaret and I would be very pleased to hear from you. Contact Tony at 26 Fetty's Brook Road, Chineham, Hants RG24 8RW or send an email to ajdavie@btinternet.com

A daughter is trying to locate former soldiers who served with her father (now 92 years old) at Biggin Hill during 1940. Her father **2040039 Alexander Redgate RE, South London Search Light Battery**, was stationed at Biggin Hill to look after the pilots and aircraft during the Battle

of Britain. Contact Ann Greenfield by email at annapan2@btinternet.com

101 FS Battalion REME requires Territorial Army volunteers for Op Herrick 15. Covering a 12-month mobilisation period with tour dates between September 2011 and April 2012. Anyone interested should contact the ROSO, 101 FS Bn REME via their company PSAO. Next selection weekend is **March 25-27**.

A student studying at Loughborough University and who is sponsored by the RAF is researching the design of an innovative multi-terrain luggage solution for her final-year project. Leanne would like feedback from soldiers on their thoughts on the current issued deployment bags and any issues or problems they may have had with them. Contact Leanne Martin by email at l.martin-08@student.lboro.ac.uk

A daughter is trying to locate comrades who served with her father during the Second World War. **Sgt Leonard Anthony Bowers (Tony) (5111372)**, now 91 years old, served in the 1/7th TA Bn Royal Warwickshires Signals in 1938. Battalion called-up in December 1939 and sent to France. 1940 Stationed in Devon and Kent. Returned to France in 1944, fought in Belgium and finally stationed in Germany. Demobbed in 1945. Contact Lena Bowers by email lenabowers18@googlemail.com

Where are you **Spr Steve Pearson RE?** An old mate is trying to find you. Steve is a Yorkshireman who was attached to 3 Pioneer Corps Regiment in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1981-1983. Contact Dave Muckle on 07961 072398 or email davemuckle46@hotmail.com

Do any *Soldier* readers have any interesting colour photographs of **Afghan/Iraq/Northern Ireland/Wootton Bassett** that I could use to illustrate a book of poems? *Over the Water* is being published in support of SSAFA Forces Help. I am unable to pay any copyright fees and any images need to be supplied on a donation basis. Contact Christine Rodgers at overthewater76@yahoo.co.uk

Rutlish School, Wimbledon, is looking for a **Combined Cadet Force School Staff Instructor**. Contingent currently 45 strong, Army section affiliated to the Rifles Regiment. Post is part-time and the SSI can claim for up to 51 days per annum at an Army WO2 rate of pay, other expenses may be payable, subject to MoD regulations. Applicant likely to be an ex-senior NCO of the Regular or Reserve armed services, or have a working knowledge of the cadet movement. Interested persons contact Maj Bob Penny by email at cc@rutlishccf.org.uk

Jean Donaldson is trying to locate comrades of her father **1621234 Gnr Thomas Rogers**, who served in 147/43 Light AA Battery RA, Ceylon during 1941. He was also stationed on the Pevensy Marshes in 1940. Contact Jean by email at jean@jigsawresearch.co.uk

A researcher is seeking information for a book on **2nd Lt William James Moffatt, RE** – only son of Mr and Mrs W Moffatt of Blackrock, Dublin. Commissioned in 1915 and went to the front in December. In July 1916 he was wounded and hospitalised in Lincoln. He lived to be 95 and is said to have won a golf championship in the 1930s. Contact by email history@turtleunbury.com

A former soldier wishes to make contact with anyone who served with **8th Railway Squadron Royal Engineers** from late 1954 to late 1957, or anyone who served at Longmoor during that period. Contact John Barnes by email at ernest1234@terra.es

REUNIONS

2011 Aliwal Dinner: To be held at the Telford Golf and Spa Hotel on January 29, 2011. All ex and serving members, including attached personnel of 16/5 Lancers, 17/21 Lancers and QRL are invited to this weekend function. Nine- and 18-hole golf competition on Saturday. Further details of the event and application forms can be obtained by visiting www.deathorglory.yuku.com or phoning Bill Cook on 01952 740411.

2 Royal Anglian (Grimsby Poachers): Reunion for retired and serving Poachers and their families, to be held at the Beachcomber Holiday Centre, Cleethorpes on March 26. Tickets are £8 and obtainable from Denis Watson on 07809 727795 or email denis.watson@ntlworld.com also Frank Rimmer on 07879 625338, or email frank.rimmer@ntlworld.com or visit website www.grimsbypoachers.com

Gloucestershire Regiment 28/LXI: Reunion for 2011 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin, Korea. The all-ranks dinner of Bristol/Gloucestershire RGBW Association Back Badge will take place on April 2, 2011 in Gloucestershire. For full details and booking forms visit www.glost.org/bb2011 or send an SAE to Back Badge and Imjin 60 Reunion Team, 45 Coleridge Gardens, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 2QA.

Ex-Army apprentices: A dinner for all ex-apprentices, regardless of where you trained, on June 24, 2011. This will serve two purposes: firstly to celebrate Armed Forces Day on June 25 and secondly to donate all proceeds to the Army Apprentice National Memorial Fund. To assist planning we need replies by January 15, 2011. Bring partners or form your own groups. Send emails to chepchappy@btinternet.com or send an SAE to Colin Weir, 20 Graburn Road, Formby, Liverpool L37 3PB. The Memorial will be dedicated on September 7, 2011 at the Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffs.

COMPETITIONS

Spine Line winner: Ms Gill Heesom, Seabridge, Staffs.

A Team winners: G Crandles, Edinburgh; K Chapman, Knightswood, Glasgow; P Rendall, 39 Signal Regiment; Ms Liz Pullman, Fulwood, Preston; W02 V Bannister, CVHQ RA & HQWS, London.

Beneath Hill 60 winners: Cpl J Hall, 33 Engineer Regiment; Capt B Exley, 265 Bty RA, London; D Workman, Glasgow; D Magan, JHQ, BFPO 40; Mrs Jodi Bellringer, Abingdon, Oxon.

EA Sports MMA winners: R Matthews, Dallas, Aberdeen; Pte Osman, Dunfermline, Fife; D Myatt, Defence Estates, Sutton Coldfield; Sgt J Dunwoody, 2 Signal Regiment; S Hitchman, Thatcham, Berks.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

January: No presentations. **February:** Newquay; Salisbury; Taunton (dates TBC).

NO. 830

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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TEN details have been changed on this photograph from the *Soldier* archive of The Royal Scots Greys on exercise in Sharjah. Circle the differences in the upper image and send the panel to **HOAY 830, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by January 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 March issue.

November competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **W02 Russell Jarman**, AFCO Exeter. Runners-up **Mrs J Fear**, SWS, Warminster and **W02 T Richards**, Recruiting Group Scotland, Stirling, each win a £25 gift voucher.



DESPITE being given the British Prime Minister's meeting with his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy, as an excuse for poking fun at people in power, our army of satirists showed remarkable constraint when captioning the image below.

However, one notable entry came from razor-sharp David Holmes from London who focused on the political pair's attention to sartorial detail: **"I told you I was wearing a blue tie, blue suit and shiny shoes! Next time I'll wear a hoody."**

Another mention goes to Henry Aldridge of Kent who offered **"Nicolas if you use that electric-shock buzzer on me one more time I can't promise that I won't revert to my days as Eton's hardest and most-feared pupil"**.

However, a copy of



Picture: Cpl Steve Blake, RLC

"I know the tuition fees thing was controversial but I didn't think the students would overthrow the Government and lock me up."

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by January 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Robert Kershaw's excellent *Sky Men*.

Karl Marlantes' best-seller *Matterhorn* goes to Mr P Clarke of Berkshire. The Wokingham resident suggested the Anglo-French decision to share military assets might require compromise with **"So Nicolas, we use the aircraft carrier Monday, Wednesday, Friday. You take Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. On Sunday we hire it out."**

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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 British Army.

www.facebook.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Facebook fan page

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www.youtube.com/britisharmy

The Army's official video channel with lots of videos ranging from training to equipment.

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www.erskine.org.uk

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

www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.veterans-uk.info

A wealth of information about pay, pension and support services to both military personnel and the veterans community.

www.nivets.org.uk

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

www.oswaldstoll.org.uk

Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation provides appropriate housing with support to vulnerable and disabled ex-Service personnel, including those who have been homeless.

www.blesma.org

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

MUSEUMS

www.remuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

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

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

www.remuseum.org.uk

Royal Engineers Museum, Library & Archive. The explosive history of the Royal Engineers is on display for all the family to enjoy.



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Picture: Crown Copyright

Crunch time: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body will meet Army personnel before making vital recommendations on Service salaries in the coming months

‘Ensure Pay Review Body is aware’

WITH money for British Army accommodation getting tighter, funds for new work at home being slashed and families returning from Germany to the UK, Service personnel need to fight their budgetary corner.

Part of my remit as chief executive of the Army Families Federation, along with the two other Federation heads, is to present a view of family life in the military to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB).

It is always a very interesting session with board members asking about families’ day-to-day existence, the effect of operations and looking for further explanation or corroboration of things that they have seen and heard during their visits to units across the world.

The independent AFPRB has a particularly difficult task when deciding their recommendations for the coming year.

They are faced with a dilemma; they cannot increase the rate of pay for those earning over £21,000, however they are in a position to recommend an increase (or a decrease!) in accommodation rates and various other payments such as separation allowance and specialist pay.

It also raises the question about what happens to those whose pay rise would take them over the £21,000 threshold.

With accommodation being one of my hobby horses, the intense debate about possible increases in rent was a key part of the most recent session.

The condition of the Defence estate is brought up at every meeting by the AFPRB members and in the past few years it has been a “cup half full” discussion.

This time round though, there was little in terms of good news.

Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) are still trying to get things right but are sometimes let down by their choice of contractors.

The upgrade and core works programmes for Service Families Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation have been hit hard by the economic pressures on the MoD and have been seriously slashed.

The repairs budget has not been reduced but incidental new works, which covers carpets, showers and new fences among other things have been heavily cut, which will cause problems.

So if you request or need some work that is not in the MHS response maintenance contract then it is unlikely to be authorised by Defence Estates, unless there is a genuine health and safety concern.

Interestingly, the money that could have made a difference – the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea Barracks which was promised to housing by the previous Government – has not been forthcoming.

A question raised in Parliament recently showed that this decision has been reversed and the monies will be spent elsewhere.

I have emphasised to the AFPRB that an increase in accommodation rates would be unjust when families are seeing little or no improvement in the housing that they occupy and at a time when many are subject to a pay freeze.

I was asked how families would feel about the move back from Germany. For those with roots in the European country it will of course be a huge wrench but talking to my Germany staff I get the impression that a Deutschland posting no longer holds the attraction it did for my husband and I in the 90s and families are now keen to move back to the UK.

The ever-reducing Local Overseas Allowance, the low exchange rate and a lack of employment opportunities mean that for simple financial reasons families are

choosing to make their home in Britain.

The AFPRB will make its much-awaited recommendations during the coming weeks and then begin its next round of visits and research over the summer.

If you get the chance at all to meet members of the board and tell them about your life as an Army family – good or bad – then please do take it.

The MoD is under pressure to make large budget cuts so it is more important than ever that the AFPRB understands the true impact on soldiers and their families. ■

‘The upgrade and core works programs have been hit hard by the economic pressures’

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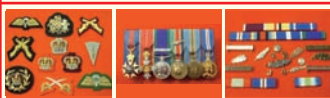
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Violent vision: *Bonded By Blood* gives a behind-the-scenes tour of the drugs-and-guns lifestyles of modern-day gangsters

Rettendon revisited

Drug-running, fast cars and bloody fist fights reveal a more sinister side to Essex

Interview: Sharon Kean

FEAR and brutality dominated the nightclub and drugs scene in mid-90s Essex with self-styled gangsters ruling the roost and making fast money – until it all caught up with them.

Bonded By Blood is the latest attempt – with blood-splattering detail – to tell the “true story” behind the so-called Rettendon Range Rover murders and charts the rise and fall of full-time thugs Patrick Tate, Tony Tucker and Craig Rolfe.

The burly threesome had been at the top of the underworld tree until they were found shot dead in a remote country lane in December 1995.

Although two men – Mickey Steele and Jack Whomes – are currently serving life sentences for the triple killing, both protest their innocence and the actual sequence of events remains unclear.

The film treads on similar ground to *Essex Boys* (2006) and *The Rise of the Footsoldier* (2009) and is the latest in a long line of mediocre post-*Lock Stock* British gangster flicks.

However, *Bonded By Blood* does lay claim to the status of an insider's account.

It is based on a book written by bona fide

Essex Boy Bernard O'Mahoney whose shadowy past included a stint as the head doorman at Raquel's nightclub in Basildon, where much of the on-screen drug dealing takes place against a backdrop of loud house music and girls in uncomfortably short skirts.

This, along with some very authentic Estuary English, fast cars and mock-tudor detached houses make director Sacha Bennett's film a believable slice of Essex life in the pre-Blair years.

Sadly the storytelling is slightly less slick, which makes the perpetual swearing and wife-bashing seem almost as gratuitous as the scantily-clad dolly girls who appear in every bar, car and club scene.

Career on-screen villain Tamer Hassan (*Kick-Ass*, *Clash of the Titans*) plays ringleader Tate and told *Soldier* the movie was “as close to the real story as you're likely to get”.

“Until someone comes forward and says ‘I did this’, who's gonna know how it really turned out in the end?,” he said. “Bernard O'Mahoney was their [the Essex Boys] closest associate so this is the nearest you'll get to the truth.”

Taking the lead and playing the role of head hardman Tate, Hassan looks every inch the boss. He swears, spits and snorts his way from prison

to the top of the Essex underworld, wrapping his hands around the neck of anyone who dares to get in the way, including his long-suffering girlfriend (played convincingly by authentic Essex girl Kierston Wareing).

“I play the villain. A villain is a villain and I can play that role in my sleep,” Hassan said.

“Everyone knows this story so I wanted to put my stamp on it.”

The London-born actor added: “I didn't want it to be all about bringing a reign of terror, I wanted it to be a bit more entertaining, in the same vein as *Goodfellas*.”

Although Hassan leaves little room for sympathy by the time his character meets his sticky end, the laddish banter and toilet humour will no doubt make some viewers smile through the pain of successive broken noses.

Adam Deacon is also thoroughly believable as foul-mouthed upstart Darren Nicholls, the on-screen narrator and real-life super-grass whose evidence led to the eventual conviction of Steele and Whomes.

The big surprise about this movie? Danny Dyer's not in it. ■

● *Bonded by Blood* is out now on DVD

From sex trafficking to a Welsh drug lord, *Soldier* gives you the chance to win the latest DVD releases...

Win... The Girl Who Played With Fire

THE follow-up to *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, this screen adaptation of the second instalment of **Stieg Larsson's** literary phenomenon is released on January 10. The film sees the return of **Noomi Rapace** as Lisbeth Salander and further explores her relationship with Mikael Blomkvist (**Michael Nyqvist**) while the pair attempt to expose the sex trafficking underworld in Sweden. Momentum Pictures are offering five readers a chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us who wrote the book behind the film. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Win... Death Race 2

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Win... The Town

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Tear up: King of the British gangster flick, Tamer Hassan, stars in yet another visit to the shocking scene of the Range Rover killings of December 1995

Win... Splice

PRODUCER **Guillermo Del Toro** gives us this futuristic sci-fi story of a new species being developed within a laboratory. We see a pair of scientists revel in their success as the new creature gains them attention. But predictably the boffins had introduced human DNA into the experiment and the animal becomes more than they bargained for. Optimum Home Entertainment is providing copies of the DVD to *Soldier* HQ for five readers to win. To stand a chance of winning, tell us who produced the movie. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Win... The Last Exorcism

THIS is a hide-your-eyes horror film from the same mould as *Paranormal Activity*. Here, producer **Eli Roth** (*Hostel*, *Cabin Fever*) excels in scaring his audience. We watch the religious trickster Reverend Marcus invite a film crew to document his final fraudulent days as an exorcist, before his faith is tested when a plea from a possessed girl's father brings him face to face with evil. Optimum Home Entertainment is posting copies of the chilling DVD to five readers who can name the film's producer. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Win... Mr Nice

ADAPTED from **Howard Marks'** best-selling autobiography, *Mr Nice* is released on January 31 and stars **Rhys Ifans**. From an upbringing in Wales to a lifestyle of smuggling consignments of up to 30 tonnes of dope, the Oxford graduate had contact with organisations ranging from the CIA to the Mafia. This film provides an insight into the mind of a mild-mannered smuggler who ended up with a hefty jail sentence. We've got copies of the DVD, courtesy of Entertainment One, for five readers who can tell us who plays **Marks** in the film. Answers to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Team effort: *MotionSports* boasts a range of athletic disciplines but is best enjoyed in the company of friends or family

Pens miss the spot

...but Ubisoft's sporting all-rounder wins over games console cynic with laughter

Review: Andrew Simms

THIS reviewer has been applauded off a football pitch just once... a sympathetic ripple of clapping after being stretched from the field of play with a dislocated knee.

The lack of acclaim during my playing career, which at its height saw me don the colours of AFC Broken Biscuits and regularly rake the shins of attackers in Bournemouth University's Wednesday League, had little to do with tough crowds and everything to do with a distinct lack of talent.

It is because of appallingly bad players like myself that football titles, and in particular Electronic Arts' *Fifa* series, have become multi-million selling console hits.

The virtual world offers those with two left feet the chance to sample the impossible and play out their sporting dreams, so it was with much anticipation that I fired up Ubisoft's *MotionSports* for the first time.

Exclusive to Microsoft's Kinect, which uses precise motion technology to track the player's movements without the need for traditional controllers, the title promises world-beater

wannabes the chance to not only burst the back of a net, but also race down the slopes of a Super G slalom; duck and run your way to a game-winning touchdown; throw punches at the champ and trot to eventing gold.

Still smarting in the wake of many an England penalty shoot-out defeat, I first opted to prove that – bad knee and all – I could do what Waddle and company could not and smash the ball home from 12 yards. I did so, eventually, but quickly lost interest in *MotionSports*' football offering.

While admittedly the keeper and woodwork repeatedly denying me proved mildly irritating, it was the limited gameplay which convinced me to switch disciplines. Once you get over the initial novelty factor of Kinect, which makes Nintendo's Wii-motes seem positively prehistoric, taking a penalty kick holds little appeal.

Other football titles allow gamers to take the legs of Messi, score a diving header at the Nou Camp and humiliate Arsenal in a cup final, whereas *MotionSports* lets you bend down to place a virtual ball on a virtual spot, take one step backwards, one forward and swing a leg.

Regardless of real-world ability, it's hard to know why anyone would turn to their console for such low-level entertainment.

Fortunately football is but one option and despite the poor start, *MotionSports* is far more of a crowd pleaser than I was.

Being beaten on the slopes in a head-to-head race by my five-year-old son did nothing for my sporting pride, but certainly brought a smile to the face and my horse's refusal to clear a single jump on my equestrian debut only served to add to the hilarity in the Simms household.

Furthermore the "grid iron" and boxing mini-games are the polar opposite to the football, respectively requiring the player to exert significant physical effort to hit the touchdown line or bobbing and weaving opponent.

With your performances played back to you on the in-game TV channel, complete with sarcasm-riddled commentary, and photos of your simulated sporting highs and lows splashed over billboards and magazine covers, *MotionSports* is best enjoyed with a crowd.

An authentic simulation this is not and detractors may argue that the title suffers from trying to be a jack of all trades rather than a master of one but, to its credit, the game doesn't take itself too seriously.

Adopt the same tactic and there's more than enough on offer to keep you entertained. ■

From brutal brawling to high-speed officers on patrol, we fire up the latest games releases...

Sniper Elite for Wii

SET in Berlin at the end of the Second World War, this third-person shooter sends the protagonist on a secret mission to obtain German nuclear technology before the Soviet Union does. Broken into several secondary missions the game moves smoothly along with some well-animated cut scenes. This title requires patience and stealth, which may prove frustrating for players who simply like to blow the heck out of things. Attention to detail has been paid to uniforms and weapons but the in-game animation can sometimes be jumpy and difficult to follow. However, overall this is an engaging and well-designed game.

Out now



Fighters Uncaged for Xbox 360

FORGET the plethora of Kinect-based fitness titles fighting for your hard-earned cash, this big, brutal brother of *MotionSports*' boxing is the ultimate cyber workout. With your swings triggering stock moves – of which there are many – players can use their fists, knees, legs, elbow and head to take down their opponents in this mixed martial arts fest. Think *Streetfighter* on Red Bull and you have *Fighters Uncaged*, which is more champion than contender. However, its strength – physicality – is also its weakness. Two players swinging blows in the same room is obviously a no-no but denies the title a multiplayer option.

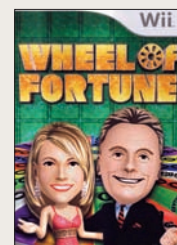
Out now



Wheel Of Fortune for Wii

A SOMEWHAT surprising conversion to the ranks of the gaming fraternity, this title offers fun for the whole family, but only if they have a penchant for all things American. With UK hosts John Leslie and Jenny Powell replaced by their lifeless counterparts from across the pond, players need a firm grasp of baffling US spellings, obscure geographic locations and nondescript celebrities if they want any success on a game inspired by the popular television show. This is engaging enough but developers THQ need to deliver a Brit-friendly version in the Queen's English to reap the full rewards of their efforts.

Out now





Off target: While the penalty shoot-out mode proves to be more Zamaretto League than Premier League, the rest of *MotionSports* offers fantastic family fun

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit all formats

THE creators of the award-winning *Burnout* series return to the fast lane for a high-octane race through the fictitious Seacrest County in their latest turbo-charged title. This ridiculous setting provides a welcome playground for petrolheads, who can push the world's greatest super cars to speeds in excess of 200mph against a backdrop of stunning national parks and surprisingly traffic-free highways. The controls are easily mastered and the option of busting boy racers as an officer of the law is a welcome addition. The action is fast and furious and serves as the perfect escape to your traffic jam blues.

Out now



Michael Jackson: The Experience

THE untimely passing of Michael Jackson has done little to dent the King of Pop's market pull, as a posthumous movie, album and all-format game testify. Spanning the entirety of a spectacular career, this title features an extensive back catalogue of his most iconic moves and performances. Expert advice in the Michael School helps wannabe dancers master the more difficult steps, while an eight-player mode provides the perfect opportunity to crown the rightful heir to the throne. Aficionados of the undoubted star will revel in the limelight of this game, but for more all-round fun you will be better served by the *Just Dance* series.

Out now

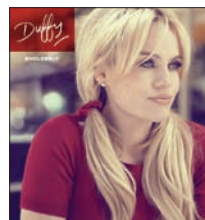


Your Shape: Fitness Evolved Xbox 360

THE start of a new year sparks the inevitable quest to lose weight and get fit. With the bleak winter doing little to feed the motivation to go running or venture to the gym, developers Ubisoft have taken the quest for a healthy lifestyle to the living room. The title's personal trainer mode provides a welcome array of exercises and will help you meet your specific fitness goals, while martial arts and yoga classes add to the variety. The Kinect technology offers no hiding places, if you are not squatting low enough or stretching fully you are swiftly put in your place, making the phrase "no pain, no gain" all the more pertinent.

Out now





Endless appeal: Welsh pop sensation Duffy returns to the musical spotlight with the release of new album *Endlessly*, which is out now

Music made simple

Multi-million selling artist revels in the uncomplicated world of her new album

Review: Richard Long

HAVING sold a staggering 6.5 million copies of her debut album *Rockferry*, Grammy award-winner Duffy is back with a new collection of 60s-inspired pop anthems.

The Welsh temptress certainly stumbled across a remarkable formula for success the first time round and one could rightly expect more of the same on *Endlessly*.

However, with the release billed as featuring more uptempo and dance floor-friendly tracks than before, it appears the 26-year-old may have opted for a distinct change in direction.

"At one point I thought 'is this going to be an indie record?' That's what it was beginning to sound like," she explained.

The fact she even released a follow-up album is somewhat of a surprise, given her admission that a return to the studio was never fully planned.

The trappings of fame have clearly weighed heavy on her mind and a retreat to the quiet life in Wales' Llyn Peninsula was a distinct possibility.

"I thought about walking away, I really did," she said.

"Not because I thought 'I'd done it'. It's just that I missed the simple things in life. Life had just got so complicated.

"At the end of that whole cycle [the release of *Rockferry*] I needed to be reminded of what I was here to do. I forgot for a while what my job was; what my role was.

"I'm not a model, I'm not a celebrity, so who am I? It all gets so complicated. Holding onto your integrity is really difficult. Having anything you want... it's really unhealthy."

However, fate intervened and an unlikely introduction to famed American songwriter Albert Hammond, the mastermind of hits such as *The Air That I Breathe* and *When I Need You*, saw the first seeds of *Endlessly* sewn.

Having seen Duffy performing on television he asked if the two could meet and a working relationship quickly formed.

She said: "We did a few days in LA, a week in Spain followed by a week in London, it was all done so swiftly.

"We had these songs and in my heart they sounded so charming on acoustic demos. And that is what I needed to hear. No complications.

"There is such a thing as working too hard. When everyone does too much you can kill

something. But it was Albert and me having fun."

While the recording process may have changed it is somewhat difficult to find any difference to what has gone before.

The sweeping strings, retro 60s sound and high-production numbers all remain in what is more than a passing glance to the late-great Dusty Springfield and her contemporaries.

Album opener *My Boy* hints at something new and exciting, a song that actually sounds as though it stems from a post-Beatles era.

However, the early encouragement is soon washed away by a succession of monotonous ballads and you can't help but think of what might have been.

Too Hurt To Dance and *Don't Forsake Me* showcase Duffy's unique vocals but the songs do little to inspire or make you sit up and take notice.

This pattern pretty much follows throughout, although surprise collaborators The Roots offer a welcome escape on the catchy *Well, Well, Well*.

The first wave of Duffy-mania was puzzling to me, a talented artist for sure but hardly worthy of record sales stretching into the millions.

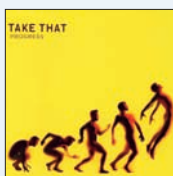
Endlessly does little to change that opinion and it has a firm essence of playing safe, rather than delivering the change it promised. ■

From the new masters of metalcore to Ray's rousing roster of friends, we rate the best and the rest...

Progress by Take That

THE highly-publicised return of **Robbie Williams** to the **Take That** fold sparked inevitable mass hysteria when it was announced last year and the second coming of the famous five was cemented with the release of *Progress*, their first album together since 1995. The result is somewhat surprising; the trademark ballads have been dispensed with in favour of a varied and bold new sound that doesn't always sit comfortably. The increasingly-enjoyable single *The Flood* leads the element of change while *SOS* and *Wait* give Williams the starring role he craves. This record certainly represents progress but it is also a gamble that will undoubtedly pay off.

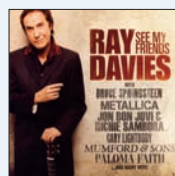
Richard Long, *Soldier*



See My Friends by Ray Davies

WHAT do you get when you mix British music legend and **Kinks** founder-member **Ray Davies** with the likes of **Bon Jovi**, **Amy McDonald** and **Bruce Springsteen** to cover some of the iconic group's greatest hits? A record of stunning production, which gets better with every listen. It's not just a pull for the older generation of musical glitterati, **Paloma Faith** and **Mumford & Sons** add a modern twist to some timeless classics including *Lola* and *Waterloo Sunset*, but the sheer energy of *You Really Got Me* alongside formidable rockers **Metallica** is my standout track. This will be one of the albums of the year, you may just regret it if you don't try it.

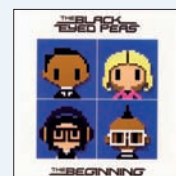
W02 Mo Morris, RLC



The Beginning by The Black Eyed Peas

THE **Black Eyed Peas** pop juggernaut shows no sign of slowing down with the release of the imaginatively-titled *The Beginning*, which comes hot on the heels of the 2009 smash *The E.N.D.* The record starts in appalling fashion with the hideous *Dirty Dancing*-inspired single *The Time (Dirty Bit)*. An overload of auto-tuned vocals ruins the following tracks *Light Up The Night* and *Love You Long Time* and you can't help but wonder what has happened to their catchy, mainstream style. The latter half offers some improvement and a slight return to form, but on the whole this is a below-par offering that ultimately disappoints and hints at the beginning of the end.

Richard Long, *Soldier*





Change of direction: Grammy and Brit-award winner Duffy has collaborated with esteemed songwriter Albert Hammond to produce a new sound

Doo-Wops and Hooligans by Bruno Mars

SINCE the release of debut single *Just The Way You Are*, **Bruno Mars** has taken the UK by storm. This album adopts a very mix-and-match style, which on paper shouldn't really work as he flicks from pop to blues and reggae to funk. However, the end result is faultless and each track seamlessly flows into the next with well-written lyrics and very catchy tunes. If you have it playing quietly in the background you'll find yourself reaching for the volume dial and cranking it up without even realising when you get to tracks such as *Grenades*. This is an excellent effort from a credible, versatile, up-and-coming artist who's going to be around for a long time to come.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

Escape The Fate by Escape The Fate

WANNABE kings of metalcore **Escape The Fate** have gathered a rather large following since their 2006 debut *Dying Is Your Latest Fashion*, but their sublime follow-up proves the four-piece are far from the peak of their career. This self-titled epic shows what this modern-day genre is all about within the first two tracks, *Massacre* and *Issues*, and while it may not be as heavy as other bands, such as **Bring Me The Horizon** and **Killswitch Engage**, it has killer riffs and some almighty choruses that will have fans hoarse at their live performances. On the whole this is a very good album, but a lot is still expected of these Nevada-born, post-hardcore kids.



Pte Stephen McManus, 1 Yorks

The Best Of Nelly Furtado

IT is hard to imagine that **Nelly Furtado** has been around long enough to warrant the "best of" treatment. However, the sprightly Canadian recently celebrated a decade of chart success and this collection captures the full spectrum of her varied career. Debut single *I'm Like a Bird* and *Turn Off The Light* reflect her early pop roots but the standout material stems from the RnB diversion of 2006, which was masterminded by the ubiquitous **Timbaland**. *Maneater* and *Promiscuous* capture Furtado in her pomp but the album offers further variation with a mix of ballads, Spanish language releases and three new tracks. All in all this is a welcome look back at a fine ten years in the industry.



Richard Long, Soldier



War-winning wagon: *Main Battle Tank*, published by Penguin, recounts the actions of the Scots DG and their Challenger 2s in Iraq

Forgotten firepower

Retelling of Operation Telic tank tales serves as a reminder of British Army's tracked star

Review: Capt Jim Vincent, RLC

WITH a proliferation of hi-tech vehicles and weaponry leading the British Army charge in Afghanistan, a former champion of the ranks is noticeable in the news headlines only by its absence.

Sidelined by the nature of operations in Helmand province, the Challenger 2 is having to sit out the current conflict while a new breed of war-winning wagons – Bulldog, Mastiff and Ridgback – earn their stripes.

However, rewind to Iraq in 2003 and it was the "Chally" which was top dog, a pedigree reaffirmed in style by Niall Edworthy's *Main Battle Tank*.

The book intricately describes the actions of The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards in southern Iraq during Operation Telic 1, with the author beginning the cavalrymen's story in Camp Alder's Nest on the Kuwaiti border.

In an aptly-titled first chapter, "Alert to all Possibilities", Edworthy skillfully puts the reader into the mindset of the leaders and troopers of the Scots DG, describing both the psychological tensions of a possible nerve agent attack and the

simple physiological threat of falling victim to a bout of diarrhoea and vomiting (a fate that has no pleasantries at the best of times, let alone when "closed down" in a tank in the heat of the desert).

The emotional roller coaster gathers pace as the men and their machines advance into Iraq along the infamous "Highway of Death" – a scene of carnage in the aftermath of a US aircraft attack on fleeing Iraqi forces during the Gulf War of 1991 – and the feelings of the soldiers are delivered with clarity and passion.

However, it is the retelling of the Challengers' devastating displays of firepower in tense, close-quarter battles in and around Basra which will awe every reader.

While the opening chapters create the impression that the Scots DG will be fighting a rolling battle across open desert, the reality sees them first locked down in the town of Az Zubayr and then surging in and out of the urban alleyways of Iraq's second city.

These forays are undoubtedly the highlight of the book and the passages describing the tank crews' destruction of a statue of Saddam Hussein with a high-explosive round, leaving only his boots intact, and taking down a mast with a high-velocity tungsten dart will go down in legend.

The action climaxes in the battle for Route Red, a dual carriageway that forms the principal route into Basra from the south, where enemy bunkers, T-55 tanks, RPGs, mortars and heavy machine-gun fire are the order of the day as the British advance against fierce resistance.

Consistent with the rest of *Main Battle Tank*, Edworthy describes the ferocity of the Iraqi defence in exacting detail and presents the operation as it was – a fiercely-fought victory.

By always keeping his focus on the tracked vehicles and crews within them, the author has done justice to the awesome muscle of the Challenger 2 and the tenacity and daring of the men that deliver its formidable firepower.

The title leaves you with as acute an understanding of what it must be like to prepare for battle, operate "closed down" and to live and fight in a modern tank as you might expect to get without having been in one yourself.

Fast-paced and charged with action, the narrative is complemented by supporting maps which make up for the far from polished accompanying photographs.

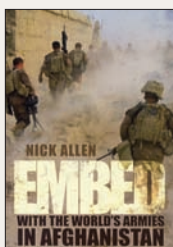
This minor irritant aside, *Main Battle Tank* is historically detailed, very interesting and makes for an excellent read for all. ■

From an embed in Afghanistan to being in a bed with the enemy, a flick through this month's literary releases...

Embed by Nick Allen

THIS book is a perfect guide to the dos and don'ts of journalism in an operational theatre and will probably appeal more to those aspiring to become war correspondents than those who do the fighting. That said, *Embed* changed this soldier's view of reporters in the field. I now know that not all of them are out to dig up dirt to further their own careers and that some actually care about the troops they are embedded with and go on to keep in regular contact with them. This collection of **Nick Allen's** experiences with multinational forces is enjoyable and proves that no matter which army you are in, you will always have to "hurry up and wait".

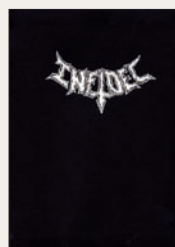
Lt Neil Dickie, 105 Regt RA (V)



Infidel by Tim Hetherington

AN intimate photographic documentary of a single US Army platoon's operational tour of a remote outpost in Afghanistan, *Infidel* is the literary companion to movie *Restrepo*. **Hetherington**, who co-directed the film, spent a year embedded with the troops and has captured in pictures both the fighting and day-to-day life of the deployment. Featuring interviews with some of the soldiers photographed, this book would make an interesting addition to any coffee table but also doubles as a good guide for Service photographers seeking inspiration for what to shoot while on tour.

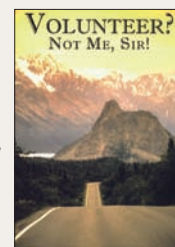
Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC



Volunteer? Not Me, Sir by Clive Toone

A VOLUNTEER to read this book again? Not me, sir. Focusing on chefs in the British Army of the Rhine in the post National Service days, I have already sampled this menu once and was let down by the quality of the food. **Clive Toone** may well have been a civilian during his days in Germany but that does not excuse making errors such as mistaking the SBS for an American unit and stating that the British Army drive jeeps. I won't list all the inaccuracies as this review would be rather tedious. In truth, I'm struggling to say something good about this book – more the literary equivalent of food poisoning than a Michelin star.

Anthony McNally, ex-12 Regt RA





Hero of the hour: Crewed by the men of The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the Challenger 2 was a champion of the 2003 conflict in southern Iraq

The Kremlin Conspiracy by Douglas Boyd

RECENT Russian history can be difficult to interpret, but *The Kremlin Conspiracy: A Long, Hot and Cold War* sets out to argue that little has changed in the country since the arrival of democracy and that hostilities with the West never really ended. With Russian reconnaissance aircraft probing UK airspace again it is a topical, if not slightly heavyweight, offering. In a well-argued narrative the author attempts to lift the lid on the Putin-Medvedev clique and explain the strategy behind the Russian expansionism of yesterday and today. Certainly a thought-provoking and disturbing read.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



Spies of the First World War by J Morton

IT was not until 1909 that the first recognised British intelligence agency – a government department tasked with stealing secrets from other countries and protecting its own – was formed. **James Morton**, in this meticulously-researched and fascinating book, covers the development of MI5 and MI6 from this humble beginning and the history of spying and espionage across Europe in the First World War. He introduces an era of colourful characters, male and female, with stories of heroism, bravery, cowardice, incompetence and betrayal; some were driven by patriotism and others by money and romance.

Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

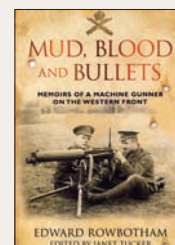


Mud, Blood and Bullets edited by J Tucker

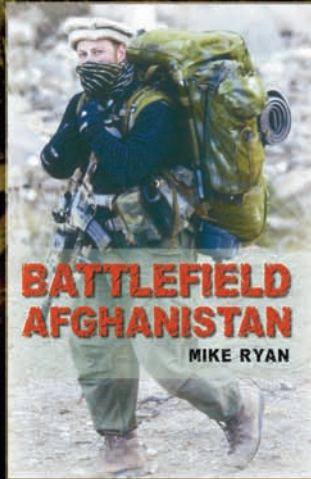
MEMOIRS of the Great War written by senior non-commissioned officers are sadly very rare.

Edward Rowbotham's account, edited by his granddaughter, is a real gem. It is both a social commentary (he was one of 15 children born into a mining family) and an intensely-personal recollection of fighting as a machine-gun section commander on the Ypres Salient and the Somme from 1916 to the Armistice. This is a captivating and absorbing tale by a modest, humorous and endearing man and it is essential reading for those who like their military history to have a beating pulse.

Lt Col (Retd) Nick Sim, ex-PWRR

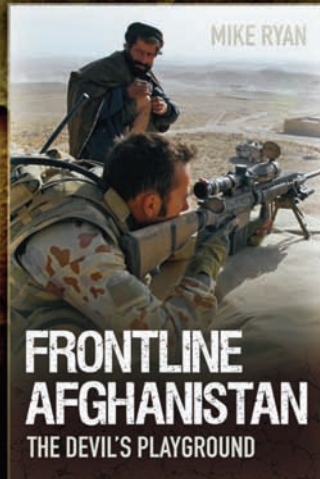


THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN



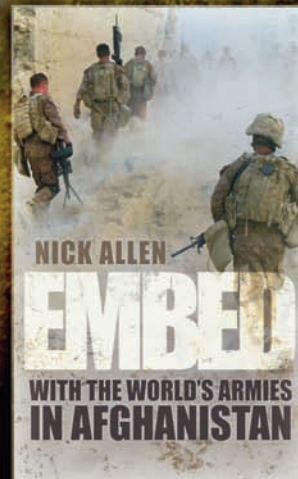
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SOLDIERSPORT

Picture: Graeme Main

WINTER WARRIORS: RUGBY
UNION'S YOUNG GUNS TAKE ON
FORCES RIVALS AND THE ELEMENTS

ALSO IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE...



P90 **BATTLE BACK**
NEW SPORTS FOR
INJURED PERSONNEL



P93 **SURFING**
SERVICE STARS RIDE
THE NEWQUAY WAVES



P95 **CRICKET**
FAST BOWLER JOINS
GLADIATORS' RANKS



P96 **BOXING**
TYSON SHINES IN
RING DEBUT





Reds suffer big freeze

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE next generation of Army Rugby Union stars endured Inter-Services heartbreak during an energy-sapping campaign fought in the bleakest of wintry conditions.

With plummeting temperatures, thick fog and a snow-covered pitch all adding to the challenge provided by their Forces rivals, the Under-23 side saw their grip on the trophy relinquished by the narrowest of margins.

Having suffered an opening day defeat to the Royal Navy, the Reds hit back to secure a fine win over the Royal Air Force in their second fixture.

But the Senior Service held their nerve in the decisive final match, earning a 6-3 victory to lift the crown.

The Army were chasing a third consecutive tournament title but their hopes were dealt a bitter blow in the dense fog of Aldershot.

The early exchanges of their clash with the Navy were characterised by prolonged spells of possession for both teams, but defences were firmly on top throughout the initial onslaught.

Gnr Owain Davies (47 Regt RA) opened the scoring on 12 minutes with a booming penalty that sailed between the posts from wide on the right.

However, the opposition hit back within minutes courtesy of a penalty in front of the posts, which was easily converted by AET John Humphries to bring the sides level.

Scoring opportunities were at a premium during a hard-fought first half but Davies broke the shackles when he crossed in the corner at the end of some fine Army attacking play.

Quick ball from scrum half Cpl Tom Chennel (7 Bn REME) found A/ Capt Dave Duffus (1 Scots) infield and the fly half fed skipper 2nd Lt Mark

Winstanley (Liverpool UOTC), who crashed into the Navy defence before offloading to Davies for a simple finish.

The fullback dusted himself down to slot a superb conversion and continued his fine form on the stroke of half-time, when he added another penalty to open a 13-3 lead.

With the hosts seemingly in control, the game suddenly turned in the Navy's favour after the break as Cfn Jamie Laing (104 FS Bn REME, pictured left) was sent to the sin bin.

With the centre off the field the visitors charged over in the corner for a converted try that brought them firmly back into contention.

They crossed again following a well-worked break from midfield and had the contest firmly within their grasp with a third try on 75 minutes.

A poor Army clearance failed to find touch and wing AET Ben Clark returned the ball with interest, showing searing pace in a sublime run that carried him to the line.

A late try from the Reds offered a glimmer of hope but when the conversion sailed wide in the thickening fog the Navy were able to cling on for a well-deserved win.

Powerhouse forwards Cpl Jacko Jackson (19 Regt RA) and Cpl Tippers Tipton (40 Regt RA) fired the Army pack forward while the impressive Chennel was constantly in the thick of the action.

Wing Tpr Leo Ravarisa (HCR) gave a superb defensive display with some big hits and the boot of Davies proved to be a fine attacking weapon.

Arctic conditions awaited the Servicemen a week later as they locked horns with the Royal Air Force at a frozen Cranwell.

After clearing several centimetres of snow from the pitch, the hosts dominated the first half but failed to transform their advantage into meaningful points.

A converted penalty try saw them open their account after 20 minutes but a Chennel penalty forced the Army into contention just before the interval.

The second period was largely settled via the boot as three further penalties saw the Reds take the lead.

With time running out, the Light Blues desperately sought a second try but their free-flowing passing brought about their downfall.

Winstanley claimed an interception deep inside the Army half and sprinted

the length of the pitch to deliver the knockout blow and complete a fine 17-7 win.

Despite seeing his side suffer tournament defeat, Army Under-23 manager Lt Col Andrew

Jackson (Para) said there were positives to be taken from a promising campaign.

"The Navy result was naturally a disappointment, but we knew that they had some experienced heads that they used to very good effect in the second half," he told *SoldierSport*.

"The Army team this year has a lot of new faces in it; this season has been about development and the boys did just that the following week against the RAF, showing real progression to beat another very good side.

"It has been a very competitive Inter-Services championship. From our point of view, the Army squad now has real strength in depth and these players can potentially represent us at Under-23 level again next year – but there will be talent out there that we have not yet seen, which we look forward to tapping into next season." ■

‘From our point of view, the Army squad now has real strength in depth’



FLYING FULLBACK

GNR Owain Davies (47 Regt RA) was the Reds' main attacking weapon in their opening defeat to the Royal Navy. The Service star kicked two thumping penalties and capped a fine attacking move to score his side's opening try at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium



FORWARD POWER

A STRONG Army front five tried to stamp their physical presence on the Navy pack in what proved to be a tight opening period in their Inter-Services clash. Both sides enjoyed long spells of possession but defences were firmly on top until a flurry of tries were scored in the second period



CAPTAIN MARVEL

ARMY skipper 2nd Lt Mark Winstanley (Liverpool UOTC) led his side to a superb win on the snow-covered pitch at RAF Cranwell. The centre made a sublime interception before running the length of the pitch to score the decisive try that ended hopes of a Royal Air Force victory



Flight star: Airborne ace Pte Mark Neale (RLC) takes to the wind tunnel under the watchful gaze of expert instructors from the Army Euphoria freefall team

Heroes take sporting chance

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main, Mike Weston

WITH sport playing a key role in the rehabilitation of injured personnel, the Battle Back scheme is doing all it can to provide a varied programme of activities for wounded troops.

These opportunities have traditionally included pursuits such as sailing, skiing, volleyball and swimming, but instead of resting on its laurels the initiative is going all-out to provide an ever-increasing roster of events.

SoldierSport has taken a closer look at two new disciplines that have made

their way into the Battle Back sphere and saw first-hand evidence of the benefits they are delivering.

For the seven Servicemen who visited the Airkix indoor skydiving centre in Milton Keynes, the trip was a truly uplifting experience.

With wind speeds of 120mph pushing them into flight, the soldiers were given a teasing insight into the adrenalin-fuelled world of extreme sports.

The session was organised by the Army Euphoria freefall team, which finished seventh at the world championships in 2010.

"This is us putting something back in for the Army," said team member Sgt

Dave Pacey (29 Cdo Regt RA), who was on hand to give expert tuition to his fellow troops.

"It was a really good experience and I was surprised at how well they flew. With losing limbs I thought they would struggle, but they coped superbly.

"Most of them were better than the majority of first-time flyers and they now want to take to the skies and do their skydive courses, hopefully that is another project we can do with them."

The Euphoria team, along with fellow donors Carphone Warehouse, the Army Parachuting Association and Airkix, covered the cost of the evening and it is hoped similar events will be staged for

PRE-FLIGHT

INSTRUCTOR Sgt Dave Pacey (29 Cdo Regt RA) gives the Battle Back skydivers some last-minute guidance and advice before they launch themselves into the 120mph gusts of the Airkix wind tunnel in Milton Keynes



FLYING HIGH

THE Army Euphoria freefall team is hoping to build on the early success of the wind tunnel session by planning similar events in the future, while looking into the possibility of running full skydiving courses for injured personnel



TUNNEL VISION

PTE Josh Campbell (23 Pnr Regt RLC) was the first Battle Back soldier to spread his wings and fly. The double amputee is now aiming to further his experience and sign up for his full jump course after excelling in Milton Keynes



Battle Back on a regular basis.

Double amputee Pte Josh Campbell (23 Pnr Regt RLC), who was injured in an IED blast in southern Afghanistan, said the session was a huge success and he plans to take up the sport as his rehabilitation programme continues.

"It was just an amazing feeling," he added. "I have done a tandem skydive before and I am interested in doing my jump course, so I thought this would be great experience."

"It is all about trying new things and finding out what your limitations are. When you are able-bodied you do not think about activities like this."

"It is a great way to test yourself while having a laugh in the process. These events break up the routine and they give you an outlet as focusing on your walking all day can get monotonous."

While the skydivers took to the wind tunnel in Milton Keynes, four colleagues were testing themselves in the salubrious surroundings of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The officer training centre has lent itself to a week-long horse riding programme that sees Servicemen and women learning a variety of equine-based skills from grooming and mucking out to trots and canters.

Maj Stewart Howells (REME), the officer in charge of Battle Back horse riding, said: "Sandhurst has iconic status in terms of real estate. It is very friendly, the staff cannot do enough for us and the riding facilities are second to none."

"These guys do not want to be wrapped in cotton wool. They want activities that able-bodied people do. They want to be treated like a soldier, rather than an injured person."

Howells said the course is open to a range of personnel, from those seeking a recreational activity to those who have Paralympic aspirations, and is now working on a number of ways to expand the initiative.

Riders will compete in the Heroes Cup at Sandown in February and plans are in place for an expedition in the Canadian Rockies later this year.

The programme has helped Rfn Chris Howard (2 Rifles) achieve a life-long ambition.

"I've always liked horses and I have been trying to find a new hobby for

some time," he explained.

"I loved the look of horse riding and everything about this has been brilliant, getting on a horse and going for a ride is a great feeling."

"This is about slowly getting back to work, especially for the guys who use horses in their jobs."

"There is a lot of hard graft but it is really enjoyable and I might even get my own horse in the long term."

Capt Andrew Jelinek (HCR) viewed the scheme as a key part of his rehabilitation and he hopes success at Sandhurst will help him achieve his next career goal.

"When I got back from Afghanistan I was supposed to be at Knightsbridge for ceremonial duties," he explained.

"But I got injured and the plan changed. I am still very keen to go and this is an ideal way to show that I can ride."

"It has been really good. A friend

of mine is doing the riding course at Windsor and I have been doing more riding hours than he has, so from that side of things it has been great for me."

With Battle Back continuing to go from strength-to-strength there now seems to be an endless stream of sporting opportunities available to injured soldiers and they are happy to take full advantage.

For more information on Battle Back, visit www.army.mod.uk/events/sport/16263.aspx ■



STABLE HAND

SADDLE star Rfn Chris Howard (2 Rifles) works on the less glamorous side of the Battle Back horse riding scheme. The course teaches a wide array of equine skills, from trots and canters to grooming and mucking out



PERFECT SETTING

THE prestigious surroundings of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst provide personnel with the ideal environment in which to perfect their riding skills as they continue their rehabilitation from injury



TASK MASTER

COURSE instructor LBdr Anna Garrett (King's Troop, RHA) believes the physical element of the horse riding programme delivers real benefits for Servicemen and women as they work their way through the recovery process



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Wipe out: The Rip Curl English Surfing Federation Surf School is offering young soldiers an adrenalin-fuelled adventurous training package in Cornwall

Surfers find right wavelength

Report: Richard Long

JUNIOR soldiers have been hitting the waves at Newquay as part of a new scheme to merge adventurous training with the high-octane sports of surfing and coasteering.

The initiative challenges personnel in a weekend programme that sees them riding boards at one of the UK's premier surf locations as well as jumping off cliff edges, swimming through caves and negotiating natural rapids.

Capt Mick Peters (RLC) has organised regular packages for Phase Two personnel from the Defence College of Logistics and Personnel Administration and he told *SoldierSport* about the benefits it offers.

"Coasteering is an excellent opportunity to challenge you both physically and mentally," he said.

"They completed arduous swims in quite testing conditions, climbed rock

faces and finally projected themselves into rough seas from heights in excess of 40 feet.

"It is a chance for them to get away and bond as a team. It takes them out of their comfort zone.

"On our last visit we took 30 to 40 young soldiers and the excitement, enthusiasm, determination and teamwork they displayed, having never surfed before, was infectious.

"The students developed in skill and self-confidence, even managing to catch a wave or two by the end of the lesson."

The sessions are staged by the Rip Curl English Surfing Federation Surf School and director Rob Barber explained how a typical weekend involves a combination of body boarding, surfing and coasteering.

"We have been working with the Army for a couple of years now but it has been getting a lot busier just recently," he said.

"With guys coming in for decompression we can offer exactly what they are looking for. The feedback they give is very positive.

"Surfing has really grown over the past four or five years and more and more people are now trying it.

"For the Army we offer a varied programme. Everyone wants to try surfing but the coasteering brings the group together. When you go surfing you can put your cares behind you for a few hours, you immerse yourself in it and it makes you feel fully refreshed.

"We really like working with soldiers. They are fit and keen to try things, they have the right attitude and they make sure it is fun."

The school offers a 40 per cent discount to Service groups booking activities at the centre.

For more information visit www.ripcurlsurfschool.com or email rob@englishsurfschool.com ■

SOLDIERSPORT'S COASTEERING GUIDE



- Coasteering is fast becoming one of the most popular extreme pursuits in the UK
- Participants jump off cliff ledges into plunge pools, swim through caves and ride natural rapids and whirlpools
- The rocky cliffs of western Britain provide the world's principle location for guided coasteering
- Key safety equipment includes wetsuits, buoyancy aids, helmets, gloves and shoes





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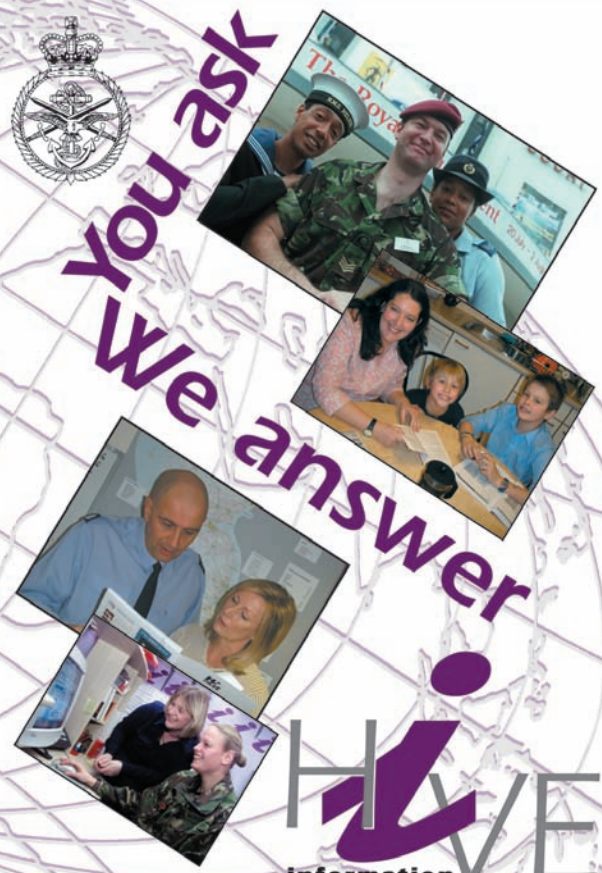
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Bowled over: Cricket star LCpl David Wade (R Signals, right) is targeting first-class success in 2011

Gladiator signs on

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

FAST bowler LCpl David Wade (R Signals) has set his sights on terrorising some of the finest batsmen in English cricket after signing a two-year contract with County Championship side Gloucestershire.

The 27-year-old was invited for a trial with the Gladiators at the end of last season and, after impressing in two 2nd XI fixtures, was swiftly offered a full-time deal.

Wade's fine form for the Army and Combined Services, along with some strong showings with club side Westbury, saw him catch the eye of the Gloucestershire management and he sacrificed two weeks of leave to take up their initial offer.

"I did fairly well in the trial games but I did not expect to hear anything from it," the pace ace told *SoldierSport*.

"It was a great way to spend two weeks' leave, playing cricket is what I love, but when they called back with the offer of a contract I was so excited.

"It is a two-year deal and during that time I have to balance my Army career with what I want to do cricket-wise.

"I just want to be playing as many

first-class games as possible. I am 27 years old now and realistically this is my last opportunity.

"When I was 16 or 17 I was released by Hampshire and that was my main drive to join the Army.

"Everyone aims to play for England and in two or three years' time who knows what might happen?

"But this will be a completely different standard. The Army play against a lot of academy sides and it will be a totally new ball park, but I am ready for the challenge."

Wade has already joined up with his professional teammates and is currently embroiled in a gruelling training programme that will prepare him for the 2011 campaign.

Under the terms of the contract he will be released to play for the Army in next season's Inter-Services competitions, a stage which he relishes.

In 2008 he claimed three wickets against the Royal Navy in the Centenary Match at Lord's and he finished with figures of 2-36 when the teams returned to action at the famous ground a year later.

In the 2010 season he took 13 wickets in all Service matches at an average of 27.1. ■

SPORT SHORTS

ARMY wakeboarders have built on their success at last year's Inter-Services competition by joining professional riders for a day of training at the LDB Wake School.

The session included coaching and demonstrations by some of the UK's top stars in an effort to raise the bar even further in a discipline that is generating considerable interest among personnel.

Rider Lee Debuse, who runs the school, organised the event in conjunction with Relentless Energy Drinks and Army team captain SSgt Mark Tillet (REME) was delighted his squad was given the time off work to take part.

"Although the standard of Army riders is now relatively high, the speed at which our civilian counterparts are improving highlights that there is no room for complacency among our ranks," he told *SoldierSport*.

"We were made most welcome and our members got the chance to ride behind the school's world-class Malibu Wakesetter VLX.

"They were coached by Lee and gained some valuable experience that would normally cost individuals a great deal of money."

SERVICE riders were put through their paces on a challenging galloping track during the 2010 Army and Royal Artillery Hunter Trials.

WO2 Brian Elliott (RATDU, pictured below on Bugsy) and LBdr Janice Illingworth (RA) were in dominant form at the event, which saw fierce competition in all classes.

The contest was run over the new track at the Royal Artillery Racecourse in Larkhill and saw a number of civilian riders taking on the military stars.



Picture: Sgt Pat Chapman (RMP)

SPORT SHORTS

SERVICE strongmen are being invited to flex their muscles at the annual Army bench press championships later this month.

The competition is the blue ribbon event in the Army Powerlifting Union season and will be held at HQ Land Forces in Andover on January 19.

Novice and first-time athletes are encouraged to take part and there will be individual prizes for best male and female as well as team, regiment and corps trophies up for grabs.

The closing date for entries is January 14 and more information is available from WO1 Dave Tempest on 94393 6302.

THE Army Fencing Union is looking for competitors to take part in the Aldershot Open tournament, which will take place on January 8 and 9.

Held at the Army School of Physical Training, the event features a men's and women's epee contest on the opening day, which will be followed by the foil discipline 24 hours later.

Entry forms and more details on the competition can be found at www.aldershot.webs.com

SERVICE cricketers claimed an early Ashes victory after defeating their Aussie rivals on the wickets of Helmand province.

The clash saw personnel from the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery locking horns with British gunners in a 16-over game at Forward Operating Base Budwan.

An unbeaten 52 from WO2 Craig Mason, of J Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, steered the Servicemen to a hard-fought victory in the opening fixture of the five-match series.

"The friendly rivalry between us is all part of Army life," he said. "Living and working with the Australians during the Ashes series will just add to an already healthy level of banter.

"Cricket aside, we are here to do a professional job and having the Australian gunners onside can only strengthen the team."

The Antipodean soldiers are on attachment to Colchester-based 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery.



Picture: SSgt Ian Houlding, RLC

Dream debut: LCpl Tyson Green (R Signals, blue) secured a fine win in his first-ever competitive bout

Tyson's star showing

SUPER-heavyweight LCpl Tyson Green has made a blistering start to his Army boxing career after he was declared best overall fighter on his tournament debut in Germany.

The 23-year-old defeated LCpl Jamie Clarke on points to win the coveted prize at the 1st Armoured Division Signals Regiment inter-squadron boxing competition.

Green, who serves with 1 ADSR HQ Sig Sqn, sealed the victory with a unanimous judges' decision in what was his first competitive bout.

"I started training as a boxer two

years ago, learning the techniques and skills but this was my first fight," he said.

"It was hard at times and I took a few punches, but overall I am pleased with how I performed.

"To come out on top in my first contest and to be voted by the judges as the best overall boxer out of 24 fighters on the night is brilliant, I didn't expect it."

The evening also saw 201 Sig Sqn lift the champion team trophy after they narrowly beat 212 Sig Sqn to the top spot.

Forces find friend in Fallon

EUROPEAN champion and double Olympian Craig Fallon (pictured in blue) was on hand to give judo players some expert tips and advice during the Combined Services annual skills camp.

The Great Britain international put personnel through their paces in a number of drills at the end of the week-long course, which was held at the Army School of Physical Training's Wand Tetley Gymnasium in Aldershot.

Army assistant director of coaching Bob Challis (ex-1 R Anglian) told *SoldierSport* the programme was aimed

at competitors ranging from novices to full-time athletes and said it proved to be beneficial for all.

"The lower-level players were focusing on basic skills and gradings, while the high-performance guys were getting the individual coaching, such as tactics and analysis, they might not get elsewhere," he added.

"Some of our squad members are at British standard and they are looking ahead to the London Olympics in 2012. I think that is a realistic goal for two or three of them."



Picture: Mike Weston

SPORT SHORTS

TRIATHLON man Cpl Martin Curran (REME) is returning to action this year to continue his fund-raising effort in aid of Help for Heroes.

The hardened athlete is planning a second entry in the Ironman 70.3, an energy-sapping event that features a 1.2-mile swim, followed by a 56-mile cycle and 13.1-mile run.

Curran raised more than £1,500 for the military charity by completing the Somerset-based challenge last year and has already generated £1,100 in sponsorship ahead of the next event on June 19.

To support his triathlon effort visit www.justgiving.com/Martin-Ironman-Curran

ARMY star LCpl Martyn Compton (HCR) has been named in the Great Britain ice sledge hockey team for the European Championships in Sweden next month.

The Battle Back Bisons player only took up the sport last summer and has since made rapid progress in the growing team event.

The European Championships will be the first major competition that Great Britain has participated in for four years and marks the start of the squad's campaign to qualify for the Winter Paralympics in 2014.

AN Army athletics development group has been formed at Brunel University to give track and field stars improved technical support ahead of the 2011 season.

The body will meet every two to four weeks up until March, with former UK event coach for decathlon Ian Grant on hand to offer expert tips and advice.

Registration is open to any athlete with aspirations of representing the Army and more information is available from Maj Paul Flavell on 01258 485221 or 94371 5221.

ENTRIES are now being sought for the Territorial Army inter-unit and individual half-marathon race.

The event is being held in conjunction with the Fleet Half Marathon on Sunday, March 20.

For more information and entry forms contact W02 John Castle via Castle@armymail.mod.uk

PEMBROKESHIRE Adventure Centre is offering Service personnel and their dependants a 20 per cent discount on all courses and programmes.

The facility arranges a host of challenging activities including surfing, climbing, coasteering and yachting.

This year also sees the launch of a new instructor training programme, which provides national governing body qualifications, practical experience and expert knowledge.

The site is run by The Prince's Trust and all profits are used to help young people find training and employment.

For more information on the courses available at the centre log on to www.princes-trust.org.uk/adventure



Picture: Sgt Mark Nesbitt, RLC

On the charge: Racers brave the bitter German temperatures in the 16km cross-country challenge

Rhino runner hits top form

ENDURANCE athlete Capt Alanda Scott (35 Engineer Regiment) produced a remarkable performance to win the women's event in the first-ever Exercise Rhino Soldier.

The 29-year-old was a late entrant to the 16km cross-country race having only found out about the gruelling challenge the night before, but she managed to beat a strong field and sub-zero temperatures to complete the course in a time of 1hr 19min.

More than 580 runners took part in the event in Northern Germany and Scott's effort saw her finish second overall, just two-and-a-half minutes behind the men's winner.

"The race had apparently been advertised for a while, but I had paid little attention to it," said the officer, who narrowly missed out on a place in the Great Britain biathlon team at the last Winter Olympics.

"I have been training hard on various exercises for a possible deployment to Afghanistan and had been due to attend a course on the day of the run.

"The course got cancelled and someone mentioned the race to me on the night before, so I thought 'why not?'"

"I would have been upset if I had not come in the top half of the women's event as I am quite into my fitness, so to come second overall is really great."

Competitors had to run in Army-issue boots and clothing and tackled a variety of obstacles including water crossings, mud and sand ditches, low nets and steep climbs.

Former soldier Steve Sommerville won the men's race, with runners from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers lifting the men's team title.

Athletes from 1 Logistic Support Regiment were crowned as the women's team champions.

Army ace joins magnificent seven

RUGBY Union sensation Pte Isoa Damudamu (RLC) helped guide the England team to a stunning victory in the Dubai Sevens tournament.

The Service player was in fine form throughout the competition and was part of the side that secured a remarkable comeback win over reigning world champions Samoa in the final.

Damudamu was among the try-scorers as England opened their campaign with a hard-fought 24-12 triumph against France.

He then watched from the sidelines as the squad slipped to an embarrassing loss to Portugal before returning to the field for the must-win clash with the Fijians.

After shading the contest by a slender 26-21 margin, England battled their way past Australia to set up a semi-final showdown with New Zealand.

The Army forward played an integral role in the tight defensive unit that restricted the mighty All Blacks for prolonged periods, an effort that ultimately brought about a fine 19-14 success.

The result was seen as sweet revenge for the team, who suffered a crushing 33-12 defeat to the same opposition in the semi-finals of the Commonwealth Games in India late last year.

Royal Navy star Cpl Greg Barden was also part of the winning squad.

final word

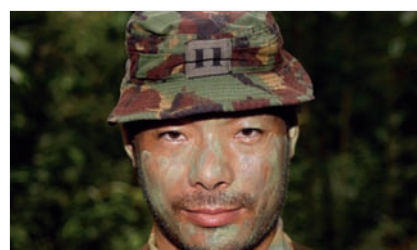
We asked staff and students on the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course (JWIC) in Brunei what skills can be learnt during the seven-week serial and how training in the trees is relevant to current operations

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: GRAEME MAIN



Sgt Nik Hawke (RAVC)

Being in the jungle improves your admin as well as your ability to live from your Bergen. Out here the wet/dry drills are essential and without them soldiers will go down, so personnel leave with a much-healthier respect for personal admin. As a dog handler, being in this environment has improved my infantry skills and I am now much happier working within a troop.



Sgt Hem Rai (2 RGR)

The course is very important in terms of learning how to operate in places like the Green Zone of Afghanistan. I have done several tours of Helmand province and the Brunei jungle is a very similar environment. Working on close-terrain combat and the ability to operate near to the enemy is very helpful. The training also teaches you how to identify opposing forces which is a valuable skill.



CSgt Eifion Griffiths (WG)

Taking things back to basics, working on hand signals and living out of your kit make for a better soldier. The course brings blokes together because out here everyone has got to learn the required skills – if you can't do things like navigate in pairs you will be in trouble. You have to have better drills here than anywhere else in the world, so it's great preparation in relation to Afghanistan.



Cpl Jason Towel (R Anglian)

The course teaches you how to survive in the jungle. All of the tactics you learn in Brunei will help a lot in places like Afghanistan and other green zones. The training out here is also much harder than anywhere else I've been; the heat and humidity and the amount of kit you have to carry sets you in good stead for wherever you may go on operations in the future.



Cpl Lee West (RM)

Micro navigation is a big thing out here and it is more challenging than training in the UK. A lot of the skills represent basic soldiering and this is an ideal place to practice. Ground sign awareness, working in the trees and knowing whether an area has been disturbed can be used in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Carrying kit and learning to be quiet on patrol are essential wherever we go.



W02 Taff Jones (RM)

The JWIC is good because living off the belt and Bergen seems to be a lost art. The jungle compels you to do the basics well and people who have those talents have the highest survivability. Aural adjustment and understanding ground signs are excellent skills – if you can scan and search properly you are more situationally aware which is a huge aid in Afghanistan.



Sgt Adam Roots (AAC)

We get people in and out of the jungle and remain constantly on call during exercises in case of injuries. Being able to operate the winch and deploy at one-hour's notice are obviously transferable to operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The whole experience of working as a unit with a team on the ground is good practice for any situation.



Cpl Angie Matley (RAMC)

When the troops go into the jungle a medic always goes with them, which helps us become more confident with drills and skills in the back of helicopters on operations. Working in the extreme heat and humidity highlights to soldiers how important it is to look after themselves in terms of hydration and hygiene, which are invaluable lessons.



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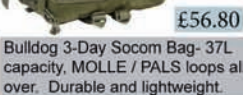
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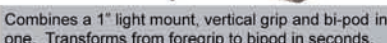
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