

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

WILL THEY WON'T THEY

Beard debate gets prickly

RANK SWAP

What happened when a soldier and officer changed places?

INSIDE:

Step up your workout

Nutrition no-nos

Could you take on BAWF?

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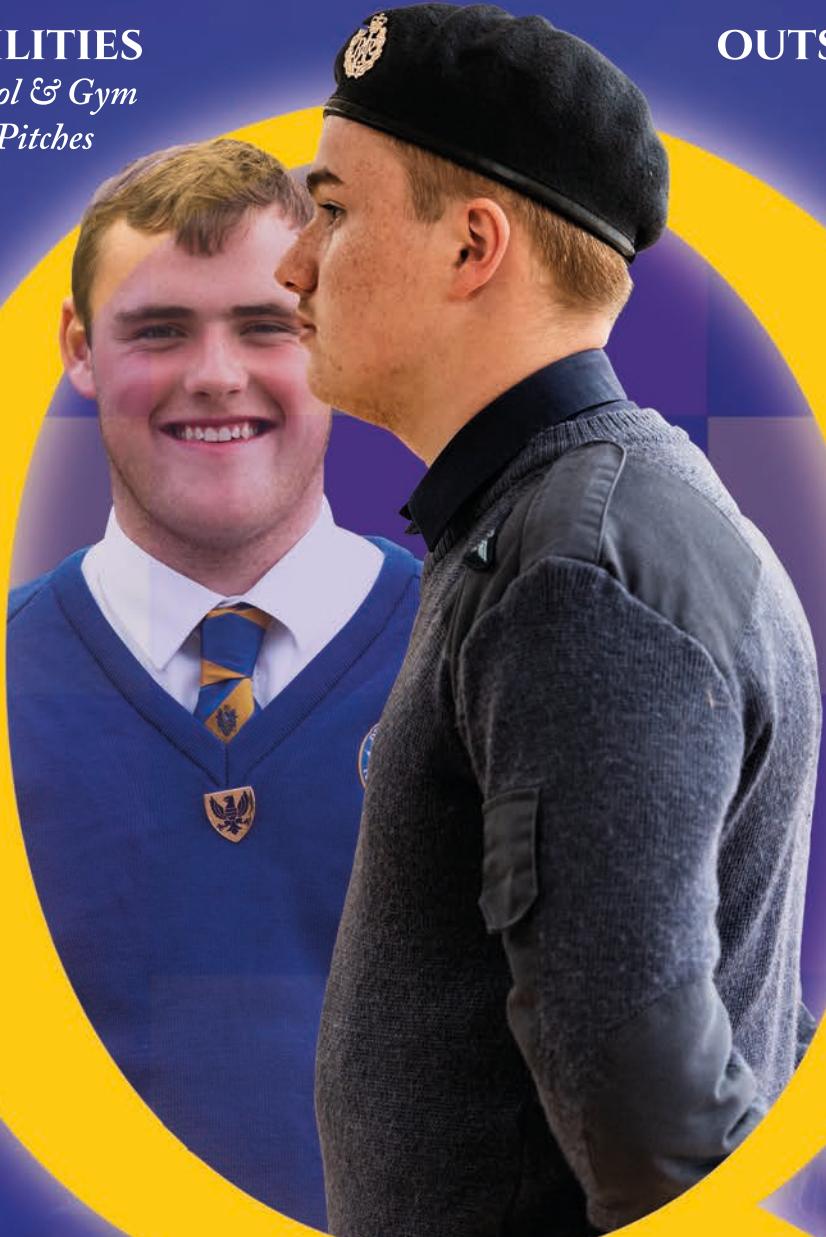
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LONGER SEPARATION ALLOWANCE (LSA)

What is LSA?

It's a payment to support and improve retention by compensating for separation over and above that compensated for by X-Factor within basic pay. It recognises the disadvantages of separation caused when a return to the duty station and/or the family home is precluded by either the nature or location of the duty.



Quick facts on LSA

- LSA attracts a personal liability for Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs). This all happens automatically through the payroll process.
- The Army spent over £62M on LSA in 2022/23.
- LSA and GYH(Travel) cannot be paid concurrently.



How much will I receive?

LSA (INVOLSEP) is paid at different levels to recognise the cumulative impact of separation. SP will be paid LSA Level 1 for the first 280 days of QS. Levels then increase every 180 days, up to level 13. Rates received a 5.8% uplift in the latest pay award announcement. This takes Level 1 LSA to £8.35 per day and Level 5 to £20.97 per day.



FAQs

I was on Op INTERFLEX and didn't get LSA. We were being bussed daily from our barracks to the training area, delivering training with very little downtime, surely we should have received LSA? Unfortunately not, SP were returning to their duty station or family home. Granted this was for very short periods of time, over a sustained period. This specific activity is recognised within the X-factor element of pay, specifically long hours and separation. More is expected in this area throughout 2024, as well as detailed work on the recommendations contained within the Haythornthwaite Review.

I'm a sports coach/manager and arguably a key enabler to the activity, surely I can have LSA when running an overseas sports visit? SP are ineligible for LSA on any period spent away from an individual's permanent duty station for the purposes of sport or sponsored/organised recreational activities. This includes enabler/coaches/managers etc. Only those key enablers for expeditions or adventurous training whose attendance is solely to facilitate the activity will be regarded as on temporary duty and

I'm a Reservist, can I receive LSA? I help out on exercises with Regular counterparts and I've been told they are eligible, but I am not? Members of the Reserve Forces, but not Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, will be eligible for LSA in line with their Regular counterparts but it is dependant on how they are employed. Reservists are only eligible for LSA if they are serving under the terms of Section 24 (FTRS) and Section 25 (ADC) of the Reserve Forces Act (RFA) 96. Reservists undertaking periods of training under Section 22 (obligatory training) and Section 27 (VTOD) are ineligible. The only exception to this is time as an enabler on expeditions/adventurous training.

For more information please consult your Unit HR in the first instance. LSA can be found in Chapter 10 of JSP 752.



ALLOWANCES BITES JANUARY 2024

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Cover picture: Graeme Main

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The course is
brutal, very
arduous, but
that's good

99

Going up in the world – p30



New year, new culture?

ARE the British Army's top brass *really* ready to embrace this challenge culture that has been getting so much talk-up of late?

It's one thing to wax lyrical publicly about the very latest in leadership thought, but quite another to put that into practice in your own team – especially when the extreme pressure of military operations is applied.

But as ex-Reservist Sir Jonathan Van-Tam – the UK's former deputy chief medical officer who became a household name during the pandemic – told us this month (page 15), commanders need to create "safe spaces" if they want the best teams.

If you've ever had to mentally berate the boss – or been left lamenting the fact you could have done something better – well, you might be right.

Turn to page 38 to find out what happened when we got an officer and a soldier to swap ranks for the day, and the various insights that this entertaining little experiment brought to both Servicemen.

Many thanks to 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment for putting their money where their mouths are when it comes to embracing a challenge culture in 2024.

The results show – you won't be surprised to learn – that scenarios where soldiers are *genuinely* listened to are the ones where wars are won.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

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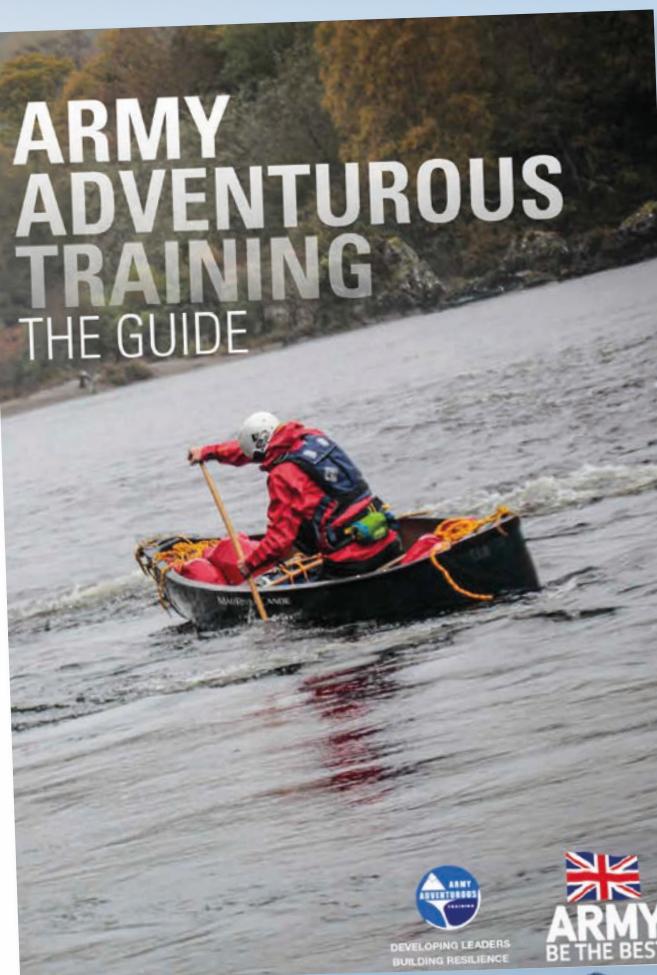
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Pictures: Graeme Main

A DIFFERENT CALIBRE...

Trainee instructors give thumbs-up to new qualification course

INSTRUCTORS will be taking up their posts at the Army's training centres better qualified than ever before in 2024, thanks to an initiative launched just over a year ago.

The standard practice used to be personnel obtaining their teaching qualifications after they arrived in post. But this meant it could take months to gain all the required credentials and even experienced staff could end up with proficiency gaps.

However, the introduction of an all-arms instructor training course at Pirbright, which is organised by the Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command Staff Leadership School, has improved the situation. It now packs the full range of required courses into a single 11-week programme (pictured above).

"It's been a resounding success, providing NCOs with all the qualifications to be the complete instructor at an Army training establishment," course supervisor WO2 Dean Smith (RAPTC, shown right), told *Soldier*.

According to one senior trainer at Pirbright, the benefit of having new instructors arriving with all boxes ticked is significant.

"Units didn't used to let troops go off to get their quals because they assumed the individuals would get them when they were in role,"

commented CSgt Keith Sampat (IG). "But that led to inefficiencies and disruptions at our training centres – highly qualified instructors might have to constantly cover for new members who weren't yet certified in range safety, for example."

One of the students on the cadre, LCpl Bradley Davis (RLC), arrived at Pirbright with no credentials at all for his next job – starting in March with 110 Training Squadron at the Defence School of Transport.

"I've been in the Army for seven years and previously tried to get my K Qual (static range management) but the unit I've been with at Wattisham Airfield was too busy to let me go.

"I think this is a great package and people who believe it's a rush to squeeze all the topics in can rest assured the curriculum has been worked out perfectly."

Another trainee instructor, Bdr Zara Sallis (RHA, shown above), added: "My unit, Kings Troop, is ceremonial-based so getting back out here doing soldiering skills has been essential.

"I haven't touched some of this stuff since my promotion course. I'm due to be posted here at ATC Pirbright and will take charge of my first intake early in the new year. I only had my drill instructor qualification when I arrived so everything else I need I'm getting on this one course, which is great." ■



“
It's providing
NCOs with
all the
credentials
”



SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP



1. ARIZONA

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

MEMBERS of 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards took part in a well-earned adventurous training package following military drills in the Mojave Desert (*Soldier*, December).

A total of 71 troops sampled a range of activities, with the majority conducting hill walking or gaining mountain biking qualifications against the dramatic backdrop of the Grand Canyon.

Meanwhile, a smaller group of seven climbers achieved their single pitch foundation qualification in Nevada's Red Rock Canyon.

The expeds came as a change of pace after a punishing three-week stint at the National Training Centre, Fort Irwin, where the Welsh Cavalry honed their specialist reconnaissance skills alongside their American counterparts during Exercise Diamondback.

2. TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

DISASTER PREP

PERSONNEL from two Caribbean nations are better equipped to deal with natural disasters such as hurricanes thanks to the efforts of soldiers from 3rd (UK) Division.

The one-month package for troops from the Turks and Caicos and Cayman Islands included medical and chainsaw courses, as well as military skills such as leadership.

A train-the-trainer module also set the local forces up to deliver practical and theory-based lessons to colleagues.

Meanwhile, Capt Jamie Pearson (RE), from 22 Engineer Regiment said the experience had benefitted the British instructors in terms of "defence engagement, professional development and cultural appreciation".

"We have gained a greater awareness of how their regiments operate and the challenges they face," he added.



3. ESTONIA

PLUNGE POOL

TROOPS from the 1st Fusiliers Battlegroup have been showing icy determination after being put through the cold weather operators' course.

The soldiers on Op Cabrit braved sub-zero temperatures as they were shown how to survive and work in Eastern Europe's brutal winter conditions.

Classroom study was followed by drills including how to build shelters, make fires and the infamous immersion in an icy pool.

They also learnt about patrolling and the fundamentals of cold weather vehicle maintenance.

All the while, personnel remained under the watchful eye of Royal Marine





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6. JAPAN

PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS

BRITISH troops have been making history in the Far East after embedding with their counterparts from the Land of the Rising Sun for the first time.

Exercise Vigilant Isles saw soldiers integrate with Japanese forces as they conducted serials at Ojōji, some 400 miles from the capital Tokyo.

Around 130 personnel from B Company of 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles formed the backbone of the UK presence. The training saw parachute assaults and live-firing.

The drills were delivered by the Japanese 1st Airborne Brigade's 3rd Infantry Battalion. Its commanding officer, Lt Col Daisuke Ishikawa, said his troops had been "eagerly anticipating the opportunity to conduct bilateral training".

Gurkha boss Lt Col Hugo Stanford-Tuck echoed the sentiment. "The exercise is a clear manifestation of the ever-growing partnership between our two nations," he concluded.



4. UK

GREAT BRUMMIE CAKE OFF

AN ARMY chef was selected to lend his expertise to the judging panel at Cake International, the world's leading sugar art show.

Sgt Rajesh Babooram (RLC), himself a talented confectioner, assessed contestants' creations in various mediums, including royal icing, pastillage, chocolate and gingerbread.

Staged annually in Birmingham's NEC, the event attracts some 700 entries from around the globe.

Sgt Babooram said he felt "privileged" to be given the opportunity and that the training process had also advanced his own skills.

5. SWEDEN

COLD CALL

TWO pairs of Ajax and Ares vehicles are undergoing cold weather trials in Sweden – another key marker in the development of the long-awaited platforms (*Soldier*, December).

Around 30 personnel, mainly from the Household Cavalry Regiment plus civilian boffins, have deployed to Tame Ranges in the north-east of the country for around three weeks.

The aim is to prove that the assets can operate in extremely cold conditions without losing lethality.

The crews are looking to test the vehicles in temperatures as low as minus 28 degrees – if the weather allows – providing valuable data and hopefully showing they are deployable in harsh environments including Northern European winters.

Col Jamie Hayward, director of the armoured cavalry programme, said: "This is the first time Ajax will be firing with Field Army crews outside the UK, a significant milestone for the system."

"The latest trials represent an important step forward in delivering the next generation of armoured fighting vehicles."



Picture: Jack Eckersley, DE&S



Picture: Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC

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To beard or not to beard?

SOLDIERS may soon be allowed to grow beards following the Army's announcement of a policy review.

Writing on X, formerly Twitter, Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, said work would take place to understand its potential impact on recruitment, retention and reputation.

As he told *Soldier* last month, top brass would then come to a decision in early 2024.

"No one joins or leaves specifically because they can't have a beard," he said. "It can be one of many factors, but when we think of that balance we should look to improve them where we can."

"Society is also more appearance-conscious – and we've reaped some of the benefits because today's soldiers spend more time in the gym and take care of themselves better."

"Facial hair is another one of the areas which is fashionable now."

However, he pointed out that the Service's reputation among its allies – especially the Five Eyes nations of which only Canada allows beards – was also a concern.

And he stressed that should the policy change, standards would be rigorously enforced.

"It will be very clear what we expect beards to look like and people will be held to account by the chain of command," he added.



Age old issue: a soldier shaves under a cam net in Afghanistan,

The issue has been a hot topic among personnel for several years, especially following the recent decision to relax hair rules for women.

"We are a very busy Army, with Op Interflex, events in the Middle East and our modernisation programme among the priorities," said WO1 Carney.

"But we said we would listen on facial hair, and we have."

Up until the mid-1800s it was common for soldiers to sport beards.

However, the 20th century ushered in a more clean-shaven era across the military, with exceptions currently only made for either religious or medical purposes. ■

“We said we would listen and we have”



Picture: Graeme Main

SUPER-fit soldiers from the Royal Army Physical Training Corps ended 2023 on a high as they deadlifted their way to a new **Guinness World Record**. The 12-strong outfit shattered the previous best for the most weight deadlifted by a team in one hour as they posted an impressive total haul of **239,784kg**. They achieved the feat by performing 2,328 reps of the 103kg bar and passed the former record – 200,400kg – in the 49th minute of the challenge at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot. "Our initial goal was for each team member to do 15 sets of 11 reps," said organiser SSgt Mark Henshaw, a RAPTCI with 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment. "It was a huge team achievement and everyone played their part."

NEW CHIEF INCOMING

THE Army's next head honcho – who survived an assassination attempt while serving in Afghanistan – says he is "absolutely thrilled" to be taking up the role of chief of the general staff.

Lt Gen Sir Roly Walker, whose operational experience includes Northern Ireland, Iraq, Africa and Afghanistan, will step into Gen Sir Patrick Sanders' shoes in June.

The 53-year-old officer, who is currently deputy chief of the defence staff, commissioned into the Irish Guards in 1993.

He later joined the Special Forces and commanded the Grenadier Guards.

Lt Gen Walker described his appointment as "the highest of privileges" and said there was "plenty to be excited about" in the Army's future. He added: "I'm looking forward to starting."



GURKHAS GET GOING

A PROUD cohort of 200 new Gurkhas have taken their place in the ranks of the British Army after signing off from the Infantry Training Centre Catterick.

The riflemen took to the parade square at Helles Barracks, North Yorkshire, to be inspected by Defence Minister Andrew Murison, concluding nine months of training that began with an arduous selection process in Nepal.

IN NUMBERS



27 FEMALE soldiers in the 440-strong Royal Army Physical Training Corps. More Servicewomen are therefore required to become all-arms PTIs and inspire the next generation. Email chelcie.brittan445@mod.gov.uk for details and to attend an insight day in Aldershot next month.

● Final Word – p74 »



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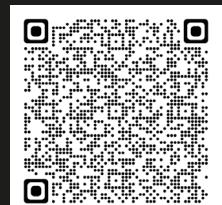
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Supplies being tracked
for 101 Operational
Sustainment Brigade

Delivering a surprise package

Logistics data network enhances commanders' decision-making

THE Ukraine war has already highlighted the importance of agile logistical support but cutting-edge Army work is now revealing the potential of investing more in this area.

That's the assessment of the commander of 101 Operational Sustainment Brigade, Brig Craig Hanson, following his formation's test of an asset-tracking data network called Orion.

Supplied by UK firm Smarter Technologies Group (STG), it was deployed during Exercise Iron Titan and provided commanders with total visibility of the supply chain in near real time, enhancing decision making.

During the exercise, where some 8,000 troops were deployed across 22 locations in England and Wales, the movement of vital commodities such as ammunition was tracked as they moved in and out of logistics nodes and then on to the "front line".

"It was good to see units working directly with industry partners to

experiment and innovate," said the senior officer.

"What the troops delivered is exemplary – the trial demonstrated the art of the possible for real-time situational awareness in a deployed military setting.

"Embracing current and emerging technologies like this is essential if we are going to meet our future needs and have the edge.

"We haven't made a decision to procure this system yet but are hoping to conduct further experimentation to understand the wider capability of it during 2024."

David Miller, chief technical officer at STG, added: "Orion has already been used to track high-value assets in the commercial sector and in defence.

"We've now demonstrated that it has benefit well beyond base infrastructure, such as naval dockyards, military air bases and established training areas, and can also support deployed operations globally." ■

“
It showed
the art of the
possible
”

Bomb veterans wear their gongs with pride

THE first British veterans to receive a new campaign decoration for a critical Cold War episode more than half-a-century ago have been sporting the award for the first time.

Individuals who took part in atomic and hydrogen bomb tests in the South Pacific donned their Nuclear Test Medals for a reception with government ministers.

The decoration was announced by PM Rishi Sunak in late 2022 – and he was on hand to personally welcome the ex-troops

along with Defence Secretary Grant Shapps at Admiralty House, London.

Recognising the contribution made by military and civilian staff who took part in a programme of detonations in the 1950s and 60s, the award is being accompanied by a government-funded history initiative to preserve memories of the era.

Academics at Liverpool and South Wales Universities are in the process of identifying and interviewing some 40 former personnel about their lives.



COMRADE REMEMBERED

FRIENDS and colleagues of an officer who was "at his happiest serving others" have been remembering his many achievements after his death in Kenya.

Maj Kevin McCool had been off-duty in the African country on November 29 last year. No further details on the incident or his cap badge have been released.

The 32-year-old, who commissioned in 2014, had served in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Falkland Islands during his career.

His fellow soldiers paid tribute to his fitness, enthusiasm and professionalism.

Maj McCool's officer commanding said he had proven himself on operations, describing him "a pilgrim soul in the truest sense" who was "happiest serving others and facing challenges".



Union Jack Club's red flag

BOSSES at the Union Jack Club have pledged to continue fighting proposals for a huge development on their doorstep after losing the first round of their battle.

Lambeth councillors recommended approval for a 70-metre office block in Waterloo at a planning meeting – despite claims that the building would leave rooms at the Armed Forces oasis in darkness while wreaking havoc on the area's overall character.

Now the club's chief executive, Hugh Player, has said he intends to appeal directly to the secretary of state for levelling-up, housing and communities, Michael Gove, in an attempt to have the blueprint re-examined.

Describing the planned building as a "carbuncle", he told *Soldier*: "I can confirm that the fight against the proposals will go on.

"We have never been against development per se but we are opposed to the massive scale of this project, which will block out light in a lot of our rooms."

GENERAL FOR A DAY

How would you use your newfound rank?
news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

IT MIGHT sound strange in the Army but I'd like to create an environment where we encouraged more recognition of the individual.

When you go through training you become a private, a fusilier – and so on. Soldiers become attuned to this approach, and rank can develop into an alter ego.

Clearly, we're serving in a disciplined organisation and there must be rules, values and standards. But I don't think you can be your very best if you're not yourself – or pretending to be something you're not.

Civvy street is a bit different – you can separate a work and personal identity more easily. But when you join the Army you are ultimately taking on a way of life. You are pretty much living with your colleagues all of the time and so it's important you are completely happy with yourself.

As part of the focus on individuals, I'd like to see people step up and take more ownership of risk. It is obviously natural to feel apprehensive when faced with key decisions, but I think it's important people should be comfortable making a call in any situation – according to their experience – and supported.

Finally, I'd also like to turn the rank structures on their head for a short time. Just for fun. It would be interesting to see how younger troops would fare if they were instantly promoted and how commanders would deal with being a junior again.

Name: **LCpl Kieran Hesketh** (see right)
Cap badge: **RRF**
Role: **Infanteer; command vehicle corporal**
Age: **22**
Years in: **6**
Deployments: **Kosovo; Cyprus**

You can't be your very best if you're not yourself

British Army leaders



Pictures Cpl Paul Watson and Danny Houghton, both RLC; Lsgt Vincent Price, SG

Slaps on the back at inaugural Leadership Excellence Awards

GREATNESS in command roles across the Service has been celebrated with the award of two brand new accolades.

They were presented by Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Sharon Nesmith (below), during the Centre for Army Leadership Conference in London – and encompassed best practice on the home front as well as on global operations.

Winners and runners up were chosen from a pool of 160 nominees, with senior officers praising the "exceptional work" of those singled out by judges.

SSgt Clair Timson (Int Corps, below right) took the leadership excellence award senior category for her sharp-end efforts to inspire others – notably advising

junior NCOs destined for a demanding Nato deployment in Estonia.

And she was joined on the podium by junior winner **LCpl Jemma Dickinson (RHG/D, below left)**.

Her conduct was described as "exemplifying Service values and standards" – and the Servicewoman was praised for setting an example to others through her actions.

The prize-giving was staged at the National Army Museum.

Delegates heard how SSgt Timson had spearheaded initiatives to promote welfare, running suicide awareness courses in the UK while becoming a diversity and inclusion practitioner.

The senior soldier's work in preparing lance corporals for Operation Cabrit had also been



SWAPPING RANKS

Could you do it? P38



WINNING ATTITUDES

Troops react to their Leadership Excellence Award

"I didn't know anything about this award – it was a total surprise. We had returned from our Cyprus tour and I was told the CO wanted to see me. It is an honour – I'm not ashamed to say that, for me, humility is one of the most important leadership qualities. And it is crucial that you know when to follow, too, giving support to commanders in their role."

– LCpl Jemma Dickinson, RHG/D



"Obviously I am proud to be recognised – I'm glad that I had the opportunity to help our soldiers, particularly after being on the ground in Kosovo. In the civilian world people tend to have separate work and personal lives but that is not true of the Army. They merge into one and become the same thing – so you need to account for this unique factor when you are leading."

– LCpl Kieran Hesketh, RRF



make a statement



From Kosovo (left) to Cabrit: Personnel stood out for their exceptional work on deployments



exceptionally thorough. Some of the junior NCOs she advised even received commendations during their deployment, her citation emphasised.

LCpl Dickinson was described as a "naturally inspirational character" who had helped develop others as a unit physical training instructor.

Her write-up also referenced work on ops in Cyprus where she stepped up as section commander and won the respect of her subordinates.

"She always sets an example and encourages others to do the same," the document revealed.

Equally impressive were the runners-up, with LCpl Kieran Hesketh (RRF) singled out in the junior category for his efforts on a tough Kosovo outing.

Lt Will Hayward (Lancs) fielded impressive achievements in the senior bracket. The young officer was praised

for showing outstanding communication skills, self-awareness and commitment to developing his troops.

Maj Gen Zach Stenning (below) – commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) – said the awards highlighted the depth of talent to be found in the Service.

"They show exceptional work – our soldiers continue to demonstrate outstanding leadership qualities from one generation to the next," he added.

The Centre for Army Leadership, based at RMAS, comprises both military and academic staff and acts as guardian of the Service's leadership doctrine.

Drawing on more than 300 years of experience, as well as expertise from outside military life, it helps to develop commanders through a range of resources, live events and online channels – including a YouTube channel and podcast. ■



"Honestly, I am super proud of this award – although a bit taken aback too. Looking after the soldiers who I lead is the most important thing to me. It was great to have the opportunity to prepare some of the younger personnel for Operation Cabrit – I'd been on tour there and could impart some experience. I love Army life – my husband is also serving and we are both well looked after."

– SSgt Clair Timson, Int Corps

"I firmly believe in our values and standards and apply all that I have been taught in my career to date. I've found that our training prepares you well and I can tell others joining that you can have full confidence in it. Honestly, I want to do my very best to help others – the Infantry is a great environment. I had wanted to join the British Army ever since taking my GCSEs."

– Lt Will Hayward, Lancs



VAN-TAM'S WISE WORDS



Picture: Tim Hammond/10 Downing Street

“
Our soldiers continue to demonstrate exceptional leadership
”

■ COMMANDERS must willingly take feedback from their subordinates if they are to run the best teams, Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam has told Army chiefs.

The government's former deputy chief medical adviser – who worked closely with Armed Forces personnel during the Covid crisis – is also an ex-Reservist in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

He was speaking during a discussion at the day-long Centre for Army Leadership Conference in London.

The expert explained that a "safe space" for troops to speak openly could foster sound decision making.

The most effective commanders also tended to be at ease in their own skin rather than adopting a different persona, he said.

"If you do that then you allow others to do the same," Prof Van-Tam added. "You have the ability to create a space for an all-ranks exchange of views."

While troops obviously needed to be mindful of professional courtesies, this environment allowed subordinates to express "what needs to be said" to bosses.

"You are both going to grow from that," he continued.

The event included a host of panellists, including retired Para officer-turned-explorer Levison Wood, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Sharon Nesmith and John Foreman, an ex-defence attache to Moscow.

Speaking to *Soldier* afterwards, the top clinician paid tribute to those involved in Op Rescript – which saw troops assist civilian authorities during the pandemic.

"They were exceptional in every role they were asked to do – from building the Nightingale Hospitals to helping the vaccination effort," he added.

"My own Armed Forces association began in the 1970s with the CCF – I later joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and assisted with the Army Cadets."

Prof Van-Tam said he had been humbled to join the conference line-up.

"I am delighted to be asked to talk about leadership – and to an organisation that I personally believe to be among the very best," he concluded.



BANGERS AND BANTER

THE Veterans' Breakfast Club network is rolling out a web service which will steadily grow as an online platform this year.

Founder Dereck Hardman (ex-RE) said the new site (afvbc.world) would soon have sections on employment and other issues relevant to former personnel as well as details on club meeting points. And he said a new year was a great opportunity for newcomers to join.

"One of the biggest mental health issues for Forces leavers relates to social isolation," the ex-NCO added. "Former soldiers are part of a unique community. When you enlist in the Army you join a cohort that is with you for life – in effect you're part of a tribe – but you often only realise this after leaving.

"When you attend a club, it doesn't take long to find all that you've been missing."

There are now dozens of free-to-join breakfast clubs across the UK with the outfit also expanding into other areas of the world, including mainland Europe and the USA.

MORAL INJURY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

A PILOT scheme to treat troops suffering mental distress from ethically testing situations is entering a new phase, thanks to a military charity.

The Forces in Mind Trust has been supporting a trial of the pioneering "restore and rebuild" therapy for so-called moral injury. And it is proving so promising the good cause is putting up £260,000 for ongoing study at King's College London.

Moral injury can arise from situations in which soldiers have had to make life-or-death decisions.

The treatment programme is spread across 20 weekly sessions



Picture: Sgt Robert Weideman, RLC

“
In effect you
are part of a
tribe
”

New era for LGBT troops

PERSONNEL and veterans affected by the ban on homosexuality in the Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000 are now able to apply for a range of restorative measures.

The launch of an application and registration of interest form by the MoD provides a mechanism for troops past and present, and so-called "persons of sufficient interest to a deceased veteran", to claim for reparations.

Some are pre-existing measures, such as the restoration of medals.

New ones, due to be introduced very soon, include receiving replacement discharge papers where the dismissal is nullified, and a letter of apology from the Service chief of staff.

Defence is also working with experts across government to establish an appropriate financial award scheme and further updates on this will be announced later.

The initiative follows the government's endorsement of Lord

Etherton's *LGBT Veterans Independent Review* last month.

The government said it accepted the "intent" behind all 49 of the document's recommendations and is "implementing and delivering restorative measures recommended to right the historic wrongs and hurt".

A statement from Fighting with Pride, a military charity supporting LGBT veterans, said: "We acknowledge the huge amount of well-intended work that has been done to progress 48 of the 49 recommendations made by the *LGBT Veterans Independent Review*.

"We have been particularly pleased and grateful for the work completed by the MoD and look forward to working with all stakeholders to resolve concerns about the plans for fair compensation."

Those affected by the ban can get more information by searching for "LGBT veterans: Support and next steps" online and then selecting the link at gov.uk ■

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



LONG AND WINDING ROAD

A FORMER gunner has completed his 9,000-mile trek around the UK coastline – three years after he started. Dan McNeil finished the endeavour at Sandyhills Beach, Scotland before Christmas, where he was greeted by scores of well-wishers

(shown). The cash he raised will help life-changing work for fellow veterans. Speaking after finishing, McNeil described the feeling of crossing the line as "surreal". He said: "I'm now looking forward to doing something different to waking up in a tent."





Ground view

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

IHAVE a confession to share – although I've never been a man for new year resolutions, 2024 is going to be an exception.

During my final stint in this role, I want to do something that will allow me to finish on a high and raise cash for a good cause. So I have put my name down for the infamous Marathon des Sables – an ultra-race through the Sahara Desert (shown).

It goes without saying this event in April is going to mean changes to my lifestyle – and the reality of this is beginning to sink in.

The prospect of a week-long, 155-mile journey across the North African wilderness is daunting.

It needs to be treated with respect, requiring some serious preparation in terms of readying both mind and body.

Therefore, I have made a resolution to ensure that this happens.

And this is where I need your help.

Time can be a precious commodity in this role, so I'll be asking units I visit to involve me in their phys. In addition to core

PT sessions I am also hoping to undertake some elements of the Army's most demanding selection programmes, such as the all-arms commando course and P Company.

There is a serious reason behind this endeavour.

As well as fundraising for the Army Benevolent Fund – of which I am a patron as the Army sergeant major – it gives me the opportunity to illustrate to the wider world a bit more about Service life.

Through all of the preparation I'm hoping I'll be able to shine a light on different units and the day-to-day work that you all do as soldiers.

Ultimately, this is a chance to show that the Service believes in adventure – and to showcase something of our organisation to would-be recruits.

So the start to 2024 is shaping up to be a bit of a shock.

At the age of 44 it's fair to say I'm no youngster. But apparently endurance comes with age, and I for one am hoping this proves to be correct.



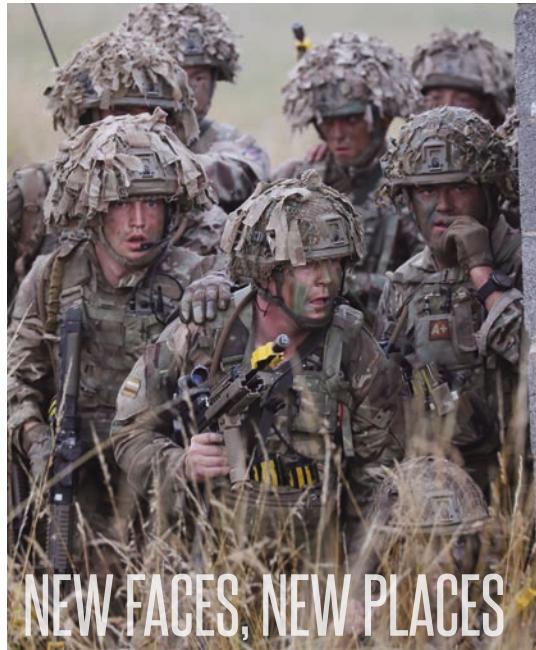
I want units to involve me in their phys

“ ”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q Will your diet change for the Marathon des Sables?

A Yes – motorway food will have to stop!



NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

IT IS a joy to be out and about seeing so many different aspects of the Army – and the work in which you're involved.

Early this year I am hoping to get out to Poland, where I'll be checking in on troops

working through the winter tour of Op Cabrit as well as the Falkland Islands for a first-hand perspective on the Roulement Infantry Company and other units.

Nothing beats face-to-face contact.

What's in store for '24

■ THINGS that I would like to see achieved in 2024 include, first and foremost, an acceleration in the setting up of the NCO academy.

This is a project many people have worked hard on during my time in post.

The seed has been sown – we recently held a development day where 75 non-commissioned officers provided valuable feedback on our plans – and I'm hoping we can use this to make further progress in short order.

Elsewhere, I am continuing to look at several issues – also relating to leadership – drawn from panel sessions at the Regimental Sergeant Majors' Convention late last year.

We discussed the tools commanders and soldiers need to do their job – as well as whether there are the right protocols in place to report inappropriate behaviours.

L403A1 - AIW





WEED TO
KILL
WEEDS
FITNESS / NUTRITION
FITNESS / EXPERIENCE / CASH

PT time-wasters

... and what to do instead

► WITH many hitting the gym with renewed enthusiasm as 2024 dawns, exercise rehabilitation instructor Sgt Ross Read (RAPTC, shown right) reveals the mistakes you should avoid to maximise your precious training time.



WARMING UP INEFFICIENTLY

I see a mix of people not doing a warm-up at all, which isn't ideal, or – on the flipside – doing way too much so they're not fresh for their actual workout.

Being really precise is critical. Tailor the warm-up to the exercise you're going to do but at a regressed standard, enough to get your pulse up to the rate it will be at during the main effort.

OVERLOOKING CORE CONDITIONING

Some people say they don't need to do any core training because they lift really heavy, but realistically, unless you're squatting double your body weight, you probably do need to do some core work like planks or sit-ups.

Mix it up – and don't forget to do some rotational movements like medicine ball rotational throws, caber tosses or cable work – that's something we all neglect.



USING DUMBBELLS TO TRAIN THE ROTATOR CUFF

This is the group of muscles round the shoulder joint that produce rotational force. I see a lot of people doing external and internal rotation exercises with standing dumbbells. But what they end up doing is a normal bicep curl and not getting much of a stimulus.

The better option is to do lying dumbbells, or use a cable machine or bands to produce that rotation because they change the direction of pull.



USING STABILITY EXERCISES IN NORMAL TRAINING

As a rehab instructor I use Bosu balls or foam pads almost daily to improve patient outcomes, however they shouldn't be used if you're uninjured. **The more instability you introduce, the lower your ability to produce a maximum strength output.**

The same goes for single leg exercises, like split squats or single leg Romanian deadlifts. They're good but you need to balance properly, so if you struggle with that, **hold onto something, like the side of a rack, so you can get the training stimulus you're after.**



KIPPING MOVEMENTS

You see this typically in CrossFit and BAWF during a pull-up for example, where you use a powerful hip pulse to help you do as many reps as possible. Outside of competition these don't have much utility.

If you want to develop your pull-ups, regress them using bands or partial movements.

BENCH TRICEP DIPS

I'm not a big fan of these. It pushes the shoulders into a deep extension, which is a jeopardised position. It's also quite a low-stimulus exercise for developing actual tricep strength, so the risk of injury is high, but the reward is low.

Instead, try some close-grip tricep press-ups, diamond press-ups or overhead cable extensions.

“BAR BELL GOOD MORNINGS”

This is where the bar goes on the back of the shoulders and you hinge forwards. This targets hamstrings and glutes. At the start it feels good – like you're doing something – but once the weight gets to a certain point, the back muscles are going to fatigue and you won't be training the area you want. **You'll achieve more with a Romanian deadlift.**



3 methods that took my training to the next level

► EXERCISE rehabilitation instructor SSgt Dan Ballard joined the RAPTC in 2018 after ten years in the Royal Engineers. A keen gym-goer throughout his career, he says it wasn't until he got technical about phys that he unlocked real gains – and a passion for helping others come back from injury.

Here, the 34-year-old shares how things changed when he understood these three concepts...

1 Reps in reverse

This is about gauging the intensity of a movement by how many more repetitions you could perform before the point of failure. Let's say you can do a maximum of five pull-ups. If you do all five in your first set, you'll be wiped out. So instead, aim to do three with two in reserve. Repeat this for five sets, for example, resting for four minutes in between each one. That way you'll end up doing 15 quality pull-ups in total. It might feel ridiculous but that's smart training. Too often ego gets in the way, however this method allows you to consistently improve and gives you data to track along the way.



after. The performance won't be there because your muscles, tendons and ligaments all need time to recover and adapt. You might get anxious that you'll lose strength if you're not doing

a certain move twice a week but the opposite is true. It will still be there 10-14 days later, but you'll have given your body time to rest.

3 Injury management

I've been there and I know how frustrating it is when you're hurting and trying to stick to a training programme. But don't be tempted by quick fixes that you might see on the internet – like foam rollers or other "hacks" that promise to take the pain away. They're just marketing tools. Instead, understand the exercises that aggravate your body and don't do them, or find regressions and modifications that will act as a bridge until your injury has healed. The gimmicks will only work in conjunction with the most important thing – graded exposure. It's a hard pill to swallow but you might need eight to ten weeks to build up the tolerance and strength before you're back in the game.

2 The SRA curve

Short for "stimulus, recovery and adaptation", this principle means knowing your body and how different forms of exercise affect it. Take the deadlift – a big exercise that uses a lot of muscles. If you do a lift that's at the upper end of your capacity, you're not going to be able to do the same the day after, or even three days



Going dry

What quitting booze could do for your fitness

► AS A student, Sgt Rob Mothersdale (RAPTC) admits he would binge drink several nights a week. Fifteen years on – with family responsibilities and a new career as an exercise rehabilitation instructor – booze has largely taken a back seat in his life. And as he explains here, he's reaping the benefits...

Better performance

Studies have shown that hangovers reduce your aerobic capacity by more than 11 per cent. Your liver is less efficient at producing glucose so you're not getting that energy you need. If you have a heavy night on Saturday, even by Monday morning you won't be at your best for PT.

Fewer cramps

Drinking a lot causes more lactic acid to build up, leading to muscle cramping. Sometimes after a night out you'll find you cramp just by stretching. I notice it most in my calves.

More shut-eye

Alcohol interferes with sleep, which is when our bodies should be repairing themselves. Lack of quality sleep reduces natural growth hormones and testosterone levels, which has a knock-on effect on training. I tend to only drink on special occasions and I notice immediately how fatigued I feel in the days that follow.

Less flab

The ethanol in alcohol is a poison and our liver prioritises breaking this down over fat, carbs and proteins. Instead, fat gets stored in our cells, leading to weight gain. You also tend to make poor food choices when drunk. When I was at uni I would eat a pizza before going out, then consume all those liquid calories from the beer, before having a takeaway on the way home and a fry-up the next morning. A massive calorie surplus like this is a sure way to pile on the pounds.



Increased motivation

When I'm hungover I feel like I want to sit in front of the TV all day. Now I don't drink, I can get better phys sessions in because I'm not still lethargic three days later due to dehydration and poor sleep. And my recovery is better because I'm eating the right food.

Most of my training is strength-based and it just feels easier and more enjoyable without booze.

Better heart health

This doesn't affect me but it's an important one to consider. Alcohol can cause abnormal heart rhythms, even a couple of days after a heavy session and especially during exercise. For those with underlying issues, it could up their risk of cardiac arrest.



New year, new goals

How to get into **BAWF** in 2024



How it works

The team competition started in late November. Teams must complete three of the five qualifying events that run until May to be in with a chance of reaching the latter stages. The final will be held in July. Men's and women's squads must feature a minimum of three and maximum of four personnel. Attention then turns to the Individual Open, which starts in July ahead of the final in October.

► **FEW** sports offer more of an all-round workout than British Army Warrior Fitness.

With its popularity on the rise and the standard higher than ever, Individual Open secretary SSgt Nick Cawley (RAPTC, pictured right) offers some pointers for those thinking of taking up the challenge...

Seek advice. Engage with your Royal Army Physical Training Corps instructors and all-arms PTIs. BAWF is the competitive element of the Army physical training system, so anyone looking to get involved will find all the movements being taught in their unit PT programmes.

Be realistic about your goals. Learn the functional movement patterns before going on to more complicated exercises and do not think you should be lifting and doing the same as others are. When you are new to BAWF it's important to start from the ground up.

Find like-minded people in your unit or shared gyms. BAWF is better in a team environment, and you will train better as part of a group.

Mix it up. Don't do high-intensity workouts all the time. Every component of fitness needs to be covered from

aerobic and anaerobic capacity, strength, flexibility, speed, power and green fitness. People often think it's all about those energy-sapping "wods" – workouts of the day – but an all-round approach is what's needed.

Work your way up. Units can run their own competitions under the supervision of RAPTC staff, and you can grow into it at a local level – you do not just have to wait for the open and team events. Most units organise contests.



For more details on how to get involved follow **@ArmyWarriorFit** on X, **@britisharmy_warrior_fitness** on Instagram or the **British Army Warrior Fitness** Facebook page



Striking a balance

How to fuel your January training routine correctly

► YOU may be hitting the gym hard after leave, but it's easy to undermine your good work with nutritional no-nos, says Army boxing coach SSgt Shane Sadler (RAPTC).

"People tend to not eat enough when they need to, and too much when they don't need to," he summarises.

"You might think you need to cut your calories, however that way you will counteract your training by reducing performance.

"Alternatively, if you do less activity at the weekend your food intake might be too high and you'll undo your progress."

These are his top tips for staying on track...

Take it easy

Don't go 100 miles an hour your first week back. The Army physical training system is broken into three blocks: foundation, resilience and specific. Start with foundation – and tailor your food to complement this level of training.

Back to basics

Most soldiers know what's healthy and what's not. We know natural foods are better than processed, we know five portions of fruit and veg a day is important – try and up that amount a little bit. Remember to also drink plenty of water.

Timing matters

Make sure you eat enough carbohydrates in the 24 hours before a session. On the day, think about a good breakfast, for example oats with a banana and some honey. Keep your protein intake regular – a small portion every four hours will help you recover in time for your next workout.

Skip the energy drinks

We all feel tired after Christmas and these act as a temporary pick-me-up. But while you'll get a brief sugar high, it will be followed by a slump that makes you feel even more fatigued.

Plus, the caffeine will affect your sleep.

Scale up and down

Your calorie intake should be higher on the days you train. The baseline is 2,500 daily for men and 2,000 for women. But if you've done green PT followed by your own session after work, you might be up to 3,000-3,500 calories. Then at the weekend you might be chilling and not need as much fuel. Try to adapt your diet accordingly and be consistent.

Be organised

If you're out and about, prep your food and take healthy snacks – a banana, a protein bar (avoiding high-sugar ones), a protein shake or some fruit or veg. This will stop you reaching for junk food.

Tech is your best friend

Monitor your calorie intake and physical output with your smartwatch or apps like *MyFitnessPal*. The *Army Fitness* app is also a good way of tracking your progress and ensuring you're not over-training.



'I was missing something extraordinary'

Officer sets sights on Atlantic challenge after beating cancer

▶ PUTTING your body through the most gruelling physical and mental challenge imaginable isn't a typical response for someone who has faced down a life-threatening illness.

But after undergoing surgery for kidney cancer Maj Dec Lynn (AGC (ETS)) decided that rowing the Atlantic at the end of this year would be a great way to celebrate his proverbial second chance.

Now with a crew alongside him, the skipper of the Colonel Jane is preparing for the 3,000-mile voyage from the Canaries to the Caribbean on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge in December...

GBeing told I had cancer was a strange feeling. While it was a massive shock on the one hand, I was relieved to have finally discovered what was wrong with me.

Back in 2014, a decade ago now, I was feeling really rough – constantly tired to the point of exhaustion. My doctor carried out tests and all seemed to be normal.

But the problems continued. It was as if somebody had stolen my energy

and, in the end, I put it down to post-tour malaise – or maybe even depression – having returned from a 13-month deployment to Afghanistan.

Everything changed after I was posted to Middle Wallop with the Army Air Corps and saw another doctor not long after arrival. He was really thorough and sent me for scans. And that's when they found it – a huge tumour in my right kidney.

The doc was great. He told me in a matter-of-fact way that surgery was the only option and I was in the operating theatre days later.

It wasn't until afterwards that I realised how lucky I'd been. In my case, the disease had not spread – if it does then this type of tumour can quickly prove fatal. As I recovered and returned to work I could not help but reflect on my life.

I started to think about all I'd done – the Army has always offered experiences that are off limits to most people but I felt I was missing something extraordinary.

Rowing across the Atlantic was an endeavour that had fascinated me for some time. I'd known people who

had completed the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge – a 3,000-mile adventure from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to Nelson's Dockyard in Antigua – and had often told my wife that I wanted to do it. This usually happened after sharing a bottle of wine and then, one evening, she told me to stop talking and go and make it happen.

But where on earth do you begin with a huge, bucket-list challenge of this nature? You suddenly realise that even getting to the start line is demanding – there is so much to do before you dip your oars in the water.

Having some people to join me on the crossing would be a start – so last year I advertised for crew members. I wanted the entire team to be from Education and Training Services – simply to raise the profile of our part of the Army.

Soon I had three companions, all majors – Graham Yare and Graham Doyle, both ultra-marathon runners, plus rower Caroline Hart.

It was a step forward, but we would get nowhere unless we had our own boat. Curiously, an Irish team that had





The ETS team (left to right): Lt Jessica Hunter (head of charity fundraising), Maj Caroline Hart (rower), Maj Graham Doyle (rower), Lt Molly Tawney (media and comms), Maj Dec Lynn (skipper), Maj Graham Yare (rower)

taken part in the challenge was selling a vessel so we had an opportunity. With help from the Adjutant General's Corps Association we now had the funding – another piece of the jigsaw in place.

We officially called our boat Colonel Jane – named after Lt Col Jane Hunter, a member of the ETS who we lost to cancer. She was a much-loved officer and will now be coming with us as our spiritual fifth team member.

Despite the progress, there is still a huge amount to do. The clock is ticking as we're looking to join this year's challenge and so all crew members are hitting the gym.

Before we start training on the water we are first checking off a string of qualifications relating to nautical, medical and other disciplines that are required for the event.

Then we need 120 hours of sea rowing to be eligible to take part.

Thankfully, the Joint Services Sailing Centre in Gosport is helping us, along with a growing

list of organisations including the Adventurous Training Group.

It is going to be a monumental test of resilience for all of us – we'll be rowing two hours on and two off, over 3,000 miles of open water.

As much as anything, we are going to truly push our limits together as a team. Relatively few have achieved this feat – and here is the opportunity for me to do something extraordinary in life's second chance.



PROFILE

Maj Dec Lynn, AGC (ETS)

Age: 46

Years of service: 19

Operational experience:

Includes Iraq, Afghanistan



Money makeover

Give your finances a new year once-over with these six top tips

► AS ANOTHER year begins, it's the perfect time to take stock of your finances, says Cpl Cameron Eden (RLC, pictured right), whose *Savvy Squaddie* YouTube channel helps troops clue themselves up on all things money.

Here, he sets out six steps that will kickstart your journey to future financial well-being...



6

Now stick to your plan

Completing a financial audit at the start of the year is like setting out a roadmap for the months to come. It provides clarity, identifies potential pitfalls and empowers you to make informed choices. **By dedicating time to it and thinking strategically, you're not just managing money – you're taking charge of your future.**

The year 2024 could be great for you and your money if you see your plan through.

1

Reflect on last year

They say we learn from our mistakes. Ask yourself if you made any financial blunders last year. Thinking about the past and **reviewing your goals, spends and savings** can highlight areas for improvement.

5

Set goals

Take a moment to reassess your long-term objectives.

From buying a home to saving for a holiday or planning for retirement, ensure your current financial actions align with these aspirations. Adjust your spending if necessary and explore new opportunities that match with your goals.

2

Update or start your budget

A solid plan can be your financial compass. **If you have one, assess your current budget, considering changes in income, expenses and priorities.** This ensures that you are directing your money to where it matters most and helps prevent financial stress.

3

Tackle debts head on

Evaluate your outstanding debts and develop a repayment strategy, whether it's paying off high-interest borrowings first or consolidating loans. Reducing what you owe frees up money for more constructive uses.

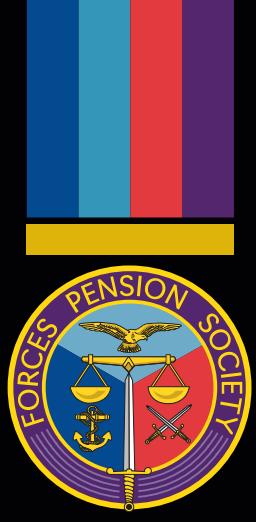
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Review and boost your savings

If your washing machine packed in, would that leave you in the red? Savings are the cornerstone of financial security. **Consider increasing your contributions to savings accounts like an emergency fund.** Automation can be a powerful tool to ensure consistent contributions and reinforce good habits.



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money intel



This year, discover how your pension choices can improve your worth.

Join us. Job done.

Like many of those serving, you may not appreciate the true value of your Armed Forces pension. Not only that, but you might also think that your pension is set in stone.

In most cases, to acquire the same value in the private sector would require a substantial £six-figure sum. Plus your Armed Forces pension is guaranteed. There's no risk due to fluctuating market prices.

And far from being set in stone, your pension value can be increased considerably if you make the right pension choices. These choices relate to decisions at critical career points and also when you choose to leave (timing can make a big difference to what you receive).

The Forces Pensions Consultants at the Forces Pension Society guide our Members through their careers on how to make the best choices for themselves and their families. It's why our membership numbers continue increasing year after year-now more than 66,000.

Independent, not-for-profit

Pension guidance is just one of the many benefits of membership. As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, our membership subscriptions help to fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs plus our vigilance in taking governments to task whenever we spot unfairness or injustice in the system.

And importantly, we provide the whole military community with a voice that counts on the representative bodies for Armed Forces and Public Sector Pensions.

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Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just £45. You will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual enewsletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.



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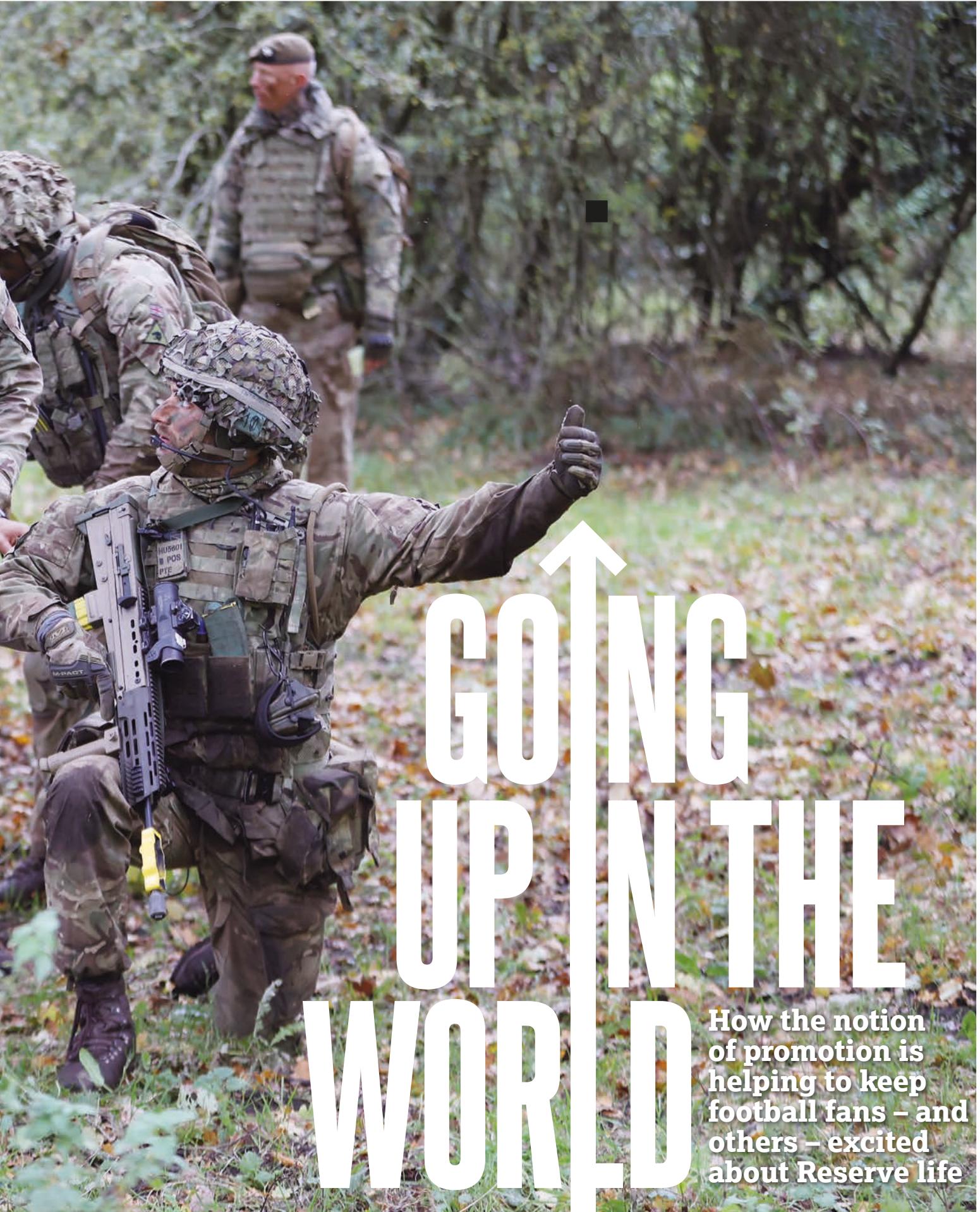
68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL.

T:020 7820 9988 E: memsec@forpen.co.uk www.forcespensionsociety.org





Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main



GOING UP THE WORLD

How the notion of promotion is helping to keep football fans – and others – excited about Reserve life





RESERVISTS REPORT

“ The course is brutal, very arduous, but that's good because we're training to be leaders. We might have to step up at any moment to go to war so we need to be toughened up. I've been in three years and consider myself a decent soldier but I'm learning a lot on this course around how to lead. It's a different kettle of fish because whether you are a section commander or 2iC, you need to be on top of communications as well as the physical side. Commanding your

troops is like conducting an orchestra and is mentally challenging because you're thinking all the time. It was important for me to do this course because I do see myself as a leader and it's giving



THE Reserve must be able to produce a compelling offer because we are always in competition to attract people,” says Col Dougie Cochran, deputy commander of 19th Light Brigade.

“Look at 4 Royal Yorks, for example – their numbers can go down if Leeds United are having a good season.”

Part of this formation's way of keeping potentially great soldiers out of the stands at Elland Road is to provide enough opportunity for them to promote – which is why it recently staged its own potential non-commissioned officer (PNCO) course for the first time.

Organising these packages can be a logistical headache for individual Reserve units because there are often not enough candidates to justify an in-house cadre.

The alternative is to book individuals onto place-limited courses at training centres such as Catterick, but that can be time-consuming to arrange around a typical Reservist's civilian commitments.

“In this brigade the Royal Anglian Reserve is potentially large enough to

me the correct training to achieve that. It's been really interesting to see other cap badges – everyone has their own way of doing things and it's great to meet up with the Scottish personnel, for example, who we'd never normally see.

Kgn David Mungins, 4 Lancs

CIVVY JOB: Self-employed gardener

“ I think I speak for a few of us who have been serving on Op Interflex as privates by saying there are a lot of things we want to be involved with but we're held back by not having a stripe on our arm. I've been a soldier for five years and I'm one of many here who want to step up, achieve more and have great responsibility. Interflex has given me a great sense of purpose – I'd rather be doing more there but I'm doing what I'm allowed

stage a PNCO course but only about every third or fourth year to have the numbers that make it viable," explains Maj Chris Hopkin (R Anglian).

"Another of this brigade's units, 7 Scots, for example, has six or seven people here but that's not enough to run this course back at battalion.

"What the brigade can do is deliver mass. If each of its regiments provide a few personnel, then we've got enough to make this work."

A total of 34 soldiers were put through the cadre on Stanford Training Area in Norfolk – an output that might have taken more than a year to achieve via training centre courses, according to one instructor we spoke to.

Participants completed a mixture of theoretical and practical lessons, including leadership, casualty evacuation and navigation skills before a final five-day exercise of simulated enemy attacks and night-time patrols, where they applied what they had learnt to show they are ready to promote.

Another benefit of the brigade staging the course was personnel from a range of »



to at my rank. So getting on this course quickly became very important to me as I want to extend my deployment. It's a problem that is compounded in the Reserve because many of the individuals here have achieved a lot very quickly in their civvy lives but are held back in the military because of their rank. The lack of speed and flexibility for progression can rankle. We are here because we want to be and it can be frustrating when you can't move up as fast as you want because courses that can take a long time to get on have to be ticked off first.

Pte Marlon Huseyin, 3 R Anglian

CIVVY JOB: Fibre optics cable engineer

“

Having a good experience here with peers from other units will also benefit the guys and girls when they go on exercises together

”

WO1 Shane Marriott, AAC



“

Working with other cap badges on this course has been a real highlight for me, and a massive benefit for improving communication and even appreciating cultural differences. The brigade has troops from every country in the UK here and it's good to get different experiences and opinions. A lot of Reserve formations pick up their standard operating procedures from their paired Regular regiment, but other units here have some different ways of doing things such as tackling certain obstacles or objectives in the field. That produces a great melting pot of ideas to tap into. It means we'll integrate better in future. Doing this course is also »





RESERVISTS REPORT

» vital for me personally because I try to give 40 days a year and take my Reserve career very seriously. Promotion really matters. The company I work for is gold standard under the Armed Forces Covenant scheme and they've been absolutely brilliant so there's little holding me back from contributing more.

Pte Parrish Whitlow, 7 Scots

CIVVY JOB: Oil and gas engineer

“ I really like the fact the training team had their finger on the pulse with what's going on in Ukraine at the minute. They've been feeding through to us the tactics they are hearing about, especially around dispersal and fire and movement. They have been trained a certain way in the

past, but they have been really good at showing us what to do based on the latest lessons emerging from that conflict and the intel they are picking up from Op Interflex. It's all been integrated into this course really well and is bringing us up to speed. Getting to do the PNCO cadre has been encouraging for me. I want to have more responsibility in the Army but I need to balance that with my career. I love the freedoms of civilian life and the earning potential as well, but I love the Army too so I'm getting the best of both worlds.

Pte Greg Jackson, 3 R Anglian

CIVVY JOB: NHS data manager for cancer drug trials



» cap badges going through the process together, something they wouldn't have experienced back at their own battalions.

"To have mixed cap badges definitely allowed them to get more out of their training," says instructor CSgt Ash Ward (R Anglian, pictured below).

"Reservists are so enthusiastic anyway, and mixing with other motivated troops from across the country is a huge benefit and will prepare them well for the future.

"They aren't so tribal as Regulars either, so they all helped out and learnt from each other, which was great to see."

Command sergeant major of 19th Light Brigade, WO1 Shane Marriott (AAC), believes the formation staging its own PNCO course comes with other innate advantages too.

"It not only helps spread good practice but introduces a degree of friendly competition between personnel from

different units, which lifts the standards," he adds.

"And when it comes to resources, Reserve battalions often suffer a bit on their own. However, we've had access to up-to-date gear thanks to having a one-star commander who has a lot of clout for tapping into the division to ensure the right kit and instructors are available.

"Having a good experience here with peers from other units will also benefit »

19TH LIGHT BRIGADE



7th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (Perth)



2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment (Lisburn)



8th Battalion, The Rifles (Bishop Auckland)



6th Battalion, The Rifles (Exeter)



The Queen's Own Yeomanry (Newcastle Upon Tyne)



The Queen's Own Yeomanry (Newcastle Upon Tyne)



HEADQUARTERS
19th Light Brigade (York)



4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment (York)



4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (Preston)



3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment (Bury St Edmunds)



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To get involved, simply scan the QR code and access the online electronic sponsorship form that you and the person you are sponsoring must complete to enrol on the scheme.

Go to <https://rbs.army.mod.uk> or click the QR code for full details



» the guys and girls when they go on exercises together or do the same Brecon courses in future, where you're really under the spotlight.

"They will likely be with people they have trained with here, and so will feel they're as good as them, which should give them the confidence to succeed."

The initiative's retention-positive effect is of particular concern to this fledgling formation, having been reformed in 2022 after being closed down in 2013.

It's the sole Reserve-only brigade in the Service and has been given an important role to play in the Op Mobilise jigsaw – providing a credible and deployable volunteer force that can supplement Regulars at home and abroad with whole combat units.

"Regardless of what any future task might be, being able to generate Army Reserve mass will be key to ensuring its

delivery," says Col Cochran.

"That's why we're not so focused on individual augmentation but on producing highly capable formed platoons, companies and battalion headquarters, to anticipate putting mass in the field.

"Let's not forget that roughly 20 per cent of the whole fighting force – and between a quarter and a third of all the personnel who are deployed on Op Interflex by the way – are Reservists."

The formation is currently preparing for a major role on Exercise Rhino Heart, taking place in Germany next June, when its constituent units will be tested alongside Regular peers as they join up with other 1st (UK) Division elements to form a battlegroup.

"That package will probably become an annual deployment exercise in mainland Europe for us, so it's absolutely critical we are well prepared for it," says Col Cochran.

"We have already penned a training cycle, with half the brigade doing basic training along with an overseas exercise, while the other half come together as a formation to prepare for and participate in Rhino Heart."

With a high tempo of activity on the cards in the years to come, initiatives such as the PNCO course have become high priorities for the brigade.

"When our commander, Brig Owen Lyttle, took the helm 18 months ago it quickly became apparent to him that we were very short of lance corporals – one of the key enabling positions – so we had to do something about that very promptly," adds Col Cochran.

"Being more self-sufficient means we can ensure we're able to deliver a war-fighting augmentation for the Regular Army and staging this course is one of the keys to achieving that." ■



What happened when an infantry soldier and an officer spent a day in each other's rank?

Interviews: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main, Google maps, Shutterstock



TRADING PLACES



66 **I**F I WAS a general I would get the juniors and seniors to switch jobs for the day, giving them a chance to see how the regiment runs from each other's perspective," Pte Millie Butt (RAMC) told this magazine last October.

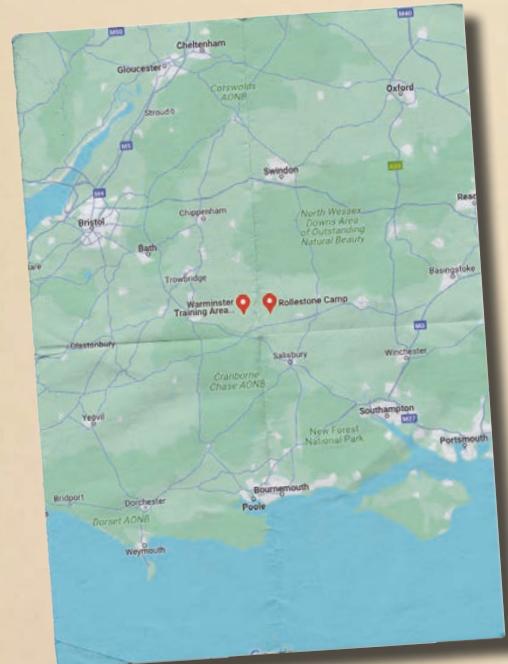
It was not the first time *Soldier* had heard this suggestion when quizzing other ranks personnel.

So with the annual All Stop Day imminent – a time when Army units come together to improve workplace culture and mutual understanding – it seemed the perfect moment to put this idea into action.

Here, two volunteers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment tell us what happened when they changed places for the day out on Salisbury Plain...

SITREP:

The Poachers were playing the enemy during validation training for The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on Exercise Wessex Storm. Pte Aaron Biddle was "promoted" to the role of company commander. Inside CHQ, the soldier of one year spent an afternoon working his way through a planning cycle to organise a complex attack against a well-defended position. His company comprised three platoons, plus numerous attached assets including recce, snipers, anti-tank, machine guns, artillery, mortars and remotely piloted air systems. The junior Serviceman was then required to communicate his plan via a brief to fellow officers. Meanwhile, his boss Maj Andy Lucas had been turfed out into the field to reacquaint himself with the fundamentals of dismounted night-time soldiering.



[DEMOTED]

NAME: Maj Andy Lucas

AGE: 34

YEARS IN: 13

(including three tours
of Afghanistan)

What did you have to do?

Deploy in small teams to saturate the forest surrounding a barn and disrupt the enemy as they began their raid. It's been a while since I've been cutting around the woods, employing my personal weapon at close quarters. These days I rarely get to fire it other than during our annual combat marksmanship test.

How did you find it?

I must admit, I had great fun. But it was also a timely reminder that being an infantry soldier is far more skilful than it's sometimes given credit for. Operating in small teams in the pitch darkness in thick wood blocks requires slick drills, as well as a detailed understanding of the wider plan.

And how did Pte Biddle fare?

Fantastically – I'm actually slightly worried he may have put me out of a job as we used a lot of his plan in the actual attack a few days later (with me back in role) and successfully destroyed our opposition. It was really useful getting his perspective because he considered things that I just wouldn't have. He looked at one of the wood blocks and said 'that's where I would be', suggesting we clear it before breaking into the building. We did it and, lo and behold, there was someone in there. Pte Biddle commented on the complexity of my role, saying he had 'steam coming out his ears'. But he did admirably and will hopefully now have more empathy for the challenges we face in the command team.

66 I'm slightly worried
he may have put me
out of a job! 99

Any standout lessons?

I will remind myself in future to allow more time for rehearsals at the platoon level, and ensure my intent is communicated in a way that is relevant to every soldier. I now appreciate that longwinded statements are unlikely to stick in the mind when isolated from the chain of command. They are not conducive to the employment of mission command, where we ask soldiers to display initiative at the tactical level.

What else did you get out of it?

It was an excellent refresher for my dismounted soldiering skills, particularly getting familiar with the full range of kit that's now available. As an infantry officer I try to remain on top of this, but the reality of desk work means you can become rusty, so it was a useful exercise from that perspective. Diversity of thought is also something I will draw on. Under time constraints you can't always run a working group, but when we get days to plan things I could bring the corporals in more to get their perspective.



[PROMOTED]

NAME: Pte Aaron Biddle

AGE: 22

YEARS IN: 1



What did you have to do?

Plan an attack on a compound using various assets. I had to go in alongside the 2iC and break down what I wanted to happen and when. It was pretty difficult at the beginning because, obviously, I am only a private soldier. But once I got going it actually wasn't too bad. Having the 2iC as my scribe felt a bit odd, though. Everything I said to him he was writing down. Usually I try to stay out of the head shed's way!

How did you find it?

Strange at first, and a bit of a headache to be honest. For a start, I have never had assets to think about before. But once things got broken down for me I began to get the hang of it. It was interesting to see how things work at HQ level, but I would rather do the job I do. It's more enjoyable being out on the ground. With his role there, it is all about mental stress whereas mine is physical stress – although obviously we are having to think too. His decisions are more complex, I would say.

And how did Maj Lucas fare?

It seemed like he didn't handle it badly at all. But I don't think he would want to do it too often. It was a pretty quiet night. There was a lot of waiting around and rotating through sentry positions, stuff like that. That's something he's probably not used to.

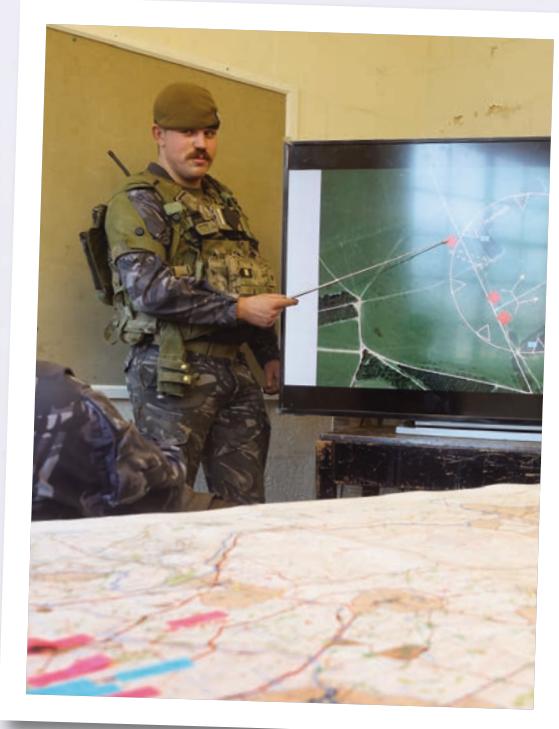
Any standout lessons?

Yes, to stay out of the way of CHQ as much as I can in future! Officers have to see a much broader horizon, which I think is far harder than what we do.

What else did you get out of it?

Not the money I was hoping for, that's for sure. Can you jump my pay next time please? I did the boss's job for a day but didn't see any more cash coming my way.

66 *Can you jump my pay next time please? 99*

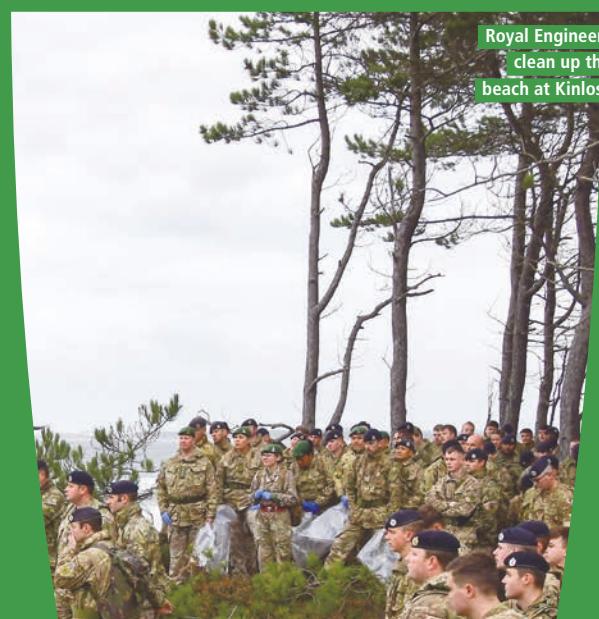


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LASTING LEGACY

Soldiers boost mission to save the planet with individual action





Loggies support the foodbank in Coventry



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

WHEN a member of the public mistook members of 3 Regiment, Royal Military Police for young offenders as they tidied up outside Aldershot's West End Centre, the irony was not lost on them.

"The whole idea was to do something that benefits the community," organiser Cpl Shane Graham (AGC (RMP)) told *Soldier*.

Dressed in their civvies – and up to their elbows in muck (shown page 45) – this small cohort were actually serving the environment, not a sentence.

It was part of a conservation initiative from 1st (UK) Division called Global Charge.

And according to those overseeing the programme, rolling up our sleeves to support the local environment should be a new year's resolution for every person on the planet in 2024.

Last year around 8,000 troops did just that as part of this movement, running 130 different activities across the globe over a handful of days in October.

The result was a heap of different sustainability and conservation undertakings, from those deployed on HMS Dauntless cleaning up beaches in Barbados to others planting tree saplings across Kenya and on Scotland's Garelochhead Training Area. Royal Engineers worked inside Belize Zoo. And The Light Dragoons lugged boulders around a peat bog in the Lake District to re-establish an important natural habitat.

As well as boosting individual projects, the idea is that Global Charge will help to ignite troops' own passion for reducing their impact on the planet.

And according to one Serviceman whose Reservist unit helped to plant trees during last year's event, that could make all the difference.

"It's very easy, especially when you aren't personally paying for the heating, lighting and rubbish collection, to take the 'easy wrong' as opposed to the 'hard right,'" said Capt Jack Eddie, adjutant at 158 Regiment, RLC.

"That could be walking past an empty room with the lights on, or noticing cardboard in the general waste. »



Coldstream Guards
do forest
conservation
in Berkshire

The Light Dragoons
work to restore
a peat bog



Gurkhas carry out
reforestation in
Mountain Pine
Ridge, Belize





“

The British Army's fundamental responsibility is to protect the nation, so this is a priority we cannot ignore

”

» “But the purpose of Global Charge goes beyond the act itself.

“It's aimed towards a culture change and realising that if we all make very minor changes in our behaviour and attitudes, these all add up and can make a big difference – even if it doesn't seem like it.”

According to Maj Gen Tom Bateman, general officer commanding of 1st (UK) Division (pictured above), the Service doing its bit is no longer a choice.

“We need to change our climate, conservation and sustainability footprint,” he told *Soldier*.

“The British Army's fundamental responsibility is to protect the nation, so this is a priority that we simply cannot ignore.”

Global Charge was established after a personal tragedy brought home the importance of legacy to the father-of-one.

He was commanding 11th Infantry Brigade back in 2019 when 22-year-old Coldstream Guardsman Mathew Talbot was killed in an elephant attack during an anti-poaching deployment in Malawi.

“I thought about Mathew's legacy,” the senior officer continued, admitting that his soldier's death had a “huge impact” on him.

“He had really stood out from the crowd – enthused, committed, charismatic and cheeky. His teammates loved him.

“Every individual should recognise that they too will leave a legacy on this earth – that isn't just the preserve of the rich and famous.

“So I want personnel to consider their choices, and how they can have a better impact on the planet.

“From picking up litter to decisions over the things they purchase; the car they drive. It's the small choices that count.”

And he said the way troops had stepped up to the initiative so far had been outstanding.

“It's been really fascinating to see some of the events the guys and girls have been delivering,” the senior officer continued. “I would never have come up with these ideas.

»



Troops assist with upgrades at Belize Zoo

RMP troops clean up at Aldershot's West End Centre

880,000

CO₂ EMISSIONS, IN TONNES, FROM THE UK DEFENCE ESTATE LAST YEAR

The government has set a target of becoming net zero by 2050. To find out about the Army's Climate Change and Sustainability Directive, which gives more detail of the collective environmental action planned by the Service to meet this target, visit gov.uk



Capt Jack Eddie, RLC

» “The fact they are generating the project ideas themselves has been inspirational. It shows that everyone can do this.”

With another round of activity due to take place under Global Charge later this year, the campaign presses on.

And if there is one organisation equipped to spread the word about climate change it is surely one filled with a plethora of trades, leadership expertise, experience of complex missions and deep knowledge of the outdoor world.

Speaking to those who took part last time around, the feedback has been promising.

“I think everyone sees the need for action like this,” Capt Eddie continued.

“And it is worth remembering that for us as an Army Reserve unit, our personnel finish their training evenings and return to their civilian day jobs.

“So this goes beyond just a military mindset change and actually covers broader society.”

Cpl Graham added: “A tasking at the community centre was something completely different to our day job. It got us out of the office and doing some good in the local area.

“The centre in Aldershot was really grateful. There’s only one or two people that do that kind of work there normally, so what we managed to do would have taken them months.”

From Aldershot to further afield, the sense of satisfaction at serving their communities with some interesting outdoor tasks was tangible.

But if this organisation is to succeed in protecting the nation in future, the state of the environment cannot be ignored at any level.

The government has identified climate change as one of the greatest threats to both UK and global security. And as such, it is already the business of every single person who dons a military uniform. ■

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Why oh why is there still no Wi-Fi?

ON PAGE 18 of your June 2023 issue there was a news article about the £150m roll-out of free Wi-Fi across 598 Army locations as part of the Future Soldier programme.

Catterick was one of the bases highlighted in the story, which was very encouraging for me and my colleagues at Bourlon Barracks to read.

However, we still don't have free Wi-Fi as we were missed off phases one and two of the project – and this is despite the fact there are buildings just 200 metres away from us which are classed as a different camp that had free Wi-Fi installed many months ago.

That makes no sense at all to me. I tried reaching out to Army Headquarters and others to query this but have had no reply.

I hope you can help out as I'm sure this inconsistency affects many personnel across the country who are still having to pay for our Wi-Fi due to what I believe is a mistake – **CSgt Alan Williams, Scots**

Tony Rogers, Delivery Manager, Information Directorate, Army Headquarters, replies: Thank you for your letter concerning the delivery of Wi-Fi into Bourlon Barracks.

You have not been forgotten – your barracks are part of the next phase of installation within Catterick Garrison and I can tell you the site survey is in progress right now.

I can assure you that the Wi-Fi service will be provided as soon as possible after the survey is completed.

We were missed off phases one and two

IS THE CURRENT BEARD POLICY JUST FUZZY THINKING?

• I WANT to know when we are going to fall in line with the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force with regards to beards.

I know arguments against it will quote wearing respirators as a major reason, but we don't wear them every working day.

And what about full-time Reserve service personnel on home commitment who don't deploy?

Will the policy ever change? – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col (Retd) Richard Eaton, Internal Comms, Army Comms Branch, replies: In early December the chief of the general staff directed the Army to review its policy on beards.

A team is currently looking at the potential benefits that might be derived from allowing soldiers to wear them, in terms of recruiting, retention, motivation, reputation and morale.

It will report in a few weeks' time so watch this space.

• SO IT seems the Army might capitulate to the long war of attrition mounted by the pro-beard lobby over the last few years.

I, for one, say why stop with facial hair? While we're at it, let's allow earrings and long hair for men to bring them in line with their female counterparts. It's only fair, after all.

Those boring, stuffy uniforms should go too. We can all cut around in tracksuit bottoms and trainers.

It will confuse the enemy and save the public purse some money – win win!

Ranks and salutes will likewise be unnecessary in this new era of informality – we'll just call each other "mate". Except the chief of the general staff – he gets to wear a name tape with "Big Pat" on it, so we can all identify him.

Be the Best? Pfft – be a civvy!

I look forward to the guaranteed surge in recruitment and retention these relaxed measures are going to usher in.

– **A concerned warrant officer**



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

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

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COMPETITIONS

NOVEMBER 2023

HOAY winner (Sterling Timepieces Campbell Watch): Padre Stephen Wilson, Ripon, North Yorkshire.

RULES: Winners chosen at random from all valid entries. Except where stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by the terms and conditions attached to a prize. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass on your details to any third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

SEARCHLINE

Calling all Staffords! Did you serve, or know anyone who served, in the 1944 Normandy campaign with the North or South Staffords, 59th (Staffordshire) Division? August 2024 will mark the 80th anniversary of their finest hour, the first successful crossing of the River Orne, which will be commemorated at an event in France. Contact 01543 434394 or curator@staffordshireregimentmuseum.com for details.

WELFARE

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

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being,

finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

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

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 014 2381

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support

01264 554004 aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

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

stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

People who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding group supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797 spaces.org.uk

Advertise in Soldier

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Veterans Gateway

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

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

Samaritans

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

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and

support services

0808 802 8080

britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address

work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393
mind.org

> continued overleaf

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of the President of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Yoon Suk Yeol, with His Majesty The King, receiving a ceremonial welcome at Horse Guards Parade.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 979, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by January 31.

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

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Complete with a wired microphone, the P300 doubles up as a karaoke machine from its 2.0 channel sound for unbeatable audio. To find out more log on to ouhlala.co.uk

The winner's name will appear in the March 2024 issue and all the usual competition rules apply (see details on the opposite page).



> continued from page 51

NHS

General mental health support
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage

A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on nhs.uk to find your local team.

Samaritans

116 123 samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

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

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816 aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

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

Relate

Relationship support relate.org.uk



RESETTLEMENT

Last year the **Career Transition Partnership (CTP)** supported more than 310,000 Service leavers in its 25 years as the official provider of Armed Forces resettlement. Regardless of service, time served or reason for leaving, all members of the Armed Forces can benefit from CTP support. Here are **six top tips** to ensure you make a smooth transition to civy street:

1. Prepare yourself and get engaged early. Too often the CTP hears from workshop attendees who wished they'd started sooner. Remember, regardless of your reason for leaving, you're entitled to CTP support – embrace it.

2. Make a plan. Confirm your timelines, set yourself "smart" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based), and identify what path you want to pursue. CTP career consultants can help you on a one-to-one basis to ensure you find the right option.

3. Avoid making snap decisions. Instead, research the sector you want to work in and people to talk to. The CTP team can support you by introducing you to a wide range of employers and providing detailed guides on various sectors as well as an ongoing supply of vacancies.

4. Identify what skills gaps you

might have and give yourself time to mitigate against these through some vocational training or a civilian work attachment. The CTP can advise and offer a wide range of qualifications and experience for you to add to your already considerable bank of transferable skills.

5. Explore and promote your brand. Who are you beyond the uniform? How are you going to let the world know you exist? The CTP will work with you to develop and hone your CV and LinkedIn profile to ensure you make a good first impression.

6. Perform well in interviews by practising with friends, family, your network and online digital tools. Let the CTP support you so you land the right outcome at the right time.

Where to start with resettlement

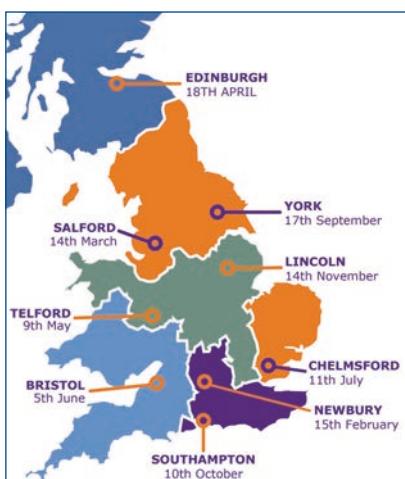
- Speak with your local unit resettlement information staff, who can offer advice on your entitlement.
- Contact your Service resettlement adviser (SRA) to discuss your resettlement package and available funding. You can find their details on ctp.org.uk/contact-us/sra-contact
- Register with the CTP via JPA and one of the team will contact you to book your first appointment.

CTP TRAINING COURSES 2023/24

- LCL L3 Certificate in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning & Heat Pump Systems
- Domestic Electrical Installation Full Scope
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations
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- EAL L3 Certificate in Traction and Rolling Stock Systems
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- Hard Landscaping and Bricklaying
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- CompTIA A+
- CompTIA Network+ and Security+
- CompTIA Cyber Security Analyst
- Strategic Finance for Non-Financial Managers
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- Director Development Programme
- QMS ISO 9001:2015 Lead Auditor Level 3
- Level 5 Certificate in Service Improvement (Lean Six Sigma – Green Belt)
- APMG Change Management
- Management of Risk
- IWFM L4 Certificate in Facilities Management
- CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management
- First Aid at Work Level 3 Award
- Managing Safely (IOSH)
- NEBOSH National General Certificate (SQA Level 6)
- NEBOSH Certificate in Fire Safety
- NEBOSH Health & Safety Management for Construction

Information about all training courses can be found on ctp.org.uk and troops can attend any of the below employment fairs in 2024 across the UK. Book via ctpevents@ctp.org.uk



CTP provides support for up to two years post-discharge, during which time troops can access its full suite of support. After two years, you have life-long employment support through the Forces Employment Charity (forcesemployment.org.uk).

MUSEUM DIARY

A flavour of the activities on offer across UK military museums...

Imperial War Museum, London

Living with the Troubles is an exhibition about life in Northern Ireland during the Army's 38-year Op Banner deployment. The special installation, which closes on **January 7**, explores the region's violent past while looking to the future. iwm.org.uk

Imperial War Museum, Duxford

Spies in the Skies, running until **February 25**, looks at the extraordinary role of the personnel who carried out aerial reconnaissance work during the Second World War. iwm.org.uk

Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop

Mandy Hickson – one of the first women to fly a Tornado GR4 on the front line with the Royal Air Force – will reveal more about life in a ground attack role with the iconic fast jet at a presentation on **January 16**. Alternatively, you can buy a pass to watch online. The presenter will also be signing copies of her book at the event. armyflying.com

National Army Museum, London

The *Shakespeare and War* showcase explores the playwright's musings on conflict and how they continue to resonate into the present day. nam.ac.uk.org

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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

Immerse yourself

Sony's VR headset shows impressive prowess

WHEN a flagship BBC science programme called *Tomorrow's World* previewed an early virtual reality headset in the 1980s, viewers watched in amazed.

Here was a product that could possibly revolutionise all kinds of digital applications – the creation of three-dimensional gaming worlds in particular.

Some 40 years later, however, the tech's potential in the field has arguably still never fully been realised.

Despite going through various incarnations, from handheld electronic toys to arcade cabinets on seaside piers, none have really hit the mark either in terms of practicality or playing dynamics.

But this is all changing with a new generation of products. With a concerted effort by publishers to push the genre towards the entertainment mainstream, it seems VR's prowess is finally being unleashed.

Soldier is a recent convert to immersive gaming after taking delivery of PlayStation's latest headset – a piece of kit which has proved hard to put down and prompted a renewed battle with a less-than-impressed wife for TV



use in the living room.

The technical specification of the PS VR2 is impressive. Mated with the Sony PS5 console via a single lead, it has a 4K Oled display that provides outstanding clarity of visuals as well as exceptional sound via earbuds.

Headset and controllers have feedback that responds to the action, with the system even tracking the player's eye movements for greater precision. It fits comfortably while the on-screen interface is mercifully tactile.

And the games line-up is impressive, with the tech supported by a growing library and further additions for this year.

There are some real aces in the pack, too.

Standout titles already include *Townsmen 2*, a highly playable take on the "god" strategy genre of the 1990s, and actioner *Horizon Call of the Mountain*, a fantasy set in a beautifully rendered paradise world.

Those with a waterborne adventurous training bent will enjoy *Kayak VR*, where they can take up their paddles across digitally-recreated locations in Antarctica, Norway and Australia, either for sightseeing or head-to-head races.

Flight actioner *Project Wingman* *Frontline 59*, meanwhile, offers a stomach churning fast air experience – and has been billed as a first-person shooter for would-be aviation aces.

The overall package holds huge promise. While a question mark remains over whether Sony can deliver the revolution promised nearly a half-century ago, the gaming experience is one of the best we've seen.

Although some titles provide a fairly short playing time – and the library is still just a small part of the overall VR market – there is clearly significant potential for future expansion.



On the downside, the headset's £500+ price tag is a definite minus and prolonged immersion can provoke some noticeable motion sickness in the most hardened gamers, this PacMan-era reviewer being no exception.

Misgivings aside, putting on the headset for the first time generates a sharp intake of breath and the realisation of just how far this field is now advancing.

The new year certainly promises to be an interesting time – the living room battle lines are well and truly drawn. ■

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER



The Sony PS5 VR2 kit offers slick gaming



Head gear

Looking for virtual reality on a PC? Here are some options

Metaquest 3

Already pulling in favourable reviews from gamers, this new PC-compatible headset represents a significant upgrade on the Metaquest 2 predecessor. It has been praised for its comfort, powerful visuals and sound as well as the backing of developers with a decent games line-up. It is more than £200 dearer, however, than the previous gen gear.



HTC Vive Pro 2

This headset has found favour for its sharp resolution, making it a winner for serious virtual reality gamers. Reviewers have praised it for smooth motion tracking and general user-friendliness.



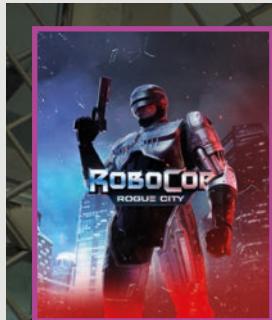
Valve Index

Reviewers are enthusiastic about this PC headset, which is supported by a wealth of games available via the online Steam platform. It can also be matched with revolutionary four-finger control paddles. This one is for the serious minded, however, with a cool £1,000 asking price.



MORE TOP PICKS

GAMES



RoboCop: Rogue City

Out now on consoles

THE X-rated movie on which this title is based holds a special significance for *Soldier*.

Back in 1987, blagging a ticket into the old Aldershot cinema to see Paul Verhoeven's horribly violent tale of a murdered cop-turned-cyborg became something of an unauthorised rite of passage among secondary school pupils.

The franchise has since spawned a raft of video game spin-offs, largely in coin-op form. But half a lifetime on, *RoboCop* has finally made a leap to the console in *Rogue City* – a first-person shooter with some investigation elements thrown in. With action aplenty and Basil Poledouris' legendary score accompanying the gameplay, the title perfectly captures the dystopian vision of the film.

However, this reviewer must warn that this gruesome title should be off-limits to kids.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Company of Heroes Collection

For Switch

SECOND World War titles were once two-a-penny in the gaming sphere.

In the mid 2000s it seemed that every other release was linked to the conflict in some way following a renewed interest in the era from the movie industry.

Company of Heroes – a real-time strategy PC outing released by THQ some 17 years ago – came at the crest of this wave.

It was impressive back then – and this reworking for

Switch shows that it has comfortably stood the test of time. Taking control of Allied troops fighting Axis forces in Europe following D-Day, the action accurately follows the battles of 1944 onward.

Controls have been well reworked and a series of useful tutorials make for satisfying gameplay.

Company of Heroes also offers excellent value at £20 – with the original title plus a plethora of add-ons and extras included in a single bundle.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Train Sim World 4

Available now on PC and consoles

ASPIRING train drivers have a chance to expand their track time and experience in the cab of new locomotives in the next iteration of this ever-popular simulation series.

The latest outings include journeys in the UK Midlands plus Antelope Valley, California and a route across the Austro-German border.

Locomotive and freight services offer plenty of opportunity to hone skills while default settings are now easier for novice players.

With the first downloadable content – focused on North West England – released during the Christmas period, the package continues to expand apace too. *Soldier* has asked developers at Dovetail Games to give a military railway a try...



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

MOVIES



Battle over Britain

Out on Blu-ray, DVD and digital from January 22

IN TERMS of film projects, taking on the Second World War's most dramatic aerial campaign with limited funds is a brave shout. But then, as Ridley Scott's *Napoleon* proved late last year, a massive budget is no guarantee of critical success either.

Battle over Britain takes a micro-level look at the struggle to repel the Luftwaffe – zooming in on 24 hours in the lives of a group of Spitfire pilots as they await orders to scramble.

It's competently acted, with the cast successfully portraying the different reactions to sustained stress and fear amongst the crew – and bringing home the terrible human cost of that chapter of the conflict.

The dogfight sequences are also well rendered, presumably leaning on CGI but not glaringly so.

While clearly on a much smaller scale than the similarly named, star-studded 1969 version of the story, it's not without its merits and is obviously a labour of love.

Tin Hat Productions, the team behind this film and several others in the same mould, work within the confines of their resources to maximum effect.

Decent fodder for a lazy Sunday afternoon when it hits streaming services later this month.



Review: WO1 Mike Owens, RE



BOOKS

Unique

by Kelly Holmes



ALTHOUGH this is not the first autobiography Dame Kelly Holmes has published, it is her first since coming out publicly as gay at the age of 52. Her time in the Army was somewhat short in comparison to her Olympic and broadcasting careers, however, as this more candid follow-up reveals, the impact it had on her ability to be open about her sexuality was profound. In this relatively liberal age, it's easy to assume everyone is comfortable being themselves, but the fear personnel experienced in the era of witch hunts and room searches was very real – and it followed Holmes for decades. This engaging memoir is an interesting insight into what makes a top athlete tick, as well as a sobering reminder of some less tolerant times.



Review: Becky Clark, Soldier

Mosquito

by Rowland White



MOVING along at such a pace that it reads like fiction, not fact, this is the tale of the de Havilland Mosquito and its mission to destroy the Gestapo's headquarters in Copenhagen. Both the airmen and the Danish resistance involved were young and unquestionably brave. Their backstories and those of some of the Nazis based in Denmark all converge in a grand climax on the RAF raid. It's a multifaceted read about an absorbing subject. Incidentally, the last wartime Mosquito pilot was a guest speaker at an event organised by the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans last summer and captivated the audience with his pathfinder stories.



Review: Roger Hall, RHC pensioner, ex-LG and REME

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SOLDIER SPORT



RING WARRIOR »

LIGHTWEIGHT ace Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC) was one of a number of fighters to compete in three bouts in the space of three days as the Army boxing team held their latest round robin tournament in Aldershot. Read more about a busy weekend of action on page 69...



GET ON BOARD: FOR DETAILS FOLLOW @ARMY_SKATEBOARDING
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Pictures: Bdr Warren Mills, RA and Stuart Bennett



BUILDING MOMENTUM

SERVICE SKATEBOARD COMMUNITY PLOTS PATH TO SPORTING RECOGNITION

THE Army Skateboarding Association is targeting further growth in 2024 after witnessing encouraging signs of progress over the past 12 months.

More than 20 personnel from all three Services competed at the Military Skate Jam contest in Nottingham before Christmas – an event that came in just the second year of the discipline's presence in Forces circles.

While there is still a long way to go in terms of skateboarding being recognised as an official Army sport, those in charge believe they are heading in the right direction – with no shortage of talent on show.

"I have been quite shocked, and was expecting a fairly low level of ability," Sgt Tom Moran (REME), Skate Jam bowl competition winner and Army head coach, told *SoldierSport* while reflecting on the standard among the ranks.

"But there are some who could probably hold their own at open-level events."

"When we started this up, we thought, regardless of ability, we would take people on and try to make them better, whether that's at vert, freestyle, slalom, downhill or street – basically, anything with a plank of wood and wheels."

"It is a relatively cheap sport, and allows soldiers to be creative – their individuality can really come through."

Moran has completed coaching qualifications with national governing body Skateboard GB and has launched a club at his unit – Lyneham-based 8 Training Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – with regular training sessions held in

the area.

Still an unofficial body, the Army Skateboarding Association is using social media to aid its growth and was able to call upon veteran, and world skate judge, Craig Brown (ex-R Signals) to help officiate the military showdown.

A Skateboard GB accredited coaching course is being planned for the coming months and it is hoped an Army competition will follow.

"We want to get to the same level as snowboarding and surfing, where we are holding regular competitions and camps to bring people on," Moran said.

"It could become another recruiting tool. The Army talks about things like resilience, determination, courage, and discipline – this is a sport that has all of those."

"The key thing now is to keep the momentum up."

That sentiment was echoed by the organisation's chair, WO2 Barry Pryor (RA).

"The main goal for 2024 is to establish the association as the focal point for existing and potential skateboarders in order to increase participation and development and competitive opportunities," he explained.

"In the mid-term, we will lead on gaining formal recognition with Army Sport, and support the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to establish associations of their own."

"Long-term, we aspire to make skateboarding a mainstream sport within the Armed Forces, opening more opportunities for personnel and developing elite athletes that can perform at national and international level."

Among those competing at



**"I ENJOY
BEING
PUSHED
OUT
OF MY
COMFORT
ZONE"**

Military Skate Jam was Cfn Nico Raucci (REME), who won the award for best endeavour.

"This is something I have been interested in for a long time but never had the chance to pursue," he said.

"But thanks to the Army I've had the opportunity to try my hand on a deck and it has been going great so far."

"There was a friendly atmosphere at Skate Jam and many tips and tricks were shared on how to stay on the board when going down a ramp – which I eventually managed."

"The event itself was brilliant to watch and although it was a competition the troops were still cheering everyone on."

"Hopefully, there will be some new faces involved next time and who knows, I could be the one passing on some skills."

Bdr Bryce Purchase (RA) is at the other end of the spectrum when it comes to experience and has been involved in the sport for 19 years.

"I started skateboarding as it offered me the chance to build close friendships, discipline myself through the repetitive nature of learning new tricks, and keep myself physically and mentally active," he said.

"My passion has only grown because of its progressive and creative aspect – I enjoy being pushed out of my comfort zone."

"Skateboarding has developed and expanded massively over the years, to the point where it is now an Olympic event."

"My hopes are that it will eventually become a recognised sport within the Army."

"Having the chance to train, coach and compete against others will unite us, as well as the other Service teams." ■



BACK FROM THE BRINK TO REALISE OLYMPIC DREAM

AFTER seeing his hopes of competing at the last Olympics dashed at one of the final qualifying hurdles, rower Cpl Stephen Cox (RLC) has set the record straight by securing his place at this summer's Games.

A fourth-place finish at the African Championships in Tunisia saw the athlete reach the required standard for Paris 2024 and he is now just months away from representing Zimbabwe in the single sculls on sport's biggest stage.

"It's hard to describe and I haven't really got my head round it yet," he told *SoldierSport* as he reflected on the achievement.

"It has been eight years of grind and I have been training like a demon, so the sense of relief is immense.

"Going into the African Championships I knew I had to make the A final.

"At that point it is the top six

rowers, and you cannot finish last if you want to qualify.

"I came fourth but underperformed massively. I should have been on the podium but was suffering from overtraining syndrome; I was consistently getting minor injuries and my back was not in a good place.

"But even on my worst day, I knew I was fast enough to get the job done."

With qualification secured, Cox is now free to concentrate on peaking at the Games and has headed to Australia to continue his preparations.

And he admitted he is relieved to have gotten the job done early.

"Selection would have been in March, so you would have to peak for that and go again at the Olympics," the soldier explained.

"Now I can really target Paris. If I can get that peak right, I could be in the top ten, however, the stars would have to align for me



**"IT HAS
BEEN
EIGHT
YEARS
OF
GRIND"**

to get a medal.

"The fact I am going has not quite hit home. My wife thinks I'm too modest about it, but internally I am ecstatic.

"A lot of people say becoming an Olympian changes your life – I cannot wait, but there is a lot of hard graft to come."

Cox's air of positivity is in stark contrast to his mood in 2021, when he came close to walking away from the sport after suffering the disappointment of missing out on the Tokyo Games.

With Zimbabwe having qualified their boat, he found himself in a battle with two compatriots for the right to compete but ultimately finished second in the tussle.

"I stopped rowing after that," the 32-year-old continued. "I knew I had to go back to work and get my career in order.

"But I kept my hat in the ring by doing one or two sessions a day. I didn't completely quit but

needed some time away to think about things.

"My wife insisted that I shouldn't give up, and World Rowing was going to offer help with funding, so I decided to give it another go.

"I hadn't rowed for five or six months, and I was terrible – I really struggled. But my coach said 'what do you expect?'.

"I returned full-time in February last year and after four months started pulling some really big numbers."

Cox then immersed himself in competition, racing in Italy, at the World Cup and on the domestic scene over seven successive weekends but then suffered the impact of his exertions.

"I was coming home in tears as I was so knackered by it all," he explained. "I was suffering with overtraining syndrome, a lack of sleep and injuries.

"I then had a mediocre World Championships, finishing 32nd out of 50 rowers when I was hoping for the top 20. My times were shocking compared to earlier in the year.

"I had to take a fair bit of time off with minimal training and should have gone a lot faster at the African Championships.

"But looking back now, I'm happy for all the people who have supported me: my wife, sponsors, the Army – who have invested so much in me – and my family. It had to pay off this time." ■



ROWING IN NUMBERS

MONTHS OF TRAINING PLANNED IN AUSTRALIA, WHICH INCLUDES COMPETING AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPS

3

ROWING EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR PARIS 2024 – RUNNING FROM JULY 27 TO AUGUST 3

14

COUNTRIES COMPETING IN LAST YEAR'S AFRICAN CHAMPS

30

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALS WON BY FELLOW ROWER, AND SOLDIER, MAJ HEATHER STANNING

2



Picture: L/Cpl Martin Walker, SCOTS

SCOTS REVEL IN RING RETURN

WITH just six weeks' training to their name, fighters from The Royal Regiment of Scotland made a triumphant return to the ring at their regimental boxing night.

All five battalions were represented at the pre-competition camp, where 36 athletes undertook a gruelling programme designed to shed weight and hone skills before stepping through the ropes.

"There was a mix of experience, from those who had never boxed in their lives to others who had fought at national youth championships," WO2 Scott Pew, lead coach with 2 Scots and part of the organising team, told *SoldierSport*.

"We were running three or four sessions a day, and everyone was given a five-kilogramme weight target to drop – some lost 12."

Several boxers were forced to withdraw along the way and with the training complete,

they were able to stage four inter-regimental bouts along with a further six contests that featured opposition from The Royal Anglian Regiment and The Royal Yorkshire Regiment.

"The standard and style of boxing was very good, but the lack of experience showed in a few of the fights," Pew continued. "And the fact they had trained together for six weeks meant they were quite pre-emptive as they had all been taught the same way."

"But the bouts against external opponents had fantastic quality throughout."

Fus Caleb Donaghy was named boxer of the night following his defeat of a seasoned Royal Anglian rival, while Fus Danielle Mullen caught the eye in her points victory at 63kg.

"The Royal Anglians have been boxing since this time last year and for us, after just six weeks, to compete at the same level was wonderful to see," Pew said. ■



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FORWARD POWER LEADS THE WAY

THE ARMY under-23s put opening day disappointment behind them to finish their Inter-Services campaign on a high with victory over the Royal Air Force.

Ill-discipline had earlier cost the Reds dear in their clash with the Royal Navy as six yellow cards and a red helped their rivals to 15-10 triumph.

But they bounced back in style on home turf a week later, when three tries from the forwards fired them to a 19-9 win.

However, it was far from plain sailing, particularly in the first half, as they conceded a string of penalties to halt their progress.

Centre AS1 Kieran Jenkins edged the RAF ahead with a coolly converted kick and the Army had to wait until the 26th minute for their first foray into the opposition 22.

And it yielded maximum reward as prop Spr Ryan Eastley (RE) crashed over after Rfn Jamie Diamond (Rifles) had earlier been held up on the line.

2Lt Henry Lapslie (Scots) slotted the extras before picking up his side's first yellow card of

the evening, and with Jenkins adding another penalty moments later the RAF trailed by just a single point at the break.

Back to their full complement, the hosts made the ideal start to the second period and again it was the power of the pack that did the damage as LBdr Semi Tokaduadua (RA) touched down. Lapslie converted in style as the lead stretched to 14-6.

Jenkins kept the airmen in touch with another successful penalty before the Army sealed the contest with their most fluent attack of the night.

Probing from right to left, the soldiers rolled through the phases to create the opening for second rower Pte Harris Fishwick (Mercian) to bundle home.

Lapslie rattled the woodwork with his conversion attempt and despite suffering two further yellow cards at the death, the Reds held firm to seal victory.

"The boys understood the pressure was on after what happened the week before, and they delivered," Army head coach Maj Gareth Slade-Jones (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*. ■

INTER-SERVICES U23 RUGBY

ARMY

19

RAF

9



STARTING IN STYLE

THE Army women's rugby union team piled on the points as they started the new season with a 97-7 win over the Pacific Islanders.

A host of debutants lined up alongside experienced operators such as WO2 Nat Lewis (R Signals, pictured above), Gnr Amy Carr (RA) and skipper SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)) in what proved to be a one-sided contest.

A number of soldiers were also called upon to boost the opposition's ranks.

"The most important thing was to get the new girls in red shirts as much game time as possible, which we did," said head coach WO2 Sarah Mitchelson (RLC).

"It was great to see our players finding space on the pitch and building confidence."

The result was followed by a 29-0 win over Brunel University.

In other news, the date has been set for this season's Army-Navy games at Twickenham.

Both the men's and women's teams will face their Senior Service rivals on Saturday, May 4.

Tickets can be purchased at eticketing.co.uk/rfu

The Inter-Services campaign concludes a week later, when the Reds face the Royal Air Force at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium.



SPORT SHORTS



Archers hit Services mark

ARMY archers ended 2023 in style as they claimed top spot at the Inter-Services Indoor Championships.

Held in conjunction with the Archery GB National Championships, the event saw the soldiers show their talents across the recurve, longbow, barebow and compound disciplines to end with a total score of 2,683 – finishing ahead of the Royal Air Force in second and Royal Navy in third.

The Army Archery Association will be hosting its next beginners' course at MoD Garats Hay, near Loughborough, from April 23 to 25. For details email craig.cherrie702@mod.gov.uk



Warrior test awaits

THE Army men's rugby league team will travel to West Yorkshire to face Fryston Warriors in the first round of the Challenge Cup.

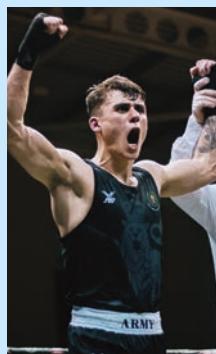
The match is scheduled for the weekend of January 13/14, with gameday details to be confirmed on the [@ArmyRugbyLeague](#) X page. The winners then have a home tie against Hunslet ARLFC on January 27/28.

Elsewhere, the Royal Air Force were handed a home clash with the Royal Navy in the first round draw.



Picture: Cole S Jackson

ROUND ROBIN BOOSTS RING EXPERIENCE



"I FELT MYSELF GETTING BETTER AND BETTER"

FIGHTERS from Sweden, Merseyside and the Home Counties provided a stern test for the Army boxing team as they hosted their latest round robin tournament in Aldershot.

Despite posting mixed results, the soldiers profited from the experience of competing in three bouts in as many days as preparations for this season's UK Armed Forces and National Championships continued at pace.

A training camp with the Welsh national set-up followed on from the clash and head coach SSgt Shane Sadler (RAPTC) has been pleased with the progress shown.

"It is all about experience," he said. "At this stage we're looking for performances, rather than arms being raised as winners – that can wait for the championships."

"For a few, it was the first time fighting over three, three-minute rounds as they have stepped up from the development team."

"LCpl Jack Lorja (Mercian) has come in and won against the German Bundeswehr and Bahrain. Against Sweden

he fought someone with five times more experience and while he lost, it was a competitive bout."

Another to shine was LCpl Leon Moulds (REME, pictured left), who won two of his three matches over the weekend.

"It was good to get that practice in ahead of the championships and, win or lose, I knew I'd be fighting again the next day," the 63.5kg star told *SoldierSport*.

"I felt myself getting better and better. When you finish on the first day you can get to work on different things while they are fresh in your head – you have that drive to go again."

"I lost a close bout to Merseyside on the Saturday and fought the same opponent again on Sunday and got the win. I gave everything to get that decision back."

Moulds is in his first season as a full-time squad member and has benefited from being part of the Army set-up.

"I am a lot fitter," he added. "And I have improved technically in terms of how I look to attack; instead of rushing there is more thought going into my work." ■



FRESH FORMAT PROGRESSES TO ITS FINAL FOURS

THE line-up for the final fours in the new-look Inter-Corps Basketball Championships was confirmed at the last round of pool fixtures in Aldershot.

In the men's draw, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers defeated the Royal Engineers 79-62 to top the standings in pool B – a result that saw the sappers reach the knockout stages as runners-up.

With the Royal Logistic Corps already crowned winners of pool A the battle for second place was fought between the Royal Signals and Army Medical Services, with the former triumphing 73-37.

"It was a big game, and we needed a composed attacking display; the guys did very well," victorious coach Sgt Stuart Hubbins told *SoldierSport*.

"We thought it would be tight, but we went out in the first half and pulled out a lead that allowed us to control the match and play our own game."

The signallers now face the REME in the semi-finals on January 24 – with the loggies facing off against the sappers – and Hubbins is predicting a close contest for his side.

He added: "It will be tough, and they have a good squad, but we have beaten them before. We will go in fit and energised and will put everything into it."

REME skipper WO2 Martin Clarke was pleased to end the pool stage on a high in what proved to be the team's toughest test of the campaign to date.

"We knew it would be competitive and we made a sluggish start," he explained. "We have blown the opposition away in our other games and wanted to put 100 points on them, but it was a good test.

"We could have played better, and it was our defence that won it for us."

The new format has featured five rounds of matches spread over several months, as opposed to the old system which saw the



**"OUR
DEFENCE
WON IT
FOR US"**

entire tournament crammed into a one-week window. And so far, it has been well received.

"Before, we'd have a week of training followed by a week of games but by the time we got to the important matches our bodies were done," Clarke (pictured left) said. "This gives everyone a chance to reset."

"More players can come in and you can manage the squad as you know what is coming."

Hubbins shared the positive sentiment about the format.

"It brings us more basketball and means the players are training and playing more often," he explained. "Instead of having two or three games in a day, when you are dead on your feet, we now have just one – and we can go all in."

The RLC, AMS, Adjutant General's Corps and a combined team featuring players from the REME, Intelligence Corps and Royal Army Physical Training Corps will contest the women's final four. ■



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SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Army Sport/Lee Crabb

Tourists' tough test

HOCKEY players from the Adjutant General's Corps tested their skills on foreign soil as they embarked on a two-week tour of South Africa.

The men's and women's teams faced six matches in and around Cape Town, with the latter – who were crowned Inter-Corps champions earlier in the season (pictured) – celebrating three wins and a draw.

"The tour allowed us to develop individual and team skills against challenging opposition," said Maj Sarah Thomson, who scored twice in the 3-2 victory over Plettenburg.



Success down under

THE UK Armed Forces enjoyed a memorable trip down under at the Australian Combined Services Volleyball Competition.

The women's team, coached by WO2 Nikki White (AGC (SPS)) and skippered by Maj Karen Tait (RAMC), negotiated the pool stage in style and defeated New South Wales in the tournament final. Sgt Hannah Chapman (Int Corps) was among the star performers.

Defeat to eventual champions New Zealand halted the men's momentum in the group fixtures but they went on to beat South Queensland in the bronze medal match.

TITLE SEALED AT THE DEATH



THERE was a dramatic conclusion to the Inter-Corps Swimming Championships as the Infantry men sealed the honours by just a single point with victory in the final race of the day.

Success in the medley relay saw them finish on 117 points, with fierce rivals the Royal Engineers on 116.

"It had been neck and neck throughout the whole day," Maj Marcus Roberts (Scots), secretary of Infantry swimming, told *SoldierSport*. "The sappers would lead for a few events and then we'd jump past. It was great to see such high-quality swimming."

Rgr Matt Scott (R Irish) helped the cause with victories in the 50 and 100 metres breaststroke, while Rfn Harry Milner (Rifles) topped the podium in the 200 metres freestyle.

Roberts was also pleased with the wider talent on show, which will help in his other role as Army team manager.

"We have identified several swimmers for the Inter-Services and because the standard is so high selection is going to be quite difficult," he added.

The Army Medical Services mounted a comprehensive defence of the women's title with a haul of 133 points – 32 clear of the Royal Engineers in second. They also posted a 100 per cent record in the water polo to seal another crown, while the duo of LCpl Katy Morrey and Sgt Katie Linney took the honours in the diving to complete an AMS clean sweep.

The sappers won the men's water polo, with Capt Nick Parks and Sgt Ben Martin also helping them to first place in the diving. ■

**"IT WAS
NECK
AND
NECK"**



FLY half LCpl Aaron James was named player of the match as The Royal Welsh Dragons downed the Lyneham Knights 46-12 to win the Army Rugby Union Knockout Cup. He slotted a number of conversions during the team's success in Aldershot, while two cross-field kicks led to tries.

MONTH IN SPORT

January's key dates...



WHAT: Corps Grassroots League Dressage and Showjumping
WHEN: January 11 and 12
WHERE: Larkhill
NEED TO KNOW: This is the first of four rounds in a novice event aimed at giving newcomers to the sport their first taste of an equestrian competition, with expert advice on hand



WHAT: Army Judo Championships
WHEN: January 12
WHERE: Army School of Physical Training, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The competition follows on from a four-day skills course at the same venue. More than 65 athletes entered the draw last year, with titles up for grabs in a host of weight categories



WHAT: Army women v Sweden
WHEN: January 21
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: Plans for this season's Inter-Services campaign step up a gear in this international test. The Reds defeated the same opposition 18-5 last year, can they claim back-to-back wins on home turf?



Pictures: Morgan Harlow

REDS RETURN TO INTERNATIONAL STAGE



SKIPPER SSgt Ellie Nawale (AGS (SPS)) praised the togetherness of the Army netball team following their defeat to the Ireland Emeralds last month.

The soldiers stepped on to the international stage in a curtain raiser to the England-South Africa clash at the Nottingham Arena and despite being beaten 47-38, there were plenty of positives to build upon as they move forward.

Pte Amy Howell (pictured left) and Capt Katharine Chadwick (both RAMC) attracted individual praise from Nawale, but she was keen to stress it was the collective effort that impressed her most.

“For me it was about the unity of the team and the way everyone gelled so well together,” the former Fijian international told *SoldierSport*.

“The majority have been playing together for a few years, but it was also a chance to bring some new faces in.

“We’ve got strong combinations and were only a point behind at half-time. While I’m disappointed with

the loss, I’m very happy with our performance.”

The Army had beaten Ireland in their two previous meetings and Nawale said they were delighted to lock horns once again on such a big stage.

“It was a privilege,” she continued. “We were honoured to be invited and there are a lot of other teams that could have been given the opportunity.

“We have a good relationship with England Netball, and it was fantastic to play in front of our families and a big crowd.”

Attention now turns to the Inter-Services – which defending champions the Army host in March – and the Reds have already named their open and development squads for the tournament.

“There were some tough decisions as so many girls came forward at the trials,” Nawale added. “We’ve had such a big squad for three months but also have a really good mixed team now. We’ve encouraged those who have missed out to join them and continue to develop.” ■



Making sure I have a goal. If you have a date for completing something in mind, it gives you a target to work towards. And it helps you manage your time, which is a big factor for me. I'm getting better at it!

Pte Sophie Roche, AGC (SPS)



Good routine. I am on top form if I get that phys in at the start of the day and get those endorphins going. Then I am set up. If I want to be a better version of myself going into the new year, it's going to be all about daily habits. You can go to the gym and do the hardest single session of your life, but that won't suddenly give you the results.

LCpl Amy Liu, REME



Telling myself I can do it, and then just cracking on and going straight to the gym after work. Heading back to your room and sitting on your bed makes it so much harder. I tell myself 'you've got this' and that gives me the momentum and positive attitude. Competition works well too – telling myself that I won't let that girl beat me.

Pte Dani Jones, RLC



Accountability is a big thing for me – ensuring I have goals and time plans, and making myself stick to those. And if you know you have other stuff you want to do at the weekend, organising yourself so you can still get those sessions in somehow.

LBdr Ella Spencer, RA

Shifting gear for a new year

We asked female fitness fanatics what would help take their strength up a notch in 2024...

Sleep will be important for me. I like to have eight hours and get up early, and when I do I perform far better.

I can cope with less if required, but I don't seem to recover from workout sessions as well – especially if I'm doing high intensity.

Pte Abbie Morgan, RLC





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